



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

What's Inside

President's Message	01
Message from Secretary	02
Executive Secretary's Message	03
Omdudsman in Focus	04
OICOA Members' Activities	06 - 21
Training Sessions in Crux	22
OICOA at Glance	23 - 47

Editorial Team
Khalid Javed
Abdul Ghani

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Esteemed OICOAOA members,
First of all, I would like to wish you a happy belated Eid-al-Adha and hope that it brings you health, happiness and prosperity.

I have to say that I am pleased to work, strengthen and outgrow together with you-esteemed Ombudsmen- under the umbrella of the "Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association-OICOAOA", which was founded in Pakistan-Islamabad in 2014.

Today, all issues and work related to the development and protection of human rights have transcended the borders of the country and gained an international and even a universal structure. In this respect, in addition to the importance of being together and being organized; sharing experiences in the field of human rights by increasing our activities is also the merging quality of our union. The sole element of ensuring our continuity is our joint trainings, regional workshops and conferences, which are held with the efforts of our Institutions and are planned to be realized in the future, as well as ensuring the exchange of knowledge by sharing our good practices. This is also very important in terms of raising the standards of our Institutions and capacity strengthening activities.



In this respect, our priorities are; to promote and increase work on knowledge, experience and research, to evaluate meticulously your requests and suggestions, to ensure the continuity of our meetings, to develop relations with member states and international institutions and organizations working in the field of human rights and to increase interaction.

I wish you success in your work.

Yours sincerely,
Seref MALKOÇ
Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye
President of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA)



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY

It gives me an immense pleasure to share the 'First Newsletter' of OICOAOA. The fundamental building principle of every Ombudsman institution of OICOAOA is derived from Islamic concept of accountability. We, at OICOAOA strongly believe that a peaceful society contributes towards a peaceful world. The agenda of peaceful coexistence can only be achieved through transparency, rule of law and just system of addressing grievances. This puts a huge responsibility at every Ombudsman Institution, which we endeavor to carry out with commitment and resilience.

'Let's grow together' has been the mandate of OICOAOA, which I strongly believe can only be enhanced through cooperation and working together. Knowledge is power that has the capacity to transform and generate new ways of growth. Islam also provides great impetus for the human pursuit of knowledge. Quran urges the mankind to think, ponder, reflect and acquire knowledge. If we follow practices of collaboration, I am hopeful that coming years of OICOAOA will be more productive and high yielding.

While sharing the "First Newsletter" of OICOAOA, we also strongly condemn the recent heinous act of the burning of the Holy Quran in the front of the Stockholm Masjid in Sweden which is a blatant violation of fundamental human rights and has hurt the feelings of all Muslims across the world. Being an Ombudsman organization we are the advocate of justice,



tolerance, protection of human rights and equality. We all call on the Swedish authorities to punish all perpetrators of this ugly and shameful act.

I am sure with the support of member countries we can build and strengthen our association. May we all be guided by the principles of justice and righteousness.

**Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah
(Hilal-i-Imtiaz) (Sitara-i-Imtiaz)
Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan
Secretary General, OICOAOA**



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

As the Executive Secretary of the OICOA Ombudsman Association, I am delighted to announce the launch of our very first newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to foster communication and collaboration among our esteemed members, as well as to keep everyone informed about the latest developments in the field of ombudsman services. Our aim is to create a platform where knowledge, experiences, and best practices can be shared, thereby strengthening the capacity of each member institution.

This newsletter will keep all members updated on upcoming conferences, workshops, and training opportunities relevant to our profession. Additionally, we will share recaps of events that have taken place, ensuring that you never miss out on valuable networking and learning opportunities. I welcome your input and invite you to share your expertise, success stories, and research with fellow members. Let's harness the power of collective wisdom. I believe that this newsletter will serve as a vital medium to promote a vibrant exchange of ideas and foster a sense of community among our members. It is our collective dedication to upholding the principles of integrity, accountability, and fairness that strengthens the OICOA Ombudsman Association and the important work we undertake.

I encourage all members to actively engage with the newsletter by sharing your feedback,



suggestions, and contributions. Together, let us build a valuable resource that reflects the diversity and expertise of our association.

Almas Ali Jovindah

Executive Secretary



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

OMBUDSMAN IN FOCUS

Mrs. Ghada Hameed Habib Ombudswoman of Bahrain

Mrs. Ghada Hameed Habib has joined The Independent Ombudsman Office as the Director of the International Cooperation and Development Directorate by decree of the prime minister on July 4, 2013. She then assumed the position of Deputy Ombudswoman by Royal Decree on August 27, 2019 till her appointment as Ombudsman with the rank of undersecretary by Royal Decree on November 2, 2022. Notably, she is the first woman to hold this position in the Kingdom of Bahrain as well as on a GCC level.

Her excellency has also participated in several international events and conferences in relation to the work of ombudsmen's offices worldwide that took place in Turkey, Morocco, the United States of America, and many European countries.

Mrs. Ghada has also contributed in the development of the principles and standards of the Independent Ombudsman Office on visiting prisons and places of detention. It is the first of its kind in Bahrain and in line with the rules of the United Nations and international treaties related to prisons, correctional facilities and detention centers.

Her excellency is effectively active in communication with foreign embassies and diplomatic missions accredited in the Kingdom



of Bahrain, and with delegations visiting the Independent Ombudsman Office which includes ministers, officials and parliamentarians, and with international human rights organizations, as well as with foreign journalists and media professionals.

A member of the National Human Rights Committee, which is an official Bahraini committee, one of its tasks is to coordinate with government bodies in all matters related to human rights to develop a mechanism for coordination to ensure the achievement of the best policies in dealing with issues in relation to human rights, and to prepare responses to statements and questions issued by organizations, associations inside and outside the Kingdom related to human rights.

She has more than 20 years of experience providing comprehensive and skilled support to senior management in areas related to law, human rights, business and education.



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

OICOA CONDEMNS DESECRATION OF HOLY QURAN IN SWEDEN



Statement regarding the Burning of the Holy Quran in Sweden

Recently, we have been witnessing many ugly acts in the Western world that trigger Islamophobia and target Muslims.

The most recent example of this was the burning of the Holy Quran under the supervision of the police in front of the Stockholm Mosque in Sweden, by the Iraqi-born Salwan Momika, on the first day of Eid-al-Adha, one of the most important days of Muslims. We strongly condemn this attack on the beliefs of Muslims around the world. It is unacceptable that the Swedish authorities allowed this provocative demonstration in the name of freedom of expression.

The act of burning the Holy Quran can in no way be reconciled with human rights, or with freedom of expression and thought. Allowing this action is an attack on the beliefs of Muslims and fuels anti-Islamism, racism, xenophobia and violence. Everyone must respect each other's religion, beliefs, holy book, without discrimination.

We, the Ombudsmen, have a duty to defend human rights, justice, equality, tolerance, dialogue, non-discrimination. In this regard, we call on the Swedish government; not to let the perpetrators of such heinous acts, which include hate crimes that target Muslims and fuel anti-Islamism to remain unpunished; to take deterrent measures and take a clear stand in order to prevent the repetition of such illegal and inhumane attacks.

As the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association, we would like to state that we will follow up on this issue.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

OICOA MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN CONFERENCE ANKARA, TURKIYE

World Ombudsmen met at the International Conference on "The Future of Human Rights in the 21st Century" organized jointly by the Ombudsman Institution of Turkiye and the European Union.

Conference was held in Ankara, on 11-12 January 2023 and Ombudsmen from 40 different countries participated to discuss Empowerment & Role of the Ombudsman in the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights".

Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan Honorable Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah was among the distinguished galaxy of World Ombudsmen and was key note speaker on the role of Ombudsmen in the protection and promotion of Human Rights in the 21st Century.

The Powerful deliberation of Honorable FTO at the conference, enlightened the audience about the role of Federal Tax Ombudsman in the protection of the rights of Tax Payers in Pakistan. Honorable FTO was the only Ombudsman in the conference who ensures rights of Tax Payers and his [Read more](#).





HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER (OMBUDSMAN) OF AZERBAIJAN

OMBUDSMAN'S REGIONAL CENTERS HELD EDUCATIONAL EVENTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF "WORLD AUTISM MONTH"

On the initiative of the Ombudsman, within the framework of "World Autism Month", the Ombudsman's Western, North-West, Northern, and Southern Regional Centers organized legal awareness events on the topics of "Public Awareness of Autism" and "Benefits of Early Diagnosis".

In the educational events, the history, essence, and goal of April 2 - World Autism Day, as well as the onset of autism in early childhood, symptoms, causes, and neurological aspects of autism, were discussed.

For the further information see the link On 3 May, in Baku, a scientific-practical conference on the topic "The National Leader Heydar Aliyev and the Development of Human Rights in an Independent Azerbaijan", dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev, was organized by the Ombudsman's Office. [Read more.](#)





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER

GENERAL INSPECTION OFFICE (OMBUDSMAN) OF REPUBLIC OF IRAN

OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL INSPECTION ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

According to the article 174 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran: "in accordance with the right of the judiciary to supervise the proper conducting of affairs and correct implementation of law by the administrative organs of the government, an organization will be constituted under the supervision of the head of judiciary branch to be known as General Inspection Organization".

[*Read more.*](#)





OMBUDSMAN OF MOROCCO

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR CELEBRATING 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CREATION OF THE INSTITUTION OF MEDIATOR OF KINGDOM OF MOROCCO

Under the high patronage of His Majesty the King Mohammed VI, the Institution of the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco has organized, on the 28th February 2023 in the headquarters of the Academy of the Kingdom, an international conference dealing with the theme: "Ensuring the Development Dimension and Effectiveness of Human Rights in the Public Policies: What Roles for the Mediators & Ombudsman", on the occasion of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Institution.

This conference has witnessed a large participation of nearly 300 attendees. In addition to that, 46 participants representing 15 states showed, from continents such as: Africa, Europe, Asia and Australia, as well as representatives of bodies of mediation at the international [Read more](#).





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

OMBUDSMAN FOR THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

The general philosophy behind the notion of initiating the Independent Ombudsman Office in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the commencement in its actual work in July, 2013 is the philosophy of caring for human-beings, respecting their rights and strengthening their freedoms. It is an authentic national philosophy stemming from a wise vision built on the basis of the constant work on the development of an institutional structure that contributes to the advancement of respecting human rights, ensuring accountability, access to justice, and fairness within the criminal justice system, specifically in the field of law enforcement organizations.

The establishment of the Independent Ombudsman Office came as a part of a legislative, executive, and administrative measures undertaken by the Kingdom of Bahrain within its comprehensive democratic and development project. It represented a remarkable qualitative leap that raised the respect of values and principles of human rights in public work, and in several times, it was occasionally reached to the ranks of international normative values and principles. [Read more.](#)





PROVINCIAL OMBUDSMAN BALUCHISTAN

THE ROLE OF OMBUDSMAN IN SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC RIGHTS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Provincial Ombudsman of Balochistan, Nazar Muhammad Baloch, Advocate, addressed a one-day seminar titled "The Role of Ombudsman in Safeguarding Public Rights and Good Governance" held at the Governor House in Quetta. The special guests at the seminar included the President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, while other participants included Governor of Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Kakar, Federal Ombudsman Ijaz Qureshi, members of the assembly, former judges associated with the judiciary, lawyers, representatives of civil society organizations, students, and officers of the Ombudsman institution.

In his address at the seminar, President Arif Alvi said that the institutions of ombudsmen play vital role in bringing good governance and Provincial Ombudsman Baluchistan is redressing public grievances. On the occasion Wafaqi Mohtasab Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi and Ombudsperson Punjab also addressed the seminar. Nazar Muhammad Baloch, Advocate, explained the purpose of establishing the Ombudsman institution, stating that people in remote areas of Balochistan faced many difficulties in obtaining justice. Therefore, the establishment of the Ombudsman institution was brought into action, keeping these difficulties in mind, so that those who fear bias in official actions or encounter legal complexities and financial problems in legal proceedings can have immediate and free access to justice within their own districts. Nazar Muhammad Baloch, Advocate, stated that the Ombudsman institution was established under the Federal Legislative Item Number 13 of the Fourth Schedule of the Interim Constitution of 1972 and subsequently in 1973. He further said that the general public can present their complaints and ongoing problems to the Ombudsman institution in a simple and convenient manner without any expenses.





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER

FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN OF PAKISTAN

WAFAQI MOHTASIB TAKES COGNIZANCE OF NON-PAYMENT OF POST RETIREMENT DUES TO ISLAMABAD TEACHERS

Wafaqi Mohtasib Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has taken cognizance of the non-payment of post-retirement benefits to the retired teachers of the educational institutions operating under the Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad.

The plight of retired teachers was highlighted in a web report titled, 'Forgotten Heros; Islamabad's Retired Teachers Await Their Pending Dues' which appeared on 15th May, 2023. It was learnt that a large number of teachers who retired during the last two years remained deprived of their lawful post retirement entitlements due to acute shortage of funds. The pending amount totalled around Rs. 2.6 Billion.

Taking notice of this huge financial pendency and dire condition of the affectees, Wafaqi Mohtasib has directed the Finance Division to allocate necessary funds for the purpose in the upcoming budget. He has also instructed the Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad to disburse the same to the retired teachers without undue delay. [Read more.](#)





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

BANKING MOKHATAB OF PAKISTAN

BANKING MOHTASIB HOLDS FIRST EVER HEARINGS AT MIRPUR, AJ&K

With a view to facilitating the banking customers and resolving their grievances at their door steps, the Banking Mohtasib Pakistan (BMP) held hearings of complaints against commercial banks for the first time at Mirpur, AJK on 22nd May, 2023.

Although Banking Mohtasib Office has recently been inaugurated at Muzaffarabad (AJK), however, keeping in view the distance and off the route location, arrangements were made for the facilitation of the complainants from Mirpur and its adjoining areas to plead their claims at Mirpur. The complainants presented their arguments in support of their claims before the Banking Ombudsman, Mr. Muhammad Kamran Shehzad in presence of authorized officials of relevant banks. It may be added here that grievances of banking customers are heard and resolved by the Banking Mohtasib free of cost and there is no need to engage a legal counsel for pleading their cases.

The Banking Mohtasib Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Kamran Shehzad, held hearings continuously for three days w.e.f 29th to 31st May, 2023 at BMP, Regional Office, Multan.

The Complainants from Multan and its adjoining areas presented their arguments in support of their claims before the Banking Ombudsman in the presence of authorized officials of relevant banks. Certain cases were settled amicably with the consent of both the parties, whereas in other cases detailed findings of the Banking Mohtasib will be communicated to the concerned parties in due course.



Hearing at Mirpur



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER

FEDERAL INSURANCE OMBUDSMAN

PRESIDENT URGES INSURANCE COMPANIES TO EXPAND SERVICES IN HEALTH, AGRICULTURE SECTORS



President Dr. Arif Alvi urged insurance companies to expand their services in the health and agriculture sectors and leverage modern technologies to enhance outreach to the masses. Dr. Arif Alvi emphasized that the insurance sector's contribution to the national economy falls short of its potential compared to other countries in the region. He called upon all stakeholders to work diligently to establish a positive reputation among the public and raise awareness in order to achieve exponential growth. The president made these remarks while addressing a seminar titled "Role of Ombudsman in the Development of the Insurance Sector," organized by the Federal Insurance Ombudsman secretariat at Sindh Governor House. Dr. Arif Alvi acknowledged that the government provides social safety nets, public health services, and compensation in the event of natural calamities and accidents. He advised keeping channels open for public complaints and feedback, while also suggesting that building goodwill among the general public and increasing mass awareness would gradually change the perception of the insurance sector. Dr. Muhammad Khawar Jameel, the Federal Insurance Ombudsman, highlighted the performance and achievements of the FIO secretariat. He informed that the monetary relief provided to complainants had grown from Rs 410 million in 2019 to Rs 2.54 billion in 2022.





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER

FEDERAL TAX OMBUDSMAN

FEDERAL TAX OMBUDSMAN DETECTS SYSTEMIC LOOPHOLES IN WITHHOLDING TAX REGIME IN BANKING SECTOR

In house studies conducted by the FEDERAL TAX OMBUDSMAN Secretariat revealed systemic gaps and loopholes in the prevalent withholding tax monitoring and payment system particularly in the banking sector. The studies revealed that commercial banks in Pakistan normally avoid field audits of withholding taxes on one pretext or another on the grounds, that banks have developed centralized & credible software for tax withholding and that withholding audit will trespass into the privacy and confidentiality of their client's data.

In order to investigate the current withholding and payment system with a view to identifying systemic loopholes and leakages of tax at the stage of deduction and transmission to the treasury, [Read more](#).





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

PROVINCIAL OMBUDSMAN SINDH

HONORABLE OMBUDSMAN SINDH INVITED HONORABLE OMBUDSMAN OF LAZIO, ITALY MR. MARINO FARDELLI

On Special invitation of Mr. Ajaz Ali Khan, who is also the President of the National Coordination council of Italian Civic Ombudsman and Mr. Danilo Giurdanella, Consul General of Italy in Karachi visited the office of Provincial Ombudsman Secretariat in Karachi on 12th June, 2023. The honorable guest planted a sapling at Ombudsman office and was given a comprehensive briefing about the working of Provincial Ombudsman Secretariat by Mr. Ajaz Ali Khan.

The honorable guest called on the Governor Sindh, Mr. Kamran Khan Tessori as well as Chief Minister Sindh Mr. Murad Ali Shah. The Governor welcomed and greeted the honorable guests with great enthusiasm. The Provisional Ombudsman Sindh also presented the annual report 2022 to Chief Minister Sindh.

The distinguished guests also visited the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA), where the visiting dignitary Mr. Marino Fardelli spoke about advancing of global justice and human rights and had a brief question answer session with the audience. The honorable Ombudsman Sindh Mr. Ajaz Ali Khan also spoke about achievements of Sindh Ombudsman office on the occasion.

A scrumptious dinner was hosted by Provincial Ombudsman for the honorable guest and the Italian Consul General at the Sindh government officers club, which was an ideal way to cap off the hectic day of the visit.





OMBUDSPERSON PUNJAB FOR THE PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

THE OMBUDSPERSON PUNJAB MS. NABILA KHAN VISITED THE OMBUDSPERSON REGIONAL OFFICE IN RAWALPINDI

The Ombudsperson Punjab Ms. Nabila Khan visited the regional office in Rawalpindi while hearing property cases. The provision of women's rights is being ensured in every way. The Ombudsperson office exists to recover women's property while justice is provided to women.

In a bid to ensure effective grievance resolution and improved public services, Ombudsperson Punjab, Ms. Nabila, paid a visit to the Regional Office in Rawalpindi. The esteemed official engaged with staff members, listened to citizens' concerns, and underscored her commitment to upholding justice and accountability.

The visit aimed to strengthen the Ombudsperson's presence in Rawalpindi and ensure that citizens' grievances are promptly and effectively addressed. Ms. Nabila, accompanied by her team, met with regional officials and discussed various administrative and procedural matters to streamline the complaint resolution process.





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

OMBUDSPERSON BALUCHISTAN FOR THE PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

BALOCHISTAN OMBUDSPERSON BRINGS VITALITY THROUGH INITIATIVES FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Nothing destroys the peace, prosperity, and integrity of women in Balochistan the way harassment at work place does. Moreover, it has not only disturbed them mentally but has also hindered their development socially and politically. According to some reports, every department in Balochistan is currently under the malfunctioned palm of Harassment, and the main issues behind the [Read more](#).



Visit and a successful meeting with the ombudsman Ministry of Bahrain. They had a discussion on establishing a coordination and collaboration partnership between both country and recognising the importance of strong relationships among ombuds offices and on contribute to the promotion of justice and equity in between both countries.



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

OMBUDSPERSON KPK FOR THE PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

OMBUDSPERSON KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA IGNITES UNMATCHED PERFORMANCE

The Ombudsperson office, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been actively working towards resolving harassment and women's property rights-related issues and ensuring justice for those affected. Regarding harassment cases, the Ombudsperson office received a total of 137 registered cases. Out of these, 101 cases have been closed, showcasing the dedication of the office to provide timely resolutions. It's worth noting that 19 cases were referred to different departments, such as the Federal & Provincial Ombudsman, courts, Cyber Crime Wing/FIA, etc., demonstrating a collaborative approach to handling complex situations. Additionally, 02 cases are currently on hold, indicating that they require further attention and investigation. [Read more](#).



Oath ceremony of Hon'ble Ombudsperson at Governor House



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

OMBUDSMAN AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR

ACTIVITIES OF OMBUDSMAN OFFICE AJ&K

The Ombudsman AJK visited Central Jail Rarha Muzaffarabad on May 4th, 2023 and inquired about the difficulties/problems faced by prisoners. He also directed the Jail Administration to provide them with better treatment, facilities and food. Multiple issues were raised by prisoners for which the Ombudsman AJK directed the concerned authority to resolve them on priority basis.

Ombudsman AJK also made a surprise visit of Burhan Muzaffar Wani Chowk Muzaffarabad. He observed the incomplete construction of Burhan Muzaffar Wani Chowk which was the responsibility of PWD (Roads) and Muzaffarabad Development Authority (MDA). He expressed displeasure on incomplete work by agencies and instructed them to complete the same at their earliest.





PROVINCIAL OMBUDSMAN KPK

HON'BLE SYED JAMAL SHAH ATTENDED SEMINAR IN QUETTA

Provincial Accountant of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Syed Jamaluddin Shah, participated in a seminar held in Quetta titled "The Role of Provincial Accountant in Safeguarding Public Services and Improving Governance." During the seminar, President of Pakistan, Mr. Arif Alvi, expressed his thoughts and said that in the current circumstances, the Provincial Accountant is the only institution that provides the general public with the most affordable and immediate justice.

Mr. Shah, known for his dedication and commitment to public service, was honored to attend the seminar and share his insights on the crucial role of the Provincial Accountant in promoting good governance. In his speech, he emphasized the need for transparency, accountability, and efficiency in managing public funds. He highlighted the importance of eliminating corruption and ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to benefit the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The audience listened attentively as Mr. Shah elaborated on various initiatives undertaken by the Provincial Accountant's office to streamline financial processes and enhance public service delivery. He discussed the implementation of advanced technologies to digitalize financial records, which not only reduced paperwork but also minimized the chances of fraud and mismanagement.





UPCOMING EVENT

TRAINING SESSION

The upcoming training session will be held on August 01, 2023 under the title of Islamic Concept of Ombudsman ship. The training session will be conducted by renowned jurist, Dr. Fayaz Ahmed Ranjha

PROFILE OF MR. FAYAZ AHMED

Profile of Dr. Fayaz Ahmed Ranjha Dr. Fayaz Ahmed Ranjha did MBBS from King Edward Medical College, Lahore in 1977. He implemented Health Programs with Community Mobilization through religious leaders which have been adopted by World Health Organization (WHO). Since 1978, he has attained a vast experience of public health administration by serving in various capacities in both provincial as well as federation level. Besides his recent most appointments as Advisor Health, Wafaqi Mohtasib, Islamabad during 2016-2018. He had served as Director General Health, Government of Pakistan, Coordinator Special Initiatives, Health Department, Govt. of Punjab, EDO Health Lahore, Medical Superintendent, Mayo Hospital, Lahore, Medical Superintendent,

Rawalpindi General Hospital. He has also served as Director General, National Training Bureau, DG Pakistan Manpower Institute, DG National Talent Pool in Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Trainings, Govt. of Pakistan. Besides his exemplary services to public sector organizations, he had honor of launching 'First-ever Polio Day in the Country in 1992'. He has been one of seven members who studied Health Systems of Thailand & Iran and contributed unprecedented National Program of Public Healthcare and Family Planning by Lady Health Workers. He has capacity building for Mobilization not only health industry but also with all determinant quarters for Welfare of Humanity in distress.





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER

OICOA AT GLANCE:



President Turkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended International Ombudsman Conference Held in Ankara



Honorable FTO Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah called on Turkiye Ambassador in Pakistan to convey heartfelt condolences at the tragic loss of 15000 lives in earthquake



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER



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OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER



The Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah distributing relief goods and food packets for Syrian refugees in Konya, Turkiye.



Provincial Ombudsman KPK Hon'ble Syed Jamal Shah attended Seminar



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER



The Ombudsman Balochistan Ms. Noor Jahan Mengal visited Quetta Chamber of Commerce



One day training conducted by Honourable Ombudsman Baluchistan Miss Noor Jahan Mengal at Shaikh Zahid Hospital, Quetta



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER



The Ombudsperson Baluchistan Ms. Noor Jahan Mengal visited Quetta Chamber of Commerce



Awareness session at PITE conducted by Honourable Ombudsperson Baluchistan Miss Noor Jahan Mengal at PITE



One day training session at Bolan Medical College and Hospital, Quetta



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER



The Ombudsperson Punjab Ms. Nabil Khan meeting with Commissioner of Sargodha Mr. Ajmal Bhatti and other regional officers regarding the coordination and Implementation of the Possession of Women's Property.



Honourable Banking Mohtasib conducting hearing at Multan



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER



Oath ceremony of Hon'ble Ombudsperson at Governor House



Group photo of representatives of FPO members after first training session held on May 16, 2023



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER



Group photo of President Arif Alvi with Honourable FTO Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, DG FTO Mr. Khaldun Ul Haq, Legal Advisor FTO Mr. Almas Ali Jovindah, and Media Advisor FTO Mr. Nazim Saleem.



Glimpses of seminar arranged by Provincial Ombudsman Baluchistan



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1
NEWSLETTER





CONTINUATION OF INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN CONFERENCE

thoughts and experiences, inspired many to actively protect financial rights of people, being one of the fundamental rights in their respective countries.

Honorable FTO emphasized to further strengthen the effectiveness and independence of the Ombudsman institution and align it further with best practices worldwide.

Ombudsman of Turkiye Seref Malkoc made extraordinary arrangements to make this conference as a landmark event and to strengthen the Institution of Ombudsmen and to make its role more effective through cohesive efforts worldwide.

Opening Session of the Conference was presided by Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkiye, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Sentop.

Ombudsman of Turkiye Seref Malkoc, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Turkiye, Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Faruk Kaymakci, and UNHCR Representative in Turkiye Philippe Leclerc delivered speeches in the opening session.

Second Session was held in the Presidential Complex and Honorable President of Turkiye, Rajab Tayyip Erdogan was the Key Note Speaker, who emphasized, through his powerful speech, that a vibrant Ombudsman, along with a professional bureaucracy and an independent judiciary, is vital to every country.

President Erdogan personally greeted all the Ombudsmen and was delighted to meet Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah.

One of the most important event of the conference was meeting between Russian and Ukrainian Envoys.

Tatiana Moskalkova, Russia's Human Rights Ombudsman and her Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Lubinets made aggressive speeches, alleging each other's countries of hostilities.

However, the breakthrough came when with the efforts of Ombudsman of Turkiye Seref Malkoc, both the delegates met on the sidelines of conference and agreed on an exchange of 40 prisoners of war each.



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

Honorable Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, in his meeting with both Russian and Ukrainian Envoys emphasized this being important that the Ombudsmen of Ukraine and Russia, in the absence of diplomatic relations (between the two countries), take concrete actions to help suffering people. He also presented traditional Pakistani Shawls to both the delegates.

Along side the conference there were sight seeings of beautifully built Mosque and National Library in the Presidential Arena. A visit to National Assembly which was followed by the dinner hosted in the Assembly Dinning Hall, by the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkiye, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Sentop.

In the final session it was unanimously resolved that Ombudsman offices are key institutions in mature and effective democracies. They provide an essential instrument for citizens and businesses to protect their rights against unlawful actions of the state, and to ensure that human rights and the principles of good administration are respected, robust and effective Ombudsman offices should ensure that citizens have trust in their institutions, in their State.

Post Conference Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr Asif Mahmood Jah visited Konya and distributed relief goods as well as cash among 250 Syrian Refugee families as a continuing resolve to help them since 2018, on behalf of his NGO of Customs Healthcare Society.



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

CONTINUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER

Opening the conference, the Ombudsman said that as a result of the initiative, attention, and concern of the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev, as a part of ensuring the implementation of those documents, comprehensive measures were implemented to improve human rights protection mechanisms in our country.

On the occasion of the 100th birth anniversary of the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, and on the initiative of the Ombudsman, a city tour for two juveniles was organized. The Ombudsman had also lunch with the juveniles, where she talked about the honorable life path of the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev.

The Ombudsman took part in the execution of the pardon order signed by President Ilham Aliyev. Sabina Aliyeva presented the pardoned convicts, including juveniles and female inmates, with the release documents, congratulating them and their family members. The Commissioner for Human Rights, Sabina Aliyeva protested the illegal deprivation of liberty of Azerbaijani servicemen captured by Armenia.

In this regard, at the end of her protest, she invited the entire international community to apply strong influence and pressure on Armenia and to take actions in accordance with the norms and principles of international law in order to release our servicemen in captivity as soon as possible. The Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Sabina Aliyeva appealed regarding the next provocation of the Armenian armed forces. In the Appeal, the Ombudsman outlined about the further provocation of the Armenian armed forces units that fire intensively from different types of firearms the positions of our Army. In connection with the 100th anniversary of Heydar Aliyev, the architect of independent Azerbaijan and the National Leader of our people, the Ombudsman, Sabina Aliyeva, and the staff of the Office visited the grave of the Great Leader.





CONTINUATION OF GENERAL INSPECTION OFFICE (OMBUDSMAN)

The Islamic Parliament of Iran approved the establishment law of General Inspection Organization, 1981. Then, the law was amended in 1996 and 2008 respectively.

Article 174 of the Iranian Constitution proclaims that the GIO shall be established by law. This has been done through the Establishment Law of the General Inspection Organization (enacted in the Iranian year 1360 (1981), amended in 1375 (1996), 1387 (2008) and 1393 (2014); hereinafter: ELGIO). Its provisions are specified and elaborated upon in the Implementation Regulation on the Law Establishing the General Inspection Organization, 1388 (2009) (hereinafter: IRGIO), which was prepared by the GIO and approved by the Head of the Judiciary (see Art 14 ELGIO). Issues pertaining to the staff of the institution are addressed in the Administrative and Employment Regulations of the General Inspection Organization of 1363/02/31 (1984) (hereinafter: AER), which were defined by the judiciary and approved by the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Art 3 Establishment Law of GIO (ELGIO)). Under its legislation, the GIO is tasked with supervising the administration in the proper conducting of affairs and the correct implementation of laws.

The institution is a member of the IOI, AOA and OICOAOA. The Head of the GIO is appointed by the Head of the Judiciary for an indefinite tenure. Only judges with a certain judicial ranking (ten to eleven) may be appointed (Art 4 ELGIO). The ELGIO and IRGIO do not contain any provisions regarding incompatibilities or immunity. The salary received by the Head of the GIO is not determined by law. As part of the judiciary, the GIO is independent from the executive branch, but operates under the supervision of the Head of the Judiciary (Art 174 of the Constitution, Art 1 ELGIO). There is no provision protecting the Head of the GIO from being removed from office.

Currently, the governing body of the GIO has one president (the Head of the GIO), one vice-president and six deputies. The structure of the institution is recommended by the Head of the GIO and approved by the Head of the Judiciary (Art 71 IRGIO). The GIO operates through inspectors or inspectorate teams, which are appointed to individual cases by the Head of the GIO (Arts 5, 6 IRGIO). These inspectors either work permanently for the institution or are temporarily placed at the disposal of the institution for a certain period of time or matter. Employees of ministries or other governmental institutions may be temporarily transferred to the GIO following a request by the GIO and the consent of the relevant institution. For a permanent transfer, the consent of the competent ministry as well as the employees required. Inspectors must be judges or persons, whose judicial competence has been confirmed by the judicial authority of Iran, or certain other employees whose determination and moral as well as professional skills have been confirmed by the GIO (Art 3 ELGIO; Arts 1, 2, 4 AER).



CONTINUATION OF OMBUDSMAN OF MOROCCO

and regional levels, headed by the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOAOA) and the Association of Ombudsman and Francophone Mediators (AOMF). Moreover, institutions that have common goals and authorities in charge of Human Rights and integrity and fight against corruption within the Arab states and within the Council of Europe also took part in the meeting. In his speech, Mr. Mohamed BENALILOU has highlighted, that stands for a very special symbolic moment, which traced back a historical step of its existence and testifies its evolution phases marking, thus, an important turning point bonding its present to its future.

This shall be undertaken in Morocco, which is convinced of the protection of the rights and freedoms making of it an essential anteroom of a solid democratic structure. In addition he has added that this celebration is marked by several major reforms that Morocco undertook, and all it cumulated as achievements in the direction of supporting the pillars of good administration, declaring that the institution made fair and equitable access to public service, by the users from different social categories, a declared objective. The institution serves as: "VOICOAe of the VOICOAeless" for the sake of Justice of the users rights, ensuring their effectiveness. Mr. Mohamed BENALILOU has underlined that the Institution stands up in front of a vast horizon of Human Rights, is aware of the defense of the rights in the framework of the relationship between the administration and the users which is a collective responsibility. This point requires creativity in terms of analysis and collective intelligence. When producing solutions, and the common work and exchange of knowledge and best practices.

The program of this conference included three panels that were organized as round tables facilitated by Mediators and Ombudsman and personas who work in renowned fields of human rights and academia. These sessions aimed at reinforcing the debate in terms of rights between Mediators and Ombudsman belonging to different judicial systems. Actors and university researchers were also involved in order to unveil common work fields to accompany different upgrades witnessed by institutional mediation. The diverse perspectives allow the achievement of its ultimate mission relying on the service of the Human societies and the contributions Mediators and Ombudsman deriving from their interventions, that guide public administration leading to an incubator administration. All that for the sake of the effort of sustainable development. In the light of the actual changes and transformations stemming sound distortions that the world witnesses, the conference sessions were the occasion to discuss the U.N. Resolution n° 75/186 upon: "The role of the Ombudsman, mediator and other national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of human rights" relying on the lens of an evolving referential of institutional mediation of its general dimensions.



CONTINUATION OF OMBUDSMAN FOR THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

Therefore, the Independent Ombudsman Office intended since the early days to set the fundamentals and rules of its work, to benefit from the top international practices in the field of ombudsman offices worldwide. Prior to its inauguration, the Independent Ombudsman Office launched an organized and systematic program to learn directly from prominent international institutions that are similar in terms of specialization.

The governance of the Independent Ombudsman Office was not solely achieved as the first office of its kind specialized in the consideration of complaints and assistance requests regarding the Ministry of Interior's employees, it was also achieved in terms of the speed of its completion since the decree of its establishment was issued in February, 2012 in a record time compared to several Ombudsman Offices worldwide. In addition, such governance was achieved through the content of the work mechanisms followed therein and its compatibility with all relevant national laws, as well as its compliance with international standards related to monitoring law enforcement bodies, and also related to monitoring reformation, rehabilitation, and pretrial detention centers, and so on.

It is also worth mentioning that the role of the Independent Ombudsman Office was a part of a sequence of legislative amendments that took place in May, 2013 that strengthened its ability to carry out its duties which contributed in a more functional legal authority, making it the first independent executive body to have the authority to visit reformation, rehabilitation, and pretrial detention centers. The first visit of its kind was made in September, 2013, only two months after its inauguration to the Men Reformation and Rehabilitation Center in the area of Jau, and thereafter issued a detailed report on this visit. In the same month, the Independent Ombudsman Office also issued the first guide on the principles, standards, and indicators of visiting reform, rehabilitation, and pretrial detention centers which are in line with the rules of the United Nations and international standards in this field.

In conclusion, I assure you that the Independent Ombudsman Office in the Kingdom of Bahrain is one of the leading self-governing bodies that serve human rights issues. However, it does not solely carry out its main and original jurisdiction which is to examine complaints and assistance requests received, its role in visiting reform, rehabilitation, pretrial detention centers, it also contributes in cooperating and coordinating with relevant authorities to develop recommendations that promote respecting human rights.



CONTINUATION OF FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN OF PAKISTAN

In another development, Wafaqi Mohtasib holds meeting with his Tatarstan counterpart to discuss upcoming meetings of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA). Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) prepares for its annual moot under Pakistan's Chair in Republic of Tatarstan. Pakistan assures full support to the annual moot of the Asian ombudsman fraternity in Republic of Tatarstan.

Wafaqi Mohtasib Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi who is also the current President of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), today held a video meeting with his counterpart Ms. Sariya Saburskaya, Commissioner for Human Rights, Republic of Tatarstan to discuss matters pertaining to the forthcoming annual moot of the Asian Ombudsman fraternity. The upcoming meetings of the Board of Directors and the General Assembly of the Association are being hosted by the Republic of Tatarstan in September this year. In addition to the election to various positions in the Association, the General Assembly will consider steps for strengthening mutual cooperation, promoting professionalism and exchange of best practices among its member institutions.

The Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) is a major non-political, independent, democratic and professional body of international character representing more than two thirds of the world population. Its Board of Directors meets once every year and the General Assembly meetings are held within two calendar years. The last meeting of the AOA Board of Directors was held at Baku (Republic of Azerbaijan) in October 2022 whereas the General Assembly meeting took place in Istanbul (Republic of Turkiye) in 2019. The General Assembly meeting is being held after a gap of three years due to COVID-19 pandemic. Pakistan has played a vital role in promoting ombudsmanship at the national as well as international levels.

Wafaqi Mohtasib (Pakistan) is member of International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) and the OICOA Ombudsman Association (OICOAOA). Established in 1996 at Islamabad, the AOA with 44 members from the Asian region is the second largest professional body of ombudsman fraternity, with its permanent Secretariat at Islamabad. The upcoming meetings of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) will be followed by an international conference in 'Kazan' city, which will discuss best practices of ombudsmanship and national perspectives. The AOA meetings will deliberate on measures to promote international cooperation in achieving the ultimate goals of good governance, rule of law and expeditious relief to the aggrieved citizens. In this regard, Wafaqi Mohtasib Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi assured the Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Sariya Saburskaya of his full support and cooperation for the success of the major meetings of the Asian Ombudsman fraternity and the international conference due at Kazan (Tatarstan) in September this year.



CONTINUATION OF FEDERAL TAX OMBUDSMAN

and to making recommendations for the purposes of developing an automated and integrated withholding tax deduction and payment monitoring system, an investigation was initiated as Own Motion in exercise of jurisdiction conferred under Section 9(1) of the Federal Tax Ombudsman Ordinance, 2000 (FTO Ordinance). While conveying the reasons for conducting 'Own Motion' investigation, the FBR was asked to share data of action completed on account of default of withholding taxes and to also share current withholding strategies for monitoring of withholding of taxes and credit of such payments to the government along with future plans for reforming withholding tax deduction and payment system.

FBR reported to FTO the current strategy for monitoring of withholding taxes in the banking sector. They stated that field formations have conducted random system audits of the banks falling under their jurisdiction from time to time by visiting the head offices and branches of these banks. However, data shared with this office during investigation did not support stance of FBR. It is observed that total demand created shared by FBR from LTO Karachi is Rs. 38,149/- million as a result of initiatives made u/s 122(5A) and 161. Out of the said demand, Rs. 794/- million is attributed to proceedings u/s 161 which constitutes 2.08% of the total demand created. When demand of Rs. 127/- million created u/s 151, 153 and 155 is taken into account, the percentage of demand created attributable to withholding tax further falls down to mere 0.33%. Such low percentage of default indicates that the attention given to monitoring of withholding tax is way low as compared to focus on invoking section 122(5A).

Analysis of data further revealed that in case of a bank, default demand was created to the tune of Rs. 667/- million for two tax years on account of non-deduction of tax u/s 154. The quantum of tax demand created showed that deduction u/s 154 is high risk area which should have been focused for effective monitoring or audit not only of the bank involved but also other banks and exchange companies involved in deduction of tax u/s 154 (exports). However, no such exercise was undertaken by FBR or their field formations despite huge default u/s 154. This substantial default indicates that internal controls of banks as well as the monitoring control of the regulator (FBR) are weaker which are required to be upgraded to bridge gaps in enforcement mechanism of withholding tax regime under section 154 in particular and for other sections in general.

Banks are required to make deductions of tax on various heads of payments which mainly include section 151 on account of profit on debt, 152 (1C), (1D), (1DA), (IDD) on account of payment to non-resident, collection of tax under section 231A and 231AA. Deduction of tax under all these subsections are required different rates of tax which range from 10% to 15%. There is variation in applicable rate of tax for section 151 which now carries rate of 15% whereas in the past it also carried rate of 10%. Besides, there is variation in applicable rate under section 231A which saw frequent changes from rate



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

of 0.3% to 0.6% and at times had different rates for filers and non-filers.

The investigation further revealed weaker areas where transactions could be manipulated. Evasion can majorly be done by either applying ATL rates to non-active taxpayers, not deducting withholding tax at all while crediting profit on debt or, deducting tax on profit on debt but not crediting in the Withholding Tax account instead crediting in any other account. It was therefore necessary to conduct system audit to see if the various rates of deduction have been inserted by banks into their software. The data provided by the FBR shows that no such system audit has been conducted by the field formations and even number of audits of statements conducted by field formations is negligible.

In addition, the facts shared during investigation show that there is substantial time runover and the pilot projects conceived could not be initiated even after lapse of over 6 months. This changing of goal posts and time targets created serious hurdles in the way of implementation of different projects and, in consequence, revenue continued to suffer leakages and shortfalls. The department should have taken notice of these serious lapses and ensure that projects to ensure various phases of implementation thereof are completed within prescribed time frame so that the improved withholding tax monitoring system could be put in place in the shortest possible time to safeguard rights of all stakeholders.

Analysis of new initiatives on SWAPS and Business Process Re-engineering revealed that systemic gaps and loopholes exist in the prevalent withholding tax monitoring and payment mechanism and that integrated, automated response is required to bridge these gaps through strengthening legal and enforcement mechanisms and inducting digital modes and portals in processes and systems for real-time feedback and responses to all the stakeholders particularly the regulator for timely remedial and corrective action.

The FTO recommended that SWAPS and their components including Functional Specific Documents (FSD) and consequential software solution be completed within specific timeframe to avoid time and cost runovers. It was further recommended that Business Process Re-engineering and linkages with IRIS, ATL and PSID should be fully integrated from end-to-end without human interface so as to avoid any tampering with and manipulation of data. Further, Data Analysis Cells should be established at Board as well as at field formations to analyze and convert voluminous data received from banks into actionable information and for retrieval of loss of revenue. Correspondingly capacity of field formations for systemic audit of WHT software be enhanced in terms of HR and technical expertise. It was further recommended that Audit of banks WHT software and system audit should be regularly conducted to check compliance with the WHT provisions.

The FTO directed that the FBR should share progress with their Secretariat in respect of recommendation on quarterly basis.



CONTINUATION OF OMBUDSPERSON BALUCHISTAN FOR THE PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

evil include the lack of education, the violation of law, and the ongoing poverty in Balochistan. Impacting the women community drastically, it has caused negative organizational culture, along with impaired career advancement, and loss of innovation and creativity. However, despite such an alarming situation, no department other than Ombudsperson Balochistan has taken such measures, like the conduction of awareness sessions, multiple training programs in different institutions with the help of several NGOs, and the publication of different awareness messages in multiple newspapers, magazines, and other social media platforms. Apart from that, Balochistan being the largest province of Pakistan, an inquiry committee has been constituted in every department of Balochistan to report and resolve the issues of harassment down trodden women at their doorsteps. In a few words, it can easily be proclaimed that the Ombudsperson Balochistan has proved very helpful to counter the issue of Harassment at work place.

The efforts carried out by the honorable Ombudsperson Balochistan Madam Noor Jahan Mengal during the last month include visits to the Provincial Institute of Teachers Education (PITE), Shaikh Zaid Hospital, and the district Jail Quetta, where the females were encouraged to raise vOICOAe against harassment with the nomination of certain acts against the harassers. However, a meeting was held with the Honorable Governor Balochistan and Ombudswomen Bahrain sharing experience and ongoing challenges to properly counter and strengthen the role of Ombudsperson Balochistan.

In short, the main agenda of the forum of the Ombudsperson Balochistan is to safeguard the women and provide a peaceful and harassment free environment all over Balochistan.





OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

CONTINUATION OF OMBUDSPERSON KPK FOR THE PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

Moving on to property-related cases, the Ombudsperson office received a substantial number of 1258 registered cases. Within this category, 354 cases have been decided and successfully closed by the office. It's commendable that the office was able to resolve these matters efficiently, considering the complexities involved. Moreover, 16 complainants requested for withdrawal, 05 cases were closed due to non-pursuance, and 16 cases were resolved through reconciliation between the parties involved, reflecting the office's commitment to alternative dispute resolution methods.

The Ombudsperson office also referred 66 property cases to court under Section 6 of the Act, emphasizing their dedication to ensuring legal recourse when necessary. Furthermore, 05 cases were referred to other departments, highlighting the collaborative efforts undertaken by the office to ensure comprehensive resolutions. Additionally, 16 cases are currently adjourned sine die, indicating that these cases require further examination before proceeding.

The office's commitment to upholding justice is further evident in the fact that judgments in 25 cases were challenged in the High Court. Out of these cases, 12 were decided in favor of the Ombudsperson office, while 13 cases are still pending, awaiting final resolution. While significant progress has been made, there are still ongoing cases that require the office's attention. Currently, 36 harassment cases and 904 property-related cases are still in progress, indicating the continuous efforts of the Ombudsperson office to ensure that justice is served to all parties involved.

Overall, the Ombudsperson office's latest update showcases its dedication to addressing harassment and property-related issues. By actively closing cases, referring matters to other departments when appropriate, and engaging in alternative dispute resolution methods, the office remains committed to upholding justice and providing timely resolutions.



Judicial writing training of KP and Punjab Ombudsperson along with staff



OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

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OICOA

Ombudsmen Association

JULY-2023, Issue # 1

NEWSLETTER

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