



# Centre for Social Justice

## Human Rights Observer

A news service for rights based work - Website: [www.csjpak.org](http://www.csjpak.org)

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### Participating in Human Rights Protection

Dear readers,

In the last couple of months, the country has seen encouraging developments in building human rights institutions (HRIs). Though for this newssheet, we limit our coverage to Punjab and Human Rights Institutions at Federal level. The progress so far, raises the prospects about the protection of human rights and simultaneously demands that civil society incorporate new dimension in their work.

The second volume of Human Rights Observer brings some conversation about the HRIs in the media. We hope that it issue will add to your information and facilitate your work. Please feel free to disseminate this dispatch further, or alternately suggest us people / organizations who you think should be on our mailing list.

Your feedback is welcome, rather anxiously awaited.

HRO Editorial team

### Developments in Brief

The member of National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), Ms Kishwar Shaheen Awan spoke at the training on March 18, 2016 organized by CSJ. She briefed that NCHR has made progress on complaint mechanism in last six months. The commission had:

- Resolved 52 complaints out of 155.
- Prepared the complaint submission rules.
- Had the approved posts 170 staff from the Government for its offices in Pakistan.

During CSJ training on March 19, 2016, the member Punjab Information Commission, Mr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ali shared the following updates about work of PIC, from the inception in 2013 to March 2, 2016.

- 1000 complaints were resolved, out of 1800 received, rest in progress.
- 454 public information officers were trained in RTI.
- A website was maintained, twitter and facebook pages developed.

The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women shared the following progress on their website (From its inception in February 2014 till 25 March, 2016):

- 21,604 inquiry calls (Incoming), and
- 30,1808 awareness calls (Outgoing)



Kishwar Shaheen Awan Member NCHR



Mukhtar Ahmad Ali - Information Commissioner

PCSW shared the following complaint status on the request of CSJ; August 21, 2014 – March 29, 2016

Complaint Status	Count
Closed	126
In Progress	111
Resolved	56
Un-Resolved	23
Grand Total	316

## Federal & Punjab Ombudspersons:

- As of January 2016, the Federal Ombudsman's Secretariat against Harassment received 339 complaints out of which 332 were resolved.
- Online submission and follow-up of complaints against the maladministration in government departments. Federal office also receives online complaints from overseas Pakistanis.
- Complaints should be filed within 3 months after the incident. The resolve/ remedy can take between 3 to 6 months. (website information)

## HRIs in News

### 1. National Commission for Human Rights

- The NCHR sent a communication to the Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony inquiring about government's policy for the interfaith harmony. The Ministry responded and had a meeting with NCHR.

Even though the process is inconclusive yet, this step, the first of its kind, where NHRIs sought information about government's policy. Therefore it brings a unique opportunity for an independent and public interaction with the government policies.

The people in the knowledge are also aware that a "policy for interfaith relations or national harmony" is yet to be finalized therefore the initiative on part of the NCHR might help raising participation and quality of policy as well as the level of institutional effectiveness. Such interventions with other ministries are also conceivable.

- The Federal Ministry for Law, Justice and Human Rights announced a human rights action plan, the NCHR is expecting to benefit from the plan as it is received by the commission. (<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/101108-Human-rights-action-plan-launched>)
- NCHR received 100 million PKR funding from the government. It will soon establish a separate office at Islamabad and provincial offices.
- NCHR has finalized rules for submitting and entertaining complaints (NCHR complaint rules 2015). A copy can be sought on request from NCHR or CSJ.
- NCHR will be recruiting staff for its offices and finalizing the service rules for the recently approved 170 posts.

Lawyer, Reema Omer raised some questions regarding NCHR's functioning and the mandate in her article 'A toothless commission'. Published in Dawn on March 1, 2016. For full read: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1242806>



Ali Nawaz Chowhan Chairperson NCHR



## 2. The Punjab Information Commission

The Right to Information mechanism received attention of the users who sought information and submitted complaints, usually about health and education sector.

- PIC drafted the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Rules, which were notified by the government.
- PIC also notified guidelines for public information officers and transparency standards for the prisons department.
- PIC shall appoint 43 persons, once the service rules are approved by the Punjab government.

### Important cases with PIC

- After a controversy of interpretation of statutes and mandate, the Governor House, Chief Minister Secretariat, Punjab Assembly, Judicial Academy, Provincial Secretaries, Commissioners, Universities, the Bank of Punjab and DCOs have disclosed information to the respective complainants on the direction of PIC.
- EDO Health Sialkot tendered an apology to the PIC for not disclosing information on the request by Gulbaz Ali Khan of Lahore. Click on the link for details: <http://e-jang.com.pk/03-09-2016/lahore/pic.asp?picname=137.gif>

Mr. Khalid Khattak, exercised the Right to Information himself and used the data in his article, which cites that '2000 schools in Punjab are without heads'. the News International on March 29, 2016. You can read details here; <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/108665-2000-high-schools-without-heads>

Muhammad Anwar, presented an interesting comparison between the Information Commissions of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab in his article 'Proactive disclosure of information' published in the express tribune on March 30, 2016. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1075990/proactive-disclosure-of-information/>

## 3. Punjab Commission on the Status of Women

- PCSW published links of non-governmental and governmental organizations (on its website) working for women rights and social justice in Pakistan.
  - PCSW uploaded information about the financial, educational and social support services available for women in Punjab, including the phone numbers of important help lines.
  - PCSW is advocating for the implementation of the recent legislation on the protection of women against violence.
- PCSW invites the information of the civil society organizations working for women's rights and social justice for publishing on Commission's website: [info@pcsw.punjab.gov.pk](mailto:info@pcsw.punjab.gov.pk).

## 4. Federal Ombudsman's Secretariat against Harassment

- Out of total 339 (received) complaints only 10 to 12 were assessed to be mala fide. Complaints were received from universities, hospitals as well as offices.
- Offers facility to check complaints' status via cell phone, through sending your CNIC number to 8999.
- The first department in Pakistan, which has started skype service for complaint handling and so far heard two cases, over the Skype.

Shahzad Irfan Ahmad in his article in The News International provides important information on the work of Federal ombudsman secretariat; <http://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/money-matters/103299-A-welcome-step%E2%80%8B>



Mazhar Hussain Minhas Chief Information Commissioner



Farkhanda Wasim Afzal Ombudsperson for Women Punjab



Fauzia Viqar - Chairperson PCSW



Yasmin Abbasey Federal Ombudsperson for Women