Democratic development
Political participation

... the state shall exercise its powers and authority through the chosen representatives of the people ...

Constitution of Pakistan
Preamble

... the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed ...

Preamble

... fundamental rights [shall be guaranteed] subject to law and public morality ...

Preamble

The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of elected representatives of the areas concerned and within such institutions special representation will be given to peasants, workers and women.

Article 32

... it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law ...

Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Preamble

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 1

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (2) Everyone has the right
of equal access to public service in his country. (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights**  
**Article 21**

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: 1. To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; 2. to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; 3. To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

**International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**  
**Article 25**

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:  

a. to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;  
b. to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;  
c. to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**  
**Article 7**

**Political participation as a human right**

The right to participate in one’s political system is fundamental; political participation not only gives citizens a voice in the functioning of their government but also provides support to minority and underrepresented people, including women, and may prevent violent political transitions.

Political participation involves much more than just voting. It encompasses the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate and the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs. Political participation includes other rights such as the freedom of expression, assembly and association, all of which are prerequisites for democracy to function.

In addition to ensuring that the right to political participation is not impeded by State action, human rights law encourages States to also take measures to overcome difficulties, such as illiteracy, poverty, and violence, that may hinder
political participation and prevent individuals and groups from exercising their rights effectively.

Human rights standards also emphasize that men and women have an equal right to participate fully in all aspects of political life.

Overview

In many ways, 2014 redefined political participation in Pakistan. Ostensibly exercising their right to political participation, the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party held rallies and sit-ins across Pakistan to protest what it called widespread and systematic rigging of the 2013 elections, joined in part by the Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), who promised a revolution by overthrowing the system. The manner the protests were carried out, as well as the government’s action—and at times inaction—highlighted the need to rethink the balance between the right to peaceful participation in political affairs and the State’s obligation to maintain law and order.

Anti-government protests

The 2013 general election, which brought the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz to power at the Centre, continued to be a source of controversy. While most national and international observers judged the elections considerably fairer than the previous ones, the PTI said widespread and systematic rigging plagued them, and accused the PML-N, the then Chief Justice of Pakistan,
Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, the Election Commission, the caretaker setup in Punjab and a powerful media house of ‘colluding to steal the people’s mandate’.

The PTI gave the PML-N a deadline of August 14, 2014, Pakistan’s Independence Day, to carry out an audit of votes in four constituencies and insisted that a Supreme Court commission lead the inquiry. In response to the government inaction, the PTI headed by Imran Khan, as well as Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri’s Pakistan Awami Tehreek, having no seat in the parliament but its own agenda to bring about a revolution, started a wave of protests, rallies and sit-ins that captivated and paralyzed the country for more than four months. Qadri’s supporters’ clashes with police on June 17 had left at least 11 people dead, including one police officer, and hundreds injured during resistance to the police plan for removing barriers outside Qadri’s house and the party’s secretariat in Lahore’s Model Town area. With the incident providing the anti-government protests a spur, on August 14 thousands of people marched from Lahore to Islamabad and eventually camped there.

**Call for civil disobedience**

Soon after the commencement of the sit-in, PTI announced a countrywide call for civil disobedience to pressurise Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif into resigning. Imran Khan urged his supporters to stop paying taxes and utility bills to paralyze what he called an illegitimate government.

**Storming of the Constitution Avenue**

On August 20, the PTI and PAT moved their protests into Islamabad’s “Red Zone” and gathered outside the Parliament House. To avoid further clashes after the Model Town incident, the government remained passive, and despite heavy deployment of police as well as the armed forces in the Red Zone, the protestors were allowed to stage their sit-ins. On their part, both parties agreed not to enter any high-security building in the Red Zone.

On August 31, however, both parties went back on their word as the protestors tried to storm the Parliament House and the Prime Minister’s residence. At least three people were killed and hundreds others injured and as the police clashed with protestors, many of whom were armed with batons and other small weapons. The next morning, clashes once again erupted as some protestors entered the Pakistan Television headquarters, resulting in PTV transmission being temporarily cut off.

**Shutdowns**

Following its sit-in in the capital and the call for civil disobedience, PTI threatened a countrywide shutdown on December 16 (later changed to December 18) preceded by a periodic shutdown of major cities if its demand
for an independent audit of the May 2013 elections was not accepted.

Detention, arrests and use of force

The government responded to the protests in curious ways. Much of Lahore was sealed with containers to prevent protestors from marching to Islamabad on August 14, followed by much of Islamabad being blocked with containers to prevent more protestors from joining the sit-ins. This was coupled with a wave of preventive detention of dozens of PAT and PTI workers.

After the storming of Parliament, the government’s misdirected response took new turns. On many occasions, First Information Reports (FIRs) or police complaints were registered against PTI and PAT members, including the leaders of both parties, under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), 1997. Some protestors were also arrested before being released on bail.

Finally, the government relied on the police force to manage the increasingly agitated crowds, despite ample warning signs—including the loss of life in the Model Town incident—that the Punjab police was not trained in the essential skill of peaceful crowd-control. On 8 December, for example, during PTI’s “shutdown” of Faisalabad, a PTI worker was killed during a clash with supporters of PML-N. On many occasions, in addition to unarmed protestors, police also attacked journalists and reporters.

PAT announced an end to its sit-in on October 21 in favour of countrywide protests. Imran Khan called off the campaign on December 17 following the massacre of nearly 150 people including 132 students by the Taliban at a school in the northwestern city of Peshawar. His announcement came a day ahead of his party’s planned country-wide shutdown intended to force the prime minister into resigning.

The contours of the right to political participation

The second half of 2014 saw active political participation in the form of protests, rallies, sit-ins, social media campaigns, civil disobedience, and finally, countrywide shutdowns. Analysts, regardless of political affiliations, commended the inclusion of women and young people in political activities. A class that previously thought of politics as “dirty” business became a part of politics—albeit on its own terms. Many of their demands embrace the core of a healthy democracy: electoral reforms, an independent and prompt investigation into allegations of rigging, and accountability for loss of life perpetrated by agents of the State. In a vibrant and healthy democracy, such political participation keeps the government of the day accountable to the electorate during its term, as opposed to merely on an election day.

However, the year’s events also illustrated the need for responsible political participation, without which the hard-won right to political association and
protest, at least in the Punjab, could lose legitimacy. Law enforcement agencies must be brought to account for their excesses and trained to control peaceful crowds without resorting to lethal force. However, to what extent can protestors who carry batons and other weapons be called peaceful? When thousands of protestors attempt to storm the country’s parliament with the intention of overthrowing the government, where does one draw the line between peaceful protests and acts of terrorism? While the State’s obligations to protect the rights of peaceful assembly, association and political participation must be stressed unconditionally, what about the ensuing duties of the protestors and their leaders to stay peaceful, ensure they refrain from inciting hatred and violence, and keep their demands within the parameters of the constitution?

How the Pakistani State strikes a balance between the right to political participation and the duty to ensure peace, law and order would have far-reaching consequences on mainstream politics in the country.

Marginalized groups and political participation

While the PTI and PAT expanded the right to political participation in Punjab’s political arena in 2014, the year saw the space for marginalized groups in politics shrink even further. With media and public attention focused on PAT and PTI for much of the year, the shrinking of the space for these marginalized groups was mostly ignored.

In October 2014, HRCP’s coordinator in Gilgit-Baltistan, Israruddin Israr, and 10 others were charged with sedition for declaring the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), 1997, a “black law” and holding a protest against the conviction and sentencing of a political rights campaigner, Baba Jan. Following a 2010 landslide in Gilgit-Baltistan, which destroyed scores of villages and left over a thousand people displaced, Baba Jan mobilized local communities to demand compensation for their displacement. The protests turned violent in August 2011 when clashes between the police and protestors resulted in two protestors being killed and public property being damaged. Baba Jan and eleven other activists from Gilgit-Baltistan were arrested and charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, and in September 2014, they were all convicted and given life sentences by an anti-terrorism court.

On March 18, the chairperson of Baloch Student Organization-Azad (BSO-Azad), Zahid Baloch, was abducted at gunpoint in Quetta, according to eyewitnesses, by members of the Frontier Corps. His fate and whereabouts still remain unknown. Baloch, like dozens of other activists who have been allegedly subjected to enforced disappearance by agents of the State, was also exercising his right to political participation by demanding justice and equal treatment for the marginalized Baloch community.

Similarly, the year also saw the “kill and dump” policy, previously used
against Baloch activists, extended to Sindhi nationalists. HRCP documented a
number of cases where men associated with Sindhi nationalist groups were
abducted, allegedly by security personnel, with their bodies later found in
different parts of Sindh and Balochistan. Similarly, reports of illegal detentions
and torture of many activists, particularly those who identified themselves as
Baloch nationalists or were close to Baloch separatist groups, also became
rampant. Several bodies of Baloch young men were found dumped in Karachi.
Legitimate political participation by Baloch and Sindhi nationalists was severely
curtailed leading to increased disillusionment with the state.

The protests by these groups, active in the margins of Pakistan that are
less open to media scrutiny as opposed to the Punjab, were declared as
treasonous and anti-Pakistan, giving State agencies a free hand to deal with
them the way they pleased. This can be contrasted with PTI’s at times violent
and manifestly unlawful attempts at coercing an elected prime minister to
resign and PAT’s rather extravagant demand of toppling the system, lauded as
heroic efforts by the media, and evoking sympathy, if not backing, by the
establishment. The double standards must be considered when assessing the
changing contours of political participation in the country.

Women

2014 was a very interesting year for women’s political participation. On
the one hand, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Awami Tehreek
(PAT) protests, rallies and sit-ins were celebrated as allowing unprecedented
participation of women in political movements, a development that was mocked
at as immoral by some reactionary and retrogressive forces in the country. On
the other hand, there were allegations that women were being used as protective
shields, and that women’s participation was reduced to attending protests and
sit-ins rather than being given any meaningful say in decision-making.

Hundreds, if not thousands of women came out on the streets to participate
in the rallies of both the PTI and PAT. Like their male counterparts, they too
were seen listening, cheering, and marching as well as dancing to the music
played during the rallies. Very disturbingly, the sight of women at public
gatherings brought out the deep-rooted misogyny in Pakistani society. The
media flashed pictures of young women for much too long; religious and
conservative parties condemned women’s presence at the rallies as immoral;
and detractors of PAT and PTI derogatively referred to the rallies as social
events where men go only to ogle at women, reducing women to mere
showpieces. All these reactions highlight the hurdles to women’s full political
participation.

The PTI and PAT leadership touted the numbers of women attending their
rallies as a revolutionary change, bringing men and women one step closer to
equal political participation. However, the stark difference in numbers of women on the stage and in the crowds in both PAT and PTI gatherings dispels the myth of equality. While it is certainly a positive development to see women attend political rallies, their contributions have to be more than cosmetic to establish that protests are radically changing women’s role in politics. To have any long-term impact, women’s political participation has to be empowering, allowing women’s voices to be heard rather than being lost in chants of hero-worship. Unfortunately, there was little evidence of any such change in women’s political empowerment in 2014.

In May 2014, Search for Common Ground Pakistan launched a report titled “Strengthening Women’s Political Participation and Leadership for Effective Democratic Governance in Pakistan: A Baseline Research Study”. The study identifies strengths and challenges related to the role of women parliamentarians in the democratic politics and governance of Pakistan.

The study found that women parliamentarians were competent and possessed an adequate level of knowledge for making legislation, but they were a less popular choice of political leaders as well as the voters as compared to their male counterparts largely due to deep-rooted gender inequality and bias. The report found that most women were allowed to run for elections because they were from a political family. The study recommended assigning leadership roles to women leaders within political parties, allocating increased seats to women on general seats, and electoral and legislative reforms to provide level playing field to women as essential steps to realising the rights of women to full political participation.

At a conference on “Increasing Women’s Technical Capacity to Participate in the Political Process” organized by the Forum of Federations, an international governance organization, participants highlighted many barriers impeding women participating in politics. These included ideological barriers, based on a general mindset that the “rightful” place for women was not in politics; social and cultural barriers, which included women’s disproportionate burden in work and domestic sphere; economic barriers, which included poverty contributing to exclusion of women; and political barriers, which included economic and social criteria for political candidacy, the level of availability which political activity demands as well as the stigma that politics is “dirty”. An increased ability and capacity, and equal opportunities for women to run for elections were recommended for better political participation of women.

According to a Free and Fair Election Network report issued on International Women’s Day, women legislators performed impressively during the nine sessions of Parliament in the first parliamentary year.

Female parliamentarians played an active role in the lawmaking process by submitting 12 private member bills, six singly and six jointly with other
Political participation parliamentarians. These bills focused on governance, human rights, democracy and political development. Women parliamentarians singly submitted 20 resolutions, 14 call attention notices, 1,383 questions, 22 motions under rule 259 and raised 64 points of order during the period.


The report seeks to measure the gap between women and men across health, education, economy and politics. According to its findings, Pakistan’s performance was assessed to be the best out of the four areas in political empowerment. Pakistan ranked 141st in terms of economic participation and opportunity for women, 132nd in terms of education attainment, 119th for health and survival and 85th for political empowerment.

Youth

Pakistan is home to one of the largest youth populations in the world. Out of a population of 180 million, 59% are below the age of 24 and 67% are under 30.

According to various surveys held in the last few years, young people saw little point in being politically active because they perceived the political system as being inherently corrupt and felt that Pakistan’s power structures prevented participation by those who came from outside the nepotistic and closed system.

Since most of the Pakistani young people of voting age were born in the 1980s or later, in an era when student politics was banned by military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq and a state-sponsored campaign maligned public institutions as corrupt and incompetent, they remained deprived of experiencing student politics and understanding the link between students and national politics.

Political parties too failed to encourage the youth to fully participate in politics and their policies, such as the Punjab government’s laptop scheme, had been hollow, aimed at co-opting the youth rather than empowering it politically.

The PTI emerged as the one party that went beyond cooption and sloganeering in reaching out to the youth. The party targeted youth participation by aiding them in procuring party’s membership. The Insaf Student Federation was setup as the official student wing of the PTI with youth representatives from all provinces. Forums were set up on social networking sites to encourage youth to use social media to participate and express their views. This resulted in widespread participation of young people, largely belonging to urban, middle-
class Pakistan, in PTI’s brand of politics.

While ensuring youth participation in the democratic process is a key factor in cementing the future of the democratic process in Pakistan, the involvement of the youth in politics cannot be taken as an absolute good. While 2014 saw a large number of students and young people come out in the street to support Imran Khan and PTI, the same people continued to show immense disdain for the political class and of democratic norms.

Their legitimate desire for change was often expressed as a self-righteous disdain for those who disagreed with their party’s course of action. News channels, journalists and media houses that were perceived as less sympathetic to their cause were frequently subjected to harassment, abuse and attack, both on social media and in the streets. It appeared that the newly politicized class of young people was too impatient to work for long-term political and democratic gain.

Young people were also seen at the forefront of another very different kind of political movement. The Voice of Baloch Missing Persons that started a Long March from Quetta in October 2013 to raise awareness about human rights violations in Balochistan and demand the recovery of their “missing” relatives, reached their destination, Islamabad, in March 2014. Another young person, Lateef Johar, a 22-year-old Baloch student, went on hunger strike in front of Karachi Press Club for 46 days to protest the abduction of Zahid Baloch, BSO-Azad’s chairperson.

The year ended with yet another kind of political movement. In the wake of the December 16 attack on the Army Public School, there were widespread calls urging the government to ensure that extremism and sectarianism in
Political participation

Madrasas and mosques was curtailed, and those who instigated violence and hatred were brought to justice. Maulana Abdul Aziz, a cleric associated with the Lal Mosque in Islamabad, refused to condemn the attack on the school on a television show.

This was followed by a stream of protests outside the Lal Mosque, later called the “Reclaim Your Mosque” campaign, demanding that Maulana Abdul Aziz apologize. The police filed charges against the protestors for “disturbing the peace, and the next day, five of the protestors were arrested. The protests, however, continued, and a few days later, the main organizer of the campaign got a threatening phone call allegedly, from Ihsanullah Ihsan, spokesman of the Taliban splinter group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, to stop the protests or he and his family would face consequences. Maulana Abdul Aziz also used his Friday sermon to threaten suicide-bombings if any harm came to him. On 26 December, an FIR was registered against Maulana Abdul Aziz under section 506 (2) of the Pakistan Penal Code for criminal intimidation or threats. The protests continue, struggling to reclaim mosques as places of worship and prayer as opposed to sanctuaries for extremists, and also challenging mainstream narrative by highlighting the role of various state actors, including the armed forces and religious elite, in the rise of religious extremism and terrorism in the country.

These different kinds of youth movements illustrated that Pakistan remained a fragmented country – religiously, ethnically, across class and gender lines. This fragmentation was also visible in the youth, which was not a homogenous group as it is referred to in everyday parlance.

Religious minorities

Violent attacks against religious minorities continued to hinder every aspect of their lives, including political participation. The insecurity experienced by religious minorities not only exposes them to the threat of death and injury, but also reinforces their exclusion from political activity, basic services, education and employment. (See chapter on religious minorities).

Institutional discrimination against religious minorities’ participation in politics also remained unchanged. Articles 41(2) and 91(3) of the Constitution of Pakistan, for example, bar non-Muslims from holding the positions of the head of state, the president, and the head of government, the prime minister. Such restrictions in the Constitution of Pakistan prove that the right to full political participation is not guaranteed to non-Muslims.

This exclusion is most evident in case of Ahmadis, who continue to appear on a separate electoral list even though all other religious minorities have been added to a common list of voters. To register their votes, Ahmadis must provide their address and dissociate themselves from Islam, which has meant that
Ahmadis have long been deprived of an opportunity to vote.

A report titled “Searching for Security: The Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan”, released in December 2014 by the Minority Rights Group International, expressed concern at the growing exclusion of religious minorities from the political process. The report found that political parties rarely offered minorities the opportunity to contest elections to general seats, and even on the rare occasion when they do or when minorities run as independent candidates, they often meet with other forms of resistance. For instance, during the recent election of May 2013, in a district where the PPP awarded party tickets to Hindu candidates, a local madrasa distributed leaflets that cautioned Muslims against voting for non-Muslim candidates, labeling Hindus as “infidels”.

The report further highlighted that even when efforts were made on the part of majority candidates to reach out to voters belonging to religious minorities, many were still ignored, even in areas with large non-Muslim populations. For example, in Mirpurkhas district few attempts were made by candidates to approach the 40% Hindu population for support. However, since the community belonged to lower castes and worked for feudal landlords, candidates called on these landlords to secure minority votes instead of attempting to access the minority groups directly.

Devolution of power and local governments

Local government, being the nearest to the grass roots, is considered an essential component of participatory democracy. In Pakistan various manifestations of local governments have historically served only one purpose:
to legitimize and strengthen the control of despotic regimes, in particular military rulers. Even subsequent civilian governments have either failed to revive elected local governments or have been unable to fulfill their real purpose.

Local government elections were held in Balochistan in December 2013. During 2014, the province held second and third phases of the election and was due to have local governments installed in January 2015 and become the only province in the country to have complied with a Supreme Court order on local bodies elections. The first phase of the election was held on December 7, 2013. The process had been delayed in the province due to amendments to the law on the LB polls. The local governments’ term in the province had expired in 2009.

Other provincial governments dragged their feet on fulfilling the legal and administrative requirements to hold elections.

In March 2014, the Supreme Court declared that provisions of provincial local government laws that empowered provincial authorities to make delimitations of local government constituencies was unconstitutional and void. The court ordered the federal and provincial legislatures to amend the laws to empower the Election Commission (ECP) to make the delimitations by October 30, 2014.

On 20 October, the Sindh Assembly approved the Sindh Local Government (Amendment) Bill, 2014, empowering the ECP to carry out the delimitation process. On October 27, 2014, the Punjab Assembly adopted Punjab Local

Except Balochistan, all provinces dragged their feet on holding local government elections.
Government (second amendment) Ordinance, making a similar provision.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the PTI-led coalition government had long demanded that local government elections be conducted through biometric electronic thumb verification machines to ensure greater transparency. The ECP responded with saying that it would only be able to hold the elections in November 2015 by using biometric system. In November 2014, the PTI agreed to hold local government elections without the biometric thumb verification system in April 2015.

**Gilgit-Baltistan**

In 2009, President Asif Ali Zardari had passed the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-governance Order, 2009, providing a limited chance to the locals to govern some affairs of the region for the first time. Following the first elections held after this presidential order, the PPP won a majority of seats and became the single largest party in the legislative assembly.

Government in Gilgit-Baltistan, however, failed to offer a sense of empowerment to the local population, and according to activists and political analysts, the limited self-rule and continued deprivation of fundamental rights in the region was tantamount to treating Gilgit-Baltistan as a colony.

2014 saw ongoing popular protests that reflected the growing sense of alienation experienced by the people of the region. Thousands took to the streets, with major sit-ins taking place in Gilgit and Skardu. The trigger for the protests appeared to be the government’s withdrawal of the subsidy on wheat, but the political subjugation and denial of basic rights were also brought to the fore.

An HRCP report, “Caught in a New Great Game”, based on observations of a fact-finding mission sent to the region in October 2013, highlighted that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan suffered greatly due to their anomalous constitutional and legal status, as well as the incompetence of the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, which had only met once during the last four years. The fact-finding mission revealed that no stakeholder expressed satisfaction with the Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, 2009. Additionally, the people of the region believed that their right to political participation was severely impeded, and the issues they raised locally did not get attention at the national level.

On December 10, the legislative assembly’s term came to an end. Elections for the new assembly were expected to take place in March 2015.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved the appointment of a retired judge Justice Tahir Ali Shah as the Chief Election Commissioner. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf challenged Justice Shah’s appointment in the Supreme Court,
claiming Justice Shah was unsuitable for the position given his close ties with the PML-N.

**Recommendations**

1. The government must ensure that the right of political participation is guaranteed across the board, without discrimination based on class, ethnicity, gender, ideology, religion or any other reason. Measures should promptly be taken to curtail the unlawful use of force by law enforcement and security agencies that impinge on the right to political participation and perpetrators must be brought to account;

2. Political parties should establish targets or adopt internal quotas to ensure a specified minimum number of women and members of religious minority groups are put forward as candidates. They should also provide support and resources to secure the election of women and religious minority candidates, and also make sure that they are fully represented in party leadership and policy committees;

3. The Election Commission must be strengthened as an independent, effective body with adequate powers to conduct free and fair elections. Reforms of the electoral system, including strengthening the Election Commission, must be undertaken after a collaborative and consultative process involving all political parties, within and outside of parliament, as well as civil society groups;

4. All legislation and policies that prohibit the operation of student unions and limit the participation of students and youth in politics must be amended
or repealed;

5. Religious minorities should be provided opportunities for full political participation, which includes: ensuring that all citizens enjoy equal voting rights and that Ahmadis are not obliged to vote on separate electorate rolls; allowing non-Muslims to occupy all levels of government by amending discriminatory restrictions such as Articles 41(2) and 91(3) of the Constitution, which bar non-Muslims from the positions of president and prime minister; and taking steps to stop violence against all religious communities and providing them effective protection, particularly in areas where they are vulnerable to militant attacks.

6. The anomalous constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan must be corrected urgently, after consultation with all stakeholders from the region. A provisional or permanent provincial status should be considered, and fundamental rights guaranteed to those living in other provinces in the country should also be extended to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.