**Human Rights Day**

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Pakistan was among the original signatories of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights back in 1948. That treaty turned 70-years-old this week. All of which makes the statistics found within the UN [Human Rights](https://dailytimes.com.pk/332088/peasants-on-international-human-rights-day/) Council (UNHRC) third Universal Period Review (UPR) for 2017-18 devastating.

IA Rehman, the former secretary general and honorary spokesperson of the Human Rights Commission Pakistan (HRCP), notes that the rights deficit had been escalating since the first UPR back in 2008. Then, 51 recommendations were placed before the government. By 2012, this figure had increased to 167. Fast-forward to the present and this has now skyrocketed to some 289 areas of concern. Of these, the state supported 168, noted 121 and rejected four (all made by India) on the grounds that these were politically motivated.

Thus the current UPR needs to be put before public debate; starting with Parliament. Not least because this upward surge has occurred at a time when the country has enjoyed over a decade of uninterrupted democracy. Thereby raising important questions.

Pakistan is passing through a turbulent time at home. It is witnessing the rise of the religious right; which has, of course, brought severe implications for religious minorities. Not to mention particular regimes of the day. Then there is the plight of ethnic minorities such as the Pashtuns that are coming under increasing pressure from the state to put up and shut up. Admittedly, the state has criminalised enforced disappearances. But it also lifted a moratorium on the death penalty. This is to say nothing of the prevalence of custodial torture. Or, indeed, the fragile security situation in Balochistan. As well as the picking up of civil society activists and journalists alike who challenge certain state narratives. And so the list goes on.

There is one bottom line and it is this: only extensive public debate to pinpoint the biggest violators of human rights in Pakistan will determine whether these are [non-state actors](https://dailytimes.com.pk/5581/both-pakistan-and-india-use-non-state-actors/). Or otherwise.  \*

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