



NATIONAL IDPs CONFERENCE

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IDPs RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

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INTRODUCTION

International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) is working together with Government, United Nations and other International institutions to promote and protect the basic fundamental human rights for the masses declared in the universal charter of human rights of United Nations to build a global village of lasting peace, social and economic justices and development.

IHRO is an independent, non-political, non-profitable and non-governmental organization registered under social welfare act 1961 in Pakistan and incorporated in USA and UK. It has a network of 53,000 volunteers in Pakistan that play a vital role against human rights violation on grass root level since its creation. IHRO is mainly dealing with the Human Rights Monitoring, Human Rights Education, Sustainable Development, Research and Human Rights Awareness through national and international Conferences, Workshops and Seminars.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Government of Pakistan (GOP) started its military operation in Swat District to stop militancy in Malakand Division. The military operation is resulting in huge migration of masses to down districts of the province and other parts of the country. Government of Pakistan's figures show the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has risen to an estimated 3.584 million. The government has established camps in Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsada, Swabi, Haripur and Abbotabad. According to a survey, the recent turmoil in Pakistan has resulted in one of the largest internal migrations of the century.

The situation still remains unpredictable. Many civilians are trapped in the conflict zone and unable to move, on the other hand, small numbers of IDPs have left camps and returned to their villages. 75 - 80% of the IDPs remain out of the camp. According to the report issued by UN-OCHA the registration of some 1.9 million IDPs has so far been confirmed by Pakistani authorities, of whom about 260,000 IDPs are living in 27 camps and the remainder with host families. Concerns have been raised regarding the establishment of several spontaneous camps in Upper Dir, and the possibility of others to follow in areas not easily accessible by the humanitarian community. There are presently 10 Registration Centers and 34 Humanitarian Hubs, which distributed 47,000 MT of food and NFIs to IDPs living in and outside camps. Ten more distribution points were inside IDP camps. Precautionary measures have been taken in host communities to prevent any outbreak of acute watery diarrhea (AWD) and other illnesses that could occur with the upcoming monsoon season.

In the light of the above analysis situation, IHRO felt to call National and International agencies and government bodies for better suggestions and recommendations for coming relief, recovery and rehabilitation work for IDPs.

NATIONAL IDPs CONFERENCE

The Emergency Relief Unit and Executive Committee of International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) decided to organize National Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Conference on June 24, 2009 in Best Western Hotel, Islamabad.

OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the Conference was:

"To help in rehabilitation and to devise a comprehensive relief policy for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Swat, Buner and others"

The main objectives of National IDPs Conference 2009

- To identify the problems faced by IDPs of Swat and Buner
- To create Public awareness among IDPs regarding their rights
- To explore partnerships and linkages among different stakeholders for IDPs Project
- To promote rights-based approach to policies programs, and Services for IDPs in Pakistan

223 participants including Government Senior Officials, civil society advocacy groups, NGOs, religious groups, federations, trade unions, representatives of political parties, diplomats, intellectuals, officials from private sector, international and regional organizations and students from different universities participated in this important conference.

OPENING SESSION

Conference was started with Recitation of Holy Quran. Dr. Khalid Aftab Sulheri, President of IHRO welcomed the distinguished guests. In his opening speech, he urged participants to take actions and step forward to raising the voices of IDPs by actively participating in the conference.

SPEECHES

Syed Mumtaz Alam Gillani

Syed Mumtaz Alam Gillani, Federal Minister for Human Rights was invited as the chief Guest and speaker in the Conference. He appreciated the work of International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) and congratulated IHRO for organizing National IDPs Conference. He said that Federal Government is trying its best to facilitate the IDPs on each and every level adopting the vision of the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan through its cabinet. He further said that single terrorist should not be spare in the region and no compromise with the terrorists will be considered as per policy of Government. He visited many camps and witnessed a big crisis in hands which cannot be coped with the existing resources of the government. He noted down all the complaints and suggestions and assured the participants that he will take notice of the suggestions made in the conference and all the actions will be shared with all the agencies working with IDPs. He appreciated Government, NGO, INGOs, UN and other agencies working to facilitate IDPs and favour Human Rights. He especially appreciated the work of grass root level organizations.

Dr. Z. U. Khan

Dr. Z. U. Khan, Chairman IHRO –Senior Advisor to the President AJK preside the National IDPs Conference. He said that we all have to come forward to perform our role for the Internally Displaced Persons of Swat and our organization will continue its efforts to promote the rights of the IDPs within policies. Dr. Khan nominated Dr. Maria Sultan, Director of SASSI as the focal point of Relief, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Network of IDPs. He urged IHRO and its partners to work with the Government on the Human Rights policies of IDPs.

Dr. Maria Sultan

Maria Sultan, Director General of the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute (SASSI) is a specialist in South Asian nuclear arms control issues, disarmament, and weapon systems development and has published widely in academic journals and the South Asian media. While addressing to the participants of the Conference, she said that lesson should be learned from the crisis faced by the nation as they witnessed the biggest migration in the history of Pakistan of internally displaced persons. Basic items should be provided to the IDPs and IDPs need to be protected, not be discriminated. IDPs have right of respectful life. She suggested that Government should coordinate with other agencies working for IDPs and coordinating agency should be declared by the Government. She stressed that budgetary amount fixed by the Government for IDPs is not sufficient the purpose. Level of national and international contribution is not enough and civil military elaboration is also required. She further said that rehabilitation strategy should be developed in collaboration with the agencies working with for IDPs. She mentioned five sectors which needed main focus are construction, livelihood, Education, local government to monitor the rehabilitation process and base line survey of the affected areas.

Hashim Babar

Hashim Babar is Additional Secretary General of Awami National Party (ANP). While addressing to the participants of the Conference regarding Peace Deal in Swat, he said peace deal was not controversial as it provided many opportunities to the whole nation. We have to change the mindset of the people about so called religious leaders (Mullahs). When indigenous forces are failed to provide protection military is called to take back the land which was the case with Swat, Buneer, and Dir. When addressing on the issue of IDPs, he said if we lose our trust on IDPs, we will be facing many problems. Transparency of external and internal policies regarding IDPs issue will lead to the failure of insurgencies. While referring to the effects of terrorism in Pakistan he said that international funding agencies are not willing to provide enough funds to the Government of Pakistan due to terrorist activities in Pakistan but they can directly forward aid to help IDPs. Time is less and residents of Malakand who cannot survive the hot climate, are suffering from harsh weather and lack of support from other provinces. Furthermore, he appreciated the work of Human Right Organizations especially female organizations on IDPs.

Sheikh Mansoor

Mr. Sheikh Mansoor, representative of Pakistan Peoples Party shared the policy of Pakistan Peoples Party and its Government. According to him, PPP is working hard to promote the relief efforts on organization level and workers of party throughout the country are participating day and night for the philanthropy work for the IDPs.

Dr. Atta-ur-Rehman

Dr. Atta-ur-Rehman, representative of Jamat-e-Islami Pakistan was also invited as the Guest Speaker of the Conference. While addressing to the participants, he said that IDPs are the affectees and human. He stated that Jamat-e-Islami is not supporting terrorism but working against terrorism. They bring people from bullet to ballet.

Iftikhar ur Rehman

Mr. Iftikhar ur Rehman, Chief Executive of Community Uplift Program (CUP), Pakistan said that our main focus should be on how to help IDPs, leaving political divide behind and working on same agenda. It's the responsibility of Government of NWFP to facilitate IDPs and providing facts and figures regarding IDPs and inform INGO & NGOs on how to provide further facilitation to IDPs.

Syed Naseer Ahmad Gillani

Syed Naseer Ahmad Gillani, Chairman of Pakistan Water Partnership shared a brief presentation of PWP work on Initiative for Provision of Water and Sanitation Facilities for IDPs. He also shared future prospects of the PWP for the facilitation of the IDPs on WATSAN.

Shafique Chaudhry

Shafique Chaudhry, Coordinator of Parliamentarian Commission for Human Rights said that Guiding Principles on IDPs should be consulted by the agencies working with IDPs to judge their activities. He mentioned a few cases of discrimination faced in the camps by the IDPs and highlighted those as violation of Guiding Principles on IDPs. Similarly lack of transportation of IDPs from their villages to the camps is also violation of the Guiding Principles on IDPs.

Syed Ihsan Ullah Waqas

Syed Ihsan Ullah Waqas, General Secretary of Al-Kidmat Foundation was also present at the Conference. He shared the activities of Al-Kidmat Foundation with the participants. He said that IDPs camps were mostly managed by Al-Kidmat Foundation. 17 medical camps and 2 temporary hospitals were also arranged by Al-Kidmat Foundation. Referring to a survey, he said 6.3% population living in camps and much of the population living with the Pakhtun families in NWFP. 600 families are provided with basic necessities by Al-Kidmat Foundation. Trucks of different items also arrived at the camps from different cities of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. Al-Kidmat Foundations Volunteers are also working all over the country for the cause of IDPs. Many international organizations work in partnership with Al Kidmat Foundation.

Anayat Ullah

Anayat Ullah, Ex. Minister for Health while referring to the difficulties faced by IDPs said that exact data of IDPs is not present with NADRA. Similarly female headed families are facing problems as females don't have their identification cards. Distribution points of WFP food packages are either too far and too less, packages containing only of wheat and ghee. This issue was also raised in UN Cluster meetings. Females in camps can't come out of their tents and hence facing suffocation. Medical camps for off camps IDPs are badly needed. Policy makers should respond to this issue as soon as possible. People still stuck in Malakand is facing different problems as well. He further suggested that return of IDPs to Buner and other IDPs should be according to a proper plan.

OTHER SPEAKERS Few other speakers also addressed to the conference including Raja Rizwan Ashfaq, Program coordinator from Islamic Relief, Dr. Seema Mallick Senior Research Fellow at Mahbub- Ul- Haq Human Development Centre, Dr. Tasneem Kousar from World Human Rights Organization, Raja Javed Bhatti Coordinator Pukar – MKRF, and gave their suggestions on how to improve lives of IDPs.

MESSAGES

Abdul Sattar Edhi-Chairman Edhi Foundation

Founder President of Edhi Foundation, Abdul Sattar Edhi was unable to participate in the conference but he sent his inclusive message for the IDPs Conference which said that we should support the homeless people of Swat, Buner, Dir and Malakand in such a way that they should not lose their integrity. IDPs are already cleared about their rights. Edhi Foundation is working for IDPs from day one with the support of the Pakistani nation. He also appreciated the efforts of IHRO for arranging conference on the issue of IDPs.

Lt. General Nadeem Ahmad Chairman Special Support Group

Lt. General Nadeem Ahmad, Chairman Special Support Group was also requested to attend the Conference as special guest and speaker but he was unable to participate due to his busy schedule. IHRO received his short appreciation letter for the organizing the Conference.

DOCUMENTARY ON IDPS

A Comprehensive Documentary on IDPs, developed by Al-Kidmat Foundation was also shared with the participants during the Conference.



IHRO also arranged a particular session for the IDPs. More than 100 IDPs participated in the conference and shared their views with the participants and Federal Minister for Human Rights. Following suggestions and recommendations were shared:

- WASH tube wells for host communities should be build.
- Benazir Income Support Program & other related programs should be started for IDPs.
- on time Registration of IDPs by NADRA should be done. Name of the late and missing persons must be included in the NADRA registration.
- Education fee should be exempted of IDPs studying in colleges and universities.
- Language problem is faced by most of the IDPs as very few people working in camps know their language.
- Central government and federal government should work in collaboration to improve the conditions of IDPs.
- Walks on Human Rights of IDPs should be organized.
- Proper medical facilities should be available for all IDPs
- Resettlement program should be started as soon as possible with the consultation of the IDPs.



Women IDPs are sitting in the Conference

CONCLUDING SESSION

Concluding Points of the Conference

Following were the concluding points of the conference:

- National IDPs Conference endorsed the efforts by the Government of Pakistan for the IDPs of Malakand through Provisional Government, Special Services Group and other resources. Direct visits of different Federal Ministers and Head of political parties were also appreciated in the Conference.
- Comprehensive National Anti-Terrorism Strategy must be established within Parliament and out of parliament. All stake holders should be part of it.
- As IDPs rights are Human Rights according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and other treaties, therefore Conference demands an immediate National Policy for the IDPs.
- International Guiding Principles for IDPs must be considered in all phases of relief, rehabilitation and resettlement.
- Social sector must be included in all phases of work for IDPs
- Water, Sanitation and other hygienic issues of IDPs should be resolved on urgent bases to save them from different diseases.
- Women, Children and aged people must be priority in all relief and other programmes.
- NADRA should register the names of missing and late IDPs with Special program.
- All partners on Anti-Terrorism must be taken into the confidence for more stubborn stance against terrorism.
- More Fund raising and advocacy Conferences for affected people should be managed on national and International level.
- National Anti-Terrorism Commission should be established.

Concluding Speech

IHRO President Dr.Khalid Aftab Sulheri concluded the Conference with these remarks:

“Basic human rights of IDPs of Malakand are affecting. Government with NGOs, donor agencies, and other institutions should develop a National Policy for IDPs and respect the Guiding Principles of IDPs. He appreciated the work of Government, NGOs, INGOs, Donor Agencies and other agencies working for IDPs and insist on continue working for the cause.

