



The Honourable Imran Khan  
The Prime Minister of Pakistan  
Islamabad  
Pakistan

19<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Prime Minister Imran Khan,

I write to you on behalf of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB), a global network of parliamentarians from diverse political, religious, and geographical backgrounds, committed to the promotion and protection of the freedom of religion or belief for all. My thoughts and deepest sympathies are with you, the Pakistani government and the people of Pakistan during these unprecedented times.

We are deeply concerned about the situation of religious minorities in Pakistan due to [continuing](#) systemic discrimination, stigmatization, harassment and physical violence on the basis of their religion or belief. Today, the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020 is the sixth anniversary of the passing of the landmark 2014 Supreme Court of Pakistan judgement that called for the National Commission of Minorities (NCM) to be established.

The recent reconstitution of the NCM has been challenged by many civil society [organizations](#) and the Shoaib [Suddle](#) Commission constituted by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. We are extremely concerned about the institutional independence and autonomy of the NCM in its present state. The Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions (Paris Principle, 1993) [require](#) National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) to not only protect and promote human rights but also to be established by the constitution or an act of legislation that guarantees their independence from political direction and interference.

It is [reported](#) that the present structure of the Commission fails to meet the intention of the landmark 2014 Supreme Court [judgement](#). The present NCM unlike other human rights commissions in Pakistan, for example the National Commission of Human Rights has [not](#) been set up through an act of legislation or by parliament. Instead the federal Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony established and oversees the body. We are concerned that without a strong legal basis, the present NCM institution will likely be an empowered, independent and statutory body that the 2014 Supreme Court judgement envisioned. The present NCM leadership also [consists](#) of leaders from the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, which is a failure of the Paris Principles.



Moreover, [reports](#) also suggest that the federal government reversed its decision to include Ahmadiyya's in the NCM, claiming that they do not "fall in the definition of minorities". An [estimated](#) 4 million Ahmadiyya's live in Pakistan and face widespread discrimination and abuse. This was recently visible in the [controversial comments](#) made by a Pakistani lawmaker on social media when Ahmadiyya's were first considered to be part of the Commission. Without representation from the Ahmadiyya community, the NCM cannot call itself an institution that represents all minorities in the country. This damages the credibility of the institution and fails to send a message of inclusivity to the Ahmadiyya's and other religious or belief-based groups in the country.

We recommend the following:

- To involve the Parliament where the institution should be established by an Act of Parliament and its jurisdiction is expanded to all provinces.
- The Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions (Paris Principle, 1993) should be adhered to when forming such NHRIs.
- To establish an NCM by way of an adequate, fair and consultative process which should be transparent, inclusive and effective.
- All religious minority groups, including Ahmadiyya's, need to be represented.

Thank you for taking our recommendations into consideration. We welcome any discussions on improving the freedom of religion or belief in Pakistan.

Sincerely,

David Anderson  
Member of Parliament, Canada (Retired)  
Chair, IPPFoRB Steering Committee