

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT
PRESS RELEASE

Islamabad the 17th June, 2021: The Standing Committee on Human Rights which met under the chairmanship, of Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, took up the agenda of violation of Article 19 of the Constitution and recent attacks on the Journalists. Mr. Bilawal said that the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan under Article 19 guarantees the right to freedom of expression and said that media plays a vital role in a democratic society. Journalism is for the ‘voice of voiceless’-expressing opinions of all those in our society, but attacks on journalist in the past couple of years has undermined and shattered the confidence of Journalists as well as people in the State Institutions especially Law Enforcement Agencies. Prominent Journalists Hamid Mir, Asma Sherazi, Absar Alam, Matee Ullah Jan, Munizae Jahangir, Asad Ali Toor, CR Shamsi, Ms. Imaan Mazari-Lawyer, Ihtesham Khan-Social Activist were asked to share their experiences and sordid tales of being attacked, abused and exploited. They all were critical and complained about the way they were attacked physically, abusive language used and wanted their voices be silenced. How treason and sedition charges have been framed against them, and even charges under Article 6 of the Constitution have been framed against some Journalists. It was noticed by the Committee that none of the cases has been resolved, and footage in most cases has not been made available to the complainants. Due diligence has always been wanting from the Police and Law Enforcement Agencies. Mr. Bilawal said that it is a sorry state of affairs. Out of 50 cases regarding attacks on Journalists 34 happened only in Islamabad. He vowed that freedom of speech will be protected at all cost and saluted all brave Journalists. He condemned attacks on Journalists and said that he and all Members of the Committee stand by all the media personals and assured them of his and the Committee’s unflinching and unwavering support. Mr. Bilawal said that as Chairman Standing Committee on Human Rights, he will request Honourable Speaker that a high powered Committee consisting of Members from all parties be made to discuss the freedom of rights enshrined in Article 19 of the Constitution and how law can be implemented. He will also write letter to Head of ISI to clear the perception of any involvement in attacks on Journalists and nabbing anyone who brings disrepute to their Organization.

2. “The Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Bill, 2021” was discussed and deliberated by the Committee. After taking into consideration the views and opinions of the Members the Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari announced to appoint a Sub-Committee under the Convenership of Mr. Lal Chand, MNA from PTI, which will start its work after the

completion of a Sub-Committee already made on the issue of Transgenders. The Sub-Committee Terms of Reference is to consider the following Bills:-

- i. The Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Bill, 2021” (Government Bill);
- ii. “The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Amendment) Bill, 2021” (Government Bill);
- iii. “The Juvenile Justice System, (Amendment) Bill, 2021” (Government Bill);
- iv. “The Islamabad Capital Territory Child Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2021” (Government Bill);
- v. “The National Commission on the Rights of Child (Amendment) Bill, 2021”(Government Bill);
- vi. “The Maintenance and Welfare of Old Parents and Senior Citizens Bill, 2020” (Moved by Moulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali, MNA);
- vii. “The Calling Attention Notice No. 24, regarding increasing trend of beggary in the Islamabad Capital Territory” (Moved by Ms. Nusrat Wahid, MNA);

3. The meeting was attended by MNAs, Ms. Ghulam Bibi Bharwana, Mr. Saif Ur Rehman, Mr. Attaullah, Ms. Ghazala Saifi, Ms. Rukhsana Naveed, Ms. Zille Huma, Ms. Tashfeen Safdar, Mr. Lal Chand, Ms. Shunila Ruth, Ms. Shaista Pervaiz, Mr. Mohsin Dawar, Mr. Abdul Rahman Khan Kanju, Ms. Zaib Jaffar, Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Shazia Marri, Dr. Mahreen Razzaq Bhutto, Special Invitee Senator (Retired) Farhatullah Khan Babar, Secretary M/o Human Rights, Special Secretary M/o Interior, Mr. Muhammad Arshad, Mr. Muhammad Hassan, Director Generals, Mr. Afzaal Ahmed Khan, DIG/Ops, Islamabad and senior officers of the relevant Departments.