



August 2024



Top news

11th OICOA Board Meeting Held in Marrakech

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OICOA Training Session on 'Ways to Access Information Regarding Maladministration by Public Functionaries'.

OICOA training session, organized by the OICOA Secretariat, provided an in-depth exploration of the evolving landscape of the Right to Information (RTI) and its importance in today's day and age.



President OICOA & Board Member Participated in Samarkand Forum

On 21 May 2024, Chief Ombudsman Mr. Seref Malkoç and the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan Ms. Sabina Aliyeva, paid a study visit to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) upon the invitation of the Ombudsman of TRNC, Ms. İlkan Varol.



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Morocco, Senegal Sign Ombudsman Cooperation Agreement

The Morocco and Senegal have agreed to work together to exchange complaints and concerns from citizens in both countries, who feel aggrieved by unfair or discriminatory decisions. The cooperation agreement was signed on Tuesday in Rabat.



Message From the President

Dear Esteemed Members,

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA) conducted 11th Board of Directors Meeting in the enchanting city of Marrakesh, Morocco. As the Chief Ombudsman of the Republic of Türkiye and the President of the OICOA, I am thankful to all participants for their participation.

As a President of OICOA, I condemn the heinous assassination of Hamas Leader Mr. Ismail Haniyeh. The Palestinian people should be protected and their right to life must be protected by the global human rights organisations.

These gatherings transcend mere meetings; they represent a confluence of shared visions dedicated to fostering the esteemed principles of Ombudsman ship on a global stage. Our collective ambition is to uphold justice, fairness, accountability, and the protection of human rights. I eagerly anticipate the pivotal discussions on expanding OICOA's membership, echoing our joint commitment to enhancing its impact and reach. Additionally, these meetings will highlight the significant role that Islamic states play in strengthening the ethos of Ombudsmanship, sending a powerful message of unity, justice, and equity worldwide.

I look forward to the camaraderie, exchange of insightful ideas, and meaningful deliberations that will unfold during our meetings. Together, let's make these sessions a significant milestone



for OICOA, paving the way for a global outreach resonating with the core principles of justice and equity.

Seref MALKOC
(Chief Ombudsman of the Republic of Turkey)
President OICOA

Message From the Secretary General

I am delighted to share the August issue of the OICOA e-Newsletter, which embodies the core principle of accountability rooted in the Islamic concept.

At OICOA, we are committed to take action against maladministration, protect human rights, and ultimately promote good governance, believing that a peaceful society contributes to a peaceful world.

The participation of OICOA board members in the 11th Board of Directors Meeting, held in the historic city of Marrakesh, Morocco, demonstrates our continuous efforts to promote better governance among Islamic countries. We are grateful to His Excellency Mohamed BENALILOU, Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco, and a valued member of the OICOA board, for generously hosting the OICOA meeting and extending memorable hospitality.

I express my deep concern over the ongoing brutal attacks and killings of innocent Palestinian Muslims since 7th October 2023. The devastating toll includes 39,173 lives lost and 79,061 injured in Israel's war on Gaza.

OICOA urges the UN and human rights organizations to bring all perpetrators of this heinous act of genocide to justice. An immediate ceasefire is imperative, and all international NGOs should be allowed to work towards rescue, relief, and rehabilitation efforts for the affected.



As Secretary General of OIC Ombudsman, I offer my condolences to the Palestinian people over the sad demise of Mr. Ismail Haniyeh and condemn his assassination.

I trust that with the support of member countries, we can strengthen and fortify our association. May our actions be guided by the principles of justice, righteousness, and peace.

Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah
(Hilal-i-Imtiaz) (Sitara-i-Imtiaz)
Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan
Secretary General, OICOA

Message From the Executive Secretary

Dear esteemed members,

I extend my sincerest gratitude to the Mediator of Kingdom of Morocco for hosting the 11th Board Meeting of the OIC Ombudsman Association with exceptional warmth and professionalism. His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Benalilou, the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco, and his team demonstrated remarkable hospitality and organizational skills, which were deeply appreciated by all attendees.

I am thrilled to announce that our application for OIC-affiliated status has been successfully submitted, courtesy the support of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Pakistan, and will be presented at the upcoming Council of Foreign Ministers meeting (to be held, after the current meeting, scheduled for August 30th, this year)

Furthermore, I am delighted to share the successful launch of our inaugural Internship Exchange Program between the Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan and the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco. Two students have already completed their 3-week internship in Morocco, and we eagerly await the arrival of return interns from Morocco.

This pioneering initiative marks a significant milestone in our efforts to foster closer cooperation and mutual learning among the youth of our member countries. The completion of the first phase of this program underscores our



collective commitment to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of our ombudsman institutions.

I also appreciate the enthusiastic participation of member institutes in our recent training session, which saw an impressive turnout of 102 participants from member institutions. This demonstrates the keenness of our member institutes to learn from each other's experiences.

Together, we continue to advance our shared goals and strengthen our network for a more effective and responsive Ombudsman community.

Almas Ali Jovindah
Executive Secretary, OICOA

11th OICOA Board Meeting Held in Marrakech

By Neelam Shujahuddin
(Assistant Advisor, OICOA)

The 11th Board Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA) convened on 25th June 2024, at the Savoy Le Grand Hotel in Marrakech, Morocco. This meeting hosted by the Mediator of Morocco and OICOA Board Member, H.E. Mohamed Benalilou, brought together the Executive Body of OICOA to address pressing global issues and reinforce the Association's mission in combating the ongoing atrocities in the world within the mandate of OICOA.



Presiding over the meeting were H.E. Seref Malkoc, Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye and President of OICOA, and H.E. Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan and Secretary General of OICOA.

The meeting was also attended by OICOA's Board Members H.E. Sabina Aliyeva (Human Rights Commissioner of Azerbaijan), and H.E. Ghada Hameed Habib (Secretary General of the Ombudsman of Bahrain). The Vice President of OICOA, H.E. Zabiullah Khodaeian (President General Inspection Organization of Iran), was represented by the Vice President of GIO, Iran Dr. Ahmed Rahmania, while H.E. Mokhammad Najih (Chairman of the Ombudsman of Indonesia), participated via video conferencing. The proceedings were conducted by Executive Secretary of OICOA, Mr. Almas Ali Jovindah.

The proceedings were started by His Excellency Mohamed Benalilou, who expressed his gratitude to those who were present and emphasized the role that the Moroccan Mediator's office plays in providing justice that is complimentary to traditional courts and easily accessible. He also recognized and appreciated the support that he received from the Board Members during his

election to the position of First Vice President of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI). In his address, H.E. Seref Malkoc emphasized the necessity of maintaining a robust foundation for OICOA through effective operations, continuous training, and public engagement. He highlighted the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and discussed the Special Report prepared by the Ombudsman Institution of Turkiye on the devastating impacts of the Israeli attacks. This report was submitted to international bodies such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, and aims to seek accountability of Israel for the ongoing atrocities against innocent Gazans. H.E. Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, Secretary General of OICOA, offered his reaffirmation to OICOA's steadfast dedication to lending support for the Palestinian cause. While praising the special report on Gaza by Ombudsman Institution of Turkiye as an important tool for worldwide advocacy, he went into detail about his efforts to collect and donate money for immediate help to Gaza through Customs Healthcare Society of Pakistan.



The proceedings of the meeting were conducted by OICOA's Executive Secretary, Almas Ali Jovindah who also reaffirmed his steadfast commitment to the advancement of OICOA. He remarked, "Guided by the exemplary leadership of OICOA President Seref Malkoc and Secretary General Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, I am deeply committed to enhancing the impact of OICOA. Our collective efforts will continue to champion justice and amplify the voices of the oppressed across OIC countries."

One of the pivotal moments of the 11th Board Meeting was the unanimous approval of the Marrakech Declaration on the Situation in Gaza. This declaration condemns the actions of the Israeli Defense Forces and expresses solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Board Members committed to disseminating the declaration widely through national media outlets to amplify OICOA's message and help in laying ground for greater international awareness and support in this matter of grave concern.

Recognizing the importance of continuous professional development, the board discussed the implementation of regular training and capacity-building workshops. These workshops are envisioned as a cornerstone of OICOA's operations, which aid in fostering skill enhancement and

sharing of best practices of ombudsman among member institutions. The commitment to capacity building initiatives was deemed essential by all Board Members for OICOA's Member Institutions in maintaining high standards of ombudsman and public service and President OICOA, H.E. Seref Malkoc urged all Board Members to actively participate in arrangement of such sessions.

The meeting also involved a comprehensive review of the decisions from the 10th OICOA Board

Meeting held in Islamabad. Key initiatives were discussed which included the launch of the International Exchange-Based Internship Program, aimed at enhancing cross-cultural understanding and nurturing young interns at OICOA Member Institutions. Additionally, efforts of the OICOA Secretariat in Pakistan to secure 'Affiliated Institution Status' with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) were also discussed at length.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Offices of Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan and Office of Mediator of Morocco regarding exchange of interns for the duration of 3 weeks. This officially commenced the launch of OICOA's International Internship Exchange Program. Another MoU was signed between the Offices of Ombudsman of Bahrain and Mediator of Morocco regarding facilitation of exchange of information and best practices in ombudsman.

A tribute to H.E. Mohamed Benalilou, honoring his appointment as the First Vice-President of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) was also given by the Executive Body of OICOA. His exemplary contributions to justice, transparency, and good governance as the Mediator of Morocco were celebrated while recognizing his visionary leadership and significant impact on promoting human rights within OICOA and the global ombudsman community.

It goes without any doubt that the 11th OICOA Board Meeting ended at a positive note as it represented more than just an assembly of distinguished ombudsmen across OIC countries. Rather, it was a pertinent step in the course of OICOA in pursuance of being a voice of oppressed. The unanimous adoption of the Marrakech Declaration on Gaza was an unequivocal cursor to the Association's deep commitment to addressing pressing global issues and advocating for innocent Palestinians. Additionally, signing of MoUs and the initiation of the OICOA International Internship Exchange Program proved once more that OICOA assured its commitment to international cooperation and professional growth for its Member Institutions in practical terms. Looking ahead, the 11th OICOA Board Meeting has laid a strong foundation for its future endeavors by signaling a continued and deepened commitment to advancing its mission of advocating for justice, fostering international cooperation, and empowering its Member Institutions to confront the challenges of tomorrow with resilience and unity.



Training Session

OICOA Training Session on 'Ways to Access Information Regarding Maladministration by Public Functionaries'.

OICOA training session, organized by the OICOA Secretariat, provided an in-depth exploration of the evolving landscape of the Right to Information (RTI) and its importance in today's day and age. Over 100 participants from OICOA Member Institutions, the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), and the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman (FPO) joined this training session in-person and online. Presided over by Dr. Arslan Subuctageen, Director General Trainings of the FPO, the session began with a focus on the complexities of obtaining information from public officials, particularly in cases of maladministration.

The keynote speaker, Mr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ali, Director of the Centre for Peace Initiative & Development (CPID), who is a seasoned expert



in governance, democratic development, and human rights with a career spanning over two decades. Mr. Mukhtar offered a historical perspective on RTI, tracing its evolution from the 1766 Freedom of Press Act in Sweden to its current status as a fundamental component of democratic governance worldwide. He emphasized, "RTI is not just a right; it is a duty for public bodies to actively disseminate information,

especially those that manage public funds." He critically examined Pakistan's RTI framework, particularly the Right of Access to Information Act of 2017. While acknowledging the law's broad scope, he highlighted significant implementation challenges, including resource constraints and a deep-rooted culture of secrecy. Despite these hurdles, Mr. Mukhtar expressed optimism, noting that "transparency is not merely a legal obligation; it is the cornerstone of good governance." During the interactive Q&A session, participants raised concerns about resistance from public officials and the complexities of digital record management.

Addressing these issues, Mr. Mukhtar advocated for a

cultural shift within public institutions, suggesting, "Transparency should be seen not as a threat but as a fundamental responsibility." He also recommended a phased approach to digital archiving, starting with critical records and ensuring secure, centralized databases. On the enforcement of RTI laws, particularly in cases involving powerful entities, Mr. Mukhtar stressed the importance of independent information commissions and the role of civil society and the media. He remarked, "The strength of RTI lies not just in the law itself but in the collective will of society to uphold it."

At the end of the session, Dr. Arslan Subuctageen and Executive Secretary of OICOA, Almas Ali Jovindah expressed their appreciation for Mr. Mukhtar's contributions, lauding his ability to make complex issues accessible. They reiterated that the fight for transparency is both a legal and cultural battle, essential for building trust in governance. It will be prudent to state that the 4th OICOA training session provided valuable insights to its participants in the ongoing pursuit of transparency and accountability within governance frameworks. The insights shared by Mr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ali, not only highlighted the challenges ahead but also offered practical solutions and the sense of urgency in our commitment to embedding the principles of the Right to Information in everyday governance.



T.C.
TÜRKİYE BÜYÜK MİLLET MECLİSİ
KAMU DENETÇİLİĞİ KURUMU
(OMBUDSMANLIK)



UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ARE BINDING

FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT THE RESOLUTIONS REQUIRES INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS

Since October 7, in attacks by Israeli security forces, 32 thousand 845 people, more than 70 percent of whom were women and children, lost their lives, 75 thousand 392 people were injured, settlements were left uninhabitable, and 1.9 million people, corresponding to 85 percent of the population of Gaza, were displaced.

The special report titled "*Gaza: From The World's Largest Open-Air Prison To The World's Largest Children's Cemetery*"¹, prepared by the Ombudsman Institution of Türkiye, determined that **Israel committed war, genocide, and crimes against humanity as addressed in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the 4th Geneva Convention**.

Acts aiming to completely wipe off the 2.2 million people living in Gaza or expel them from their homelands by killing and inflicting serious physical and mental harm on them, require the perpetrators of this crime to put on trial in front of the international criminal courts.

In that matter, Israel did not comply with the ceasefire Resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly by an overwhelming majority. Israel also insists on not complying with the UN Security Council Resolutions. As it is known, on 22 December 2023, the UN Security Council adopted a Resolution emphasizing the urgent need to provide more humanitarian aid to the civilian population. As Defense Minister Gallant stated "*There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. We are fighting against human animals*" on 9 October 2023, Israel has not fulfilled the requirements of the Resolution. Using hunger as a weapon, Israel has killed 200 humanitarian aid volunteers in the last six months, including the recent killings of 7 members of the World Central Kitchen. **Since Israel does not allow aid to be delivered especially to Northern Gaza, people, particularly babies, children and the elderly, are dying of hunger and thirst today, just as it did back in 1945.** UN reports and hospital records show that with each passing day the Security Council Resolution is not complied with, the number of deaths from starvation, entirely caused by humans, increases dramatically.

On 25 March 2024, at the end of the 6th month of Israeli attacks, the UN Security Council passed a Resolution demanding a ceasefire. The Resolution, adopted by the 15-member Security Council with 14 "Yes" votes and 1 abstention, requested an immediate ceasefire that would be respected by all parties for the remainder of the month of Ramadan and that "will lead to a permanent and sustainable ceasefire".



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TÜRKİYE BÜYÜK MİLLET MECLİSİ
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Despite this, Israel's attacks in Gaza continued increasingly. In face of the Resolution regarding a ceasefire, Israel has been bombing Rafah City, where 1.5 million people, most of whom have been displaced three times, are trapped into an area of 64 km for the last six months. Israel also besieged the Al-Shifa Hospital again, where the elderly and children in Northern Gaza had taken shelter, and **executed 400 unarmed people, including children and women**. After Israeli forces left the Al-Shifa Hospital, bodies run over by a bulldozer were found in the garden of the hospital. Additionally, the fate of hundreds of healthcare workers who have been arrested is unknown.

In his statement after the UN Security Council Resolution, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, said, "This Resolution must be implemented. Failure would be unforgivable." On the other hand, the Permanent Representative of the USA to the UN stated that the Resolution, which they abstained from, is not binding. **This situation is equivalent to supporting the war, genocide and crimes against humanity that has been committed today.** If the permanent members abstain, the Security Council can adopt a Resolution, and the failure of any of the permanent members of the Security Council to use their veto right makes the execution of the Resolution essential.

According to Article 25 of the UN Charter, UN members are required to accept and implement Security Council Resolutions. According to Article 24 of the UN Charter, the primary duty of the UN Security Council is to maintain international peace and security by acting quickly and effectively on behalf of UN members. **The UN Security Council has the authority to implement economic, diplomatic and military measures in cases where disputes that may endanger international peace and security cannot be resolved by peaceful means.**

Israeli government must immediately fulfill the requirements of the binding UN Security Council Resolution. **All sanctions stipulated in the UN Charter must be imposed against the Israeli administration by the UN Security Council, for the immediate implementation of UN Resolutions.** In order for the humanitarian disaster in Gaza to end immediately and permanently, the international community must adopt a common stance against Israel.

Şeref Malkoç

Chief Ombudsman of the Republic of Türkiye

President of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA)

OICOA's International Internship Exchange Program Commences Between the Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan and Office of the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco

With its formal establishment in 2014, the OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA) stands as a testament to the commitment of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) regarding strengthening the Ombudsman institutions across member states. The main mission of OICOA was to empower the Ombudsman offices throughout the Islamic world mainly through expertise exchange. In the light of this mission of OICOA, Office of the Mediator of Morocco and the Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) initiated a collaborative internship exchange program which was endorsed by esteemed Board Members of OICOA during the 10th OICOA Board Meeting in January 2024 held in Pakistan.

This internship Exchange program was an innovative step which reflects the commitment of OICOA to not only foster cultural understanding but also to nurture educational opportunities among its diverse members. The Federal Tax



Ombudsman of Pakistan, Dr. Asif Jah who is a staunch advocate of strengthening OICOA's platform, along with Mr. Almas Jovindah, the Executive Secretary OICOA, played a vital role in pioneering this visionary exchange program portraying unwavering commitment to the development of youth along with empowerment of institutions. This proposal strongly resonated with the progressive vision of the Mediator of Kingdom of Morocco, Mr. Mohamed Benalilou who is a dedicated OICOA board member and staunchly supports the initiatives with the objective of fostering collaboration between OICOA Members. As a result, a landmark MoU was signed between FTO and Office of Mediator of Morocco during the 11th OICOA Board Meeting held in Marakesh in August 2024 to initiate the first batch of this program. The internship exchange commenced between these two institutions in August 2024 which also marked a significant milestone in OICOA's ongoing efforts for institutional empowerment. Ms. Momina Zaigham and Ms. Tayaba Munir from FTO had the distinct privilege of undertaking their internship in Morocco.

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ACTIVITIES OF OICOA MEMBERS

Türkiye

President OICOA & Board Member Participated in Samarkand Forum

On 21 May 2024, Chief Ombudsman Mr. Şeref Malkoç and the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan Ms. Sabina Aliyeva paid a study visit to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) upon the invitation of the Ombudsman of TRNC, Ms. İlkan Varol. During his visit to TRNC, Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye Mr. Şeref Malkoç and Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, Ms. Sabina Aliyeva had a meeting with Ombudsman of TRNC, Ms. İlkan Varol. The importance for the exchange of experience and strengthening the cooperation between institutions were discussed. In addition, the efforts to overcome injustices and strengthen the rule of law were discussed. During the visit, Mr. Malkoç and Ms. Aliyeva met with the Prime Minister of TRNC Mr. Ünal Üstel, Speaker of the Parliament Mr. Zorlu Töre, the



Prosecutor General of the TRNC Mr. Sarper Altıncık, and the President of the Turkish Cypriot Bar Association Mr. Hasan Esendağlı. Within the framework of the visit, Mr. Malkoç and Ms. Aliyeva visited the President of TRNC, H.E. Mr. Ersin Tatar. Ombudsman of TRNC Ms. İlkan Varol was also present at the meeting. During the meeting, the rule of law was emphasized and the importance of the Association of Turkic States Ombudspersons and National Human Rights Institutions (TURKOMB) was stressed. Meanwhile, on 13-14 JAugust2024, upon the invitation of the Director of the National Centre of



the Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights Prof. Akmal Saidov, Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye Mr. Şeref Malkoç and his accompanying delegation participated the IV Samarkand Forum on "Environmental Challenges: Ensuring Sustainable Solutions for the Future of human Rights in a



Changing World". In his speech, Mr. Malkoç addressed the effects of environmental problems and climate change. At the Forum, Mr. Malkoç made a speech regarding environmental challenges and Türkiye's experience on the issue. During his speech, he also drew attention to the ongoing human rights violations resulting from Israel's attacks on Gaza. Also, Mr. Malkoç realized a bilateral meeting with Prof. Akmal Saidov and a bilateral memorandum of understanding between both institution was signed to strengthen cooperation.

Iran

Condolence Over Assassination of Ismail Haniyeh by GIO Iran Honourable Justice Dr. Khodaeian

The condolence message of the President of the General Inspection Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran following the martyrdom of Ismail Haniyeh;

بسم رب الشهداء والصديقين
"ولاتحسبن الذين قُتلوا في سبيل الله امواتاً بل احياء عند ربيهم يرزقون"

I extend my condolences for the martyrdom of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Ismail Haniya, to the Islamic Ummah, the great Palestinian nation, the Hamas movement, and all the nations and countries.

This cowardly assassination made the helplessness of the fake and child-killing Zionist regime and the ugly face of global arrogance more visible to the public opinion and strengthened the path of resistance for the liberation of holly Quds. Undoubtedly, the pure blood of this high-ranking martyr will record another stain on the record of the crimes of the Zionist usurper regime, and let the enemies of Islam and the Islamic Ummah know that the blood of the Palestinian martyrs and the axis of resistance, especially Martyr Ismail Haniyeh, will bring greater cohesion and unity to the resistance groups in the liberation of holly Quds. I ask Allah Almighty for the royal souls of those pious and faithful people and their companions who were martyred in this incident.



President of the General Inspection Organization of the Islamic Republic of IRAN on the Sidelines of the Funeral Ceremony of Martyr Ismail Haniyeh Condemned Murder of Ismail Haniyeh

Justice Dr. Khodaeian, the President of the General Inspection Organization of the Islamic Republic of IRAN, on the sidelines of the funeral ceremony of Martyr Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, told reporters that this cowardly assassination showed the helplessness of the child-killing Zionist regime and the ugly face of global arrogance in the eyes of the public. During all these years of fighting against the occupation regime of Quds, Haniyeh was present in the field with insight and commitment, and he sacrificed his closest family members for the great goal of liberating holly Quds.

He continued: The global arrogance and the ostracized Zionist regime should know that with these heinous actions, the determination of the free nations and the resistance axis countries will be strengthened to take the final steps towards the liberation of holly Quds.

The President of GIO pointed to the desperation of the hated Zionist regime against the desperate defense of the axis of resistance, and emphasized: Now this child-killing regime is facing defeat on the battlefield and has not achieved its evil goals, and its nature is a disgrace to the free nations of the world and is hated by public opinion. It has been committed to blind assassinations and against all international laws. There is no doubt that these crimes will have no result other than the greater unity of the fighting people of Palestine and the resistance front and the free people of the world until the complete disappearance of this fake regime.

Morocco

Morocco, Senegal Sign Ombudsman Cooperation Agreement

The Morocco and Senegal have agreed to work together to exchange complaints and concerns from citizens in both countries, who feel aggrieved by unfair or discriminatory decisions.

The cooperation agreement was signed on Tuesday in Rabat between the institution of the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco and its counterpart in Senegal, with the aim of strengthening cooperation and exchanging experiences and best practices in the field of institutional mediation.

Under the terms of this agreement, signed by the Moroccan Ombudsman, Mohamed Benalilou, and his Senegalese counterpart, Demba Kandji, the two parties undertake to cooperate, particularly in terms of exchanging complaints and grievances from citizens of both countries who feel they have been the victims of decisions or actions contrary to the principles of justice and equality before the law.

Under the terms of the document, the two parties will also develop training and capacity-building programmes for the executives of the two institutions and carry out activities linked to the development of administrative governance, as well as preparing and implementing programmes and projects of common interest in their respective areas of competence.



In a statement on this occasion, the Mediator of the Kingdom stressed that the signing of this agreement is part of the implementation of the royal vision for South-South cooperation and the Kingdom's openness to its African neighbours, noting that this is an opportunity to share the experience that Morocco has accumulated in the field of mediation (ombudsman) with African countries.

For his part, the Senegalese Ombudsman expressed his country's desire to benefit from the Kingdom's extensive experience in this field, adding that the agreement would strengthen relations between the two institutions through the exchange of expertise and training in the field of mediation.

The Mediator of the Republic of Senegal is on a working visit to the Kingdom's Ombudsman institution, which will end next Thursday.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) Sabina Aliyeva Holds Meeting with Delegation from Uzbekistan

The Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Sabina Aliyeva, met with the First Deputy Director of the National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mirzatillo Tillabayev, and the Director of the Institute of State and Law of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Murodjon Turqunov, Azernews reports.

During the meeting, the Commissioner noted the close friendship and brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, highlighting the effective cooperation in various fields, including the protection of human rights and freedoms. She expressed gratitude for the construction of a school in the liberated Fuzuli region by Uzbekistan.

The Ombudsman provided detailed information to the guests about her activities in the field of human rights and freedoms, emphasizing the importance of cooperation with international organizations and mentioning the existing relationships with foreign ombudsmen and national human rights institutions.

The Commissioner discussed the amendments to the Constitutional Law "On the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan," stating that her mandate has been expanded in areas such as the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and children, and the prevention of discrimination.

Aliyeva also talked about the activities of the National Preventive Mechanism, noting that visits are conducted to places where individuals cannot leave of their own free will, and the conditions of treatment and detention are investigated.



She highlighted that Azerbaijan will host the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change this year, and mentioned that preparations for the event are underway at a high level. The Ombudsman also announced the upcoming Baku Forum of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions.

During the meeting, the parties exchanged views on a number of other issues of mutual interest and future cooperation prospects.

Turkmenistan

The Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan Aims to be Accredited in the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions

An online meeting was held in the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan between the Authorized Representative for Human Rights in Turkmenistan - Ombudsman Yazdursun Gurbannazarova and the Secretariat of the Subcommittee on Accreditation in the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues related to the planned accreditation of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan in the GANHRI, as well as to promote further strengthening of the institutional capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman in accordance with the Paris Principles.

Accreditation to the GANHRI is one of the priority goals of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan, which is achieved through close cooperation with a number of international partners, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner



for Human Rights (OHCHR). Issues of bilateral cooperation with this UN structure were discussed at the meeting of the Authorized Representative for Human Rights in Turkmenistan Yazdursun Gurbannazarova and the Regional Representative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Central Asia, Matilda Bogner, held on the 28th of May, 2024.

As noted during the conversation, within the framework of cooperation with OHCHR in Central Asia, various activities were carried out to strengthen the capacity of the Ombudsman's Office and to raise public awareness of human rights issues. In this regard, OHCHR Regional Representative Matilda Bogner emphasized the importance of further strengthening bilateral cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan in areas such as the protection and promotion of human rights, assistance in strengthening the capacity of the Ombudsman's Office as a key condition for the planned accreditation in the GANHRI.

The Strategic Plan of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan for 2024-2028 notes that the Office is accredited by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and sets the task to prepare and submit an application to the GANHRI for accreditation of the Office with the support of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (ATF), structural UN entities and other partners.

Bahrain

Ombudswoman Meets Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights MENA Representative

Ombudswoman Ghada Hamid Habib met today with Mazen Shaqoura, Regional Representative for the Middle East and North Africa of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Beirut upon his visit to Bahrain, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ombudswoman Habib welcomed the visiting official and expressed appreciation for the ongoing communication between the Ombuds Office and the United Nation's agencies, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Development Programme, particularly in the context of joint training projects to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

The two sides discussed the role of the Ombuds Office and its contribution to promoting respect for



human rights within the framework of the judiciary and independent human rights institutions in cooperation with the relevant agencies in the kingdom.

She highlighted the interest in developing training and development activities and applying best practices, such as guidelines issued by meetings and resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

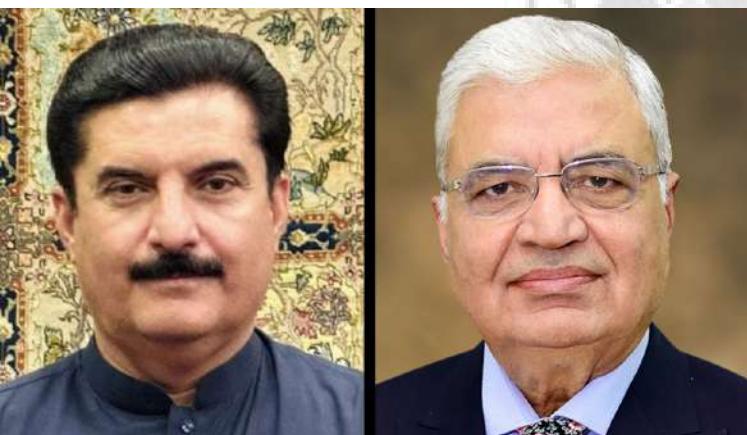
Habib emphasised the commitment to continue cooperation and communication with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This is in line with the approach of transparency and applying standards of meaningful communication to serve the public, and ensuring respect for human rights in the areas of law enforcement and monitoring reform and rehabilitation centers and pretrial detention centers.

OIC OMBUDSMAN OF PAKISTAN

Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan

Governor KP Acknowledges Role of Federal Ombudsman Office in Resolving Public Grievances

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi here on Monday acknowledged the important role of Federal Ombudsman Office in resolution of public grievances. The Governor expressed these views during a meeting with Mushtaq Ahmad Jadoon, regional head of Federal Ombudsperson Secretariat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Mushtaq Jadoon presented performance report of the Peshawar region, including Mardan,



Peshawar, and Kohat divisions, to the KP Governor.

He highlighted the ongoing efforts taken on the directives of Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi to quickly address public complaints against federal ministries and divisions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said that the government departments are government departments are servants of the people and are accountable.

He instructed federal ministries to promptly submit formal reports to the Governor House regarding complaints received from the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat. He stressed that Governor House is an institution of constitutional significance, ensuring the protection of law and upholding its sanctity under all circumstances.

Meanwhile, Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi's intervention has facilitated the payment of outstanding dues to a retired army employee.

Ali Khan, a resident of Mansehra and a former employee of the FF had complained to the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat's regional office in Abbottabad against CMA Lahore, citing long-pending arrears amounting to Rs133,235. Upon receiving the complaint, Regional In-Charge Abdul Ghafoor Baig issued notices to CMA Lahore. Following a thorough investigation, CMA Lahore issued a cheque for Rs133,235 to Ali Khan.

Baig highlighted that the Federal Ombudsman's institution serves as a public court, providing prompt and inexpensive justice. He reiterated that the federal ombudsman is regarded as the court of the poor, ensuring equal, immediate, and affordable justice as a guardian of human rights.

He shared details of various programmes aimed at delivering justice close to the public, including open courts at the tehsil level.

These initiatives allow people from remote areas to present their complaints to authorised officers of the federal ombudsman, with media involvement to raise public awareness and resolve issues.

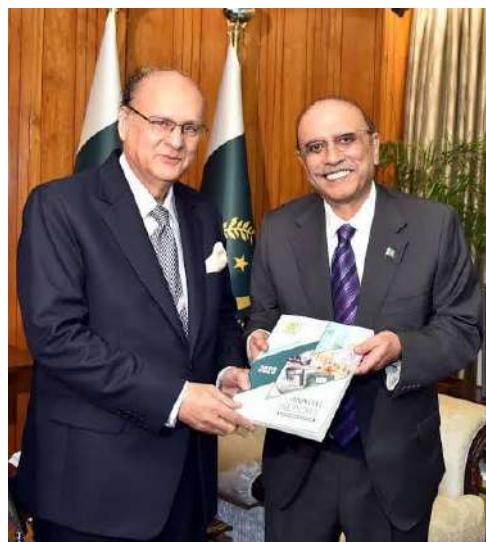
Banking Ombudsman of Pakistan

Banking Mohtasib Provides Relief of Rs 681.07 Million to Banking Customers During First Half of 2024

The Banking Mohtasib Pakistan has granted monetary relief amounting to Rs 681.07 million to the banking customers by disposing of 12,568 complaints during the first half (January to August) of the current calendar year, 2024. Last year, during the same period, relief of approximately Rs.- 539.72 million was provided to the banking customers by disposing of over twelve thousand (12,015) complaints. During the current year, about 96% (12,111) complaints were resolved amicably while only 4% (457) complaints required resolution through Hearings which required issuance of formal Orders from Banking Mohtasib.

In spite of new measures announced by the State Bank of Pakistan effective from January, 2024, there is no letup in the number of complaints being lodged against

Unveiling BMP's annual report for the year 2023, Sirajuddin Aziz explained that there was a 21 percent increase in public complaints filed with the BMP office against commercial banks in 2023 compared to 2022. However, there was a significant decrease in the number of complaints received on the Prime Minister's portal, which explains the overall decrease of 5 percent in the total number of complaints in 2023. He revealed that relief of around Rs. 6.4 billion was provided to banking customers by the institution of Banking Mohtasib since its inception in 2005. He said that the Annual Report 2023 of Banking Mohtasib was presented to the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari on July 19, 2024, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.



commercial banks as Banking Mohtasib Office has received 14,058 new complaints up-to August 30, 2024, including 3,457 from Prime Minister's Portal. With a view to protecting the banking customers from fraud and forgeries, the Banking Mohtasib Pakistan, Mr. Sirajuddin Aziz has stressed upon the banking customers not to disclose their personal and financial information to any third person. He has also advised the banking customers that on receipt of suspicious calls, they should immediately approach the nearest branch of their bank or contact the helpline of the bank.

Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan

Transformation in Performance of the Tax Ombudsman's Institution

In a significant stride towards enhancing taxpayer's rights and fairness in tax administration, the Office of the Tax Ombudsman has experienced a remarkable transformation under the leadership of Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, the Hon'ble Federal Tax Ombudsman. Mr. Khalid Javed (Registrar to FTO) recently spoke to the media team, highlighting pivotal developments and achievements of the Federal Tax Ombudsman's office.

Established in the year 2000, the Federal Tax Ombudsman's office initially faced challenges with tepid responses and a limited number of complaints. However, the appointment of a seasoned Tax expert as Ombudsman sparked a notable turnaround. Under this new leadership, there has been a resolution of complaints. Notably, Section 33, of FTO ordinance designed for informal resolutions of disputes, has witnessed a significant rise in its utilization by adopting an all-encompassing approach in addressing taxpayer issues promptly and justly.

In a recent media briefing, Mr. Khalid Javed, Registrar to the FTO, highlighted the remarkable progress made under Dr. Jah's leadership. According to the six-month report, the FTO Secretariat received 5947 complaints, of which 4928 have been disposed of. This is a significant improvement compared to 2023, where 3878 complaints were received, and 3923 were disposed of in the corresponding period.

The intervention of the FTO has been particularly impactful in expediting the settlement of delayed refunds. Over the last six months, a total of Rs 17,317.74 million has been refunded to aggrieved taxpayers, a significant increase from the Rs 6,316.5 million refunded in 2023. This transformation in the performance of the Tax Ombudsman's institution reflects a commitment to upholding taxpayer's rights and improving the efficiency of tax administration, setting a new standard for responsiveness and fairness in the processes.

Dr. Jah, the Hon'ble Federal Tax Ombudsman, has adopted proactive measures by initiating all time high number of own-motion investigations. These investigations target systemic maladministration within federal tax administration, underscoring a strong commitment to rectify underlying issues affecting taxpayers at larger scale.

Central to this success is the expertise of a dedicated team of seasoned advisors who have played a crucial role in conducting extensive outreach activities. These efforts are aimed at educating taxpayers about their rights and the services provided by the Tax Ombudsman Secretariat thereby fostering greater awareness, trust, and confidence among the taxpayers.

The Honorable FTO has been instrumental in spearheading initiatives that enhance taxpayer confidence in the institution. By actively addressing concerns and advocating for fairness in tax administration, the Tax Ombudsman institution has firmly established itself as a reliable premier organization for redressing grievances and ensuring equitable treatment.

A recent landmark decision exemplifies the Advisors commitment to duty and resolution of tax hardships. Acting on several complaints under Section 10(1) of the Federal Tax Ombudsman



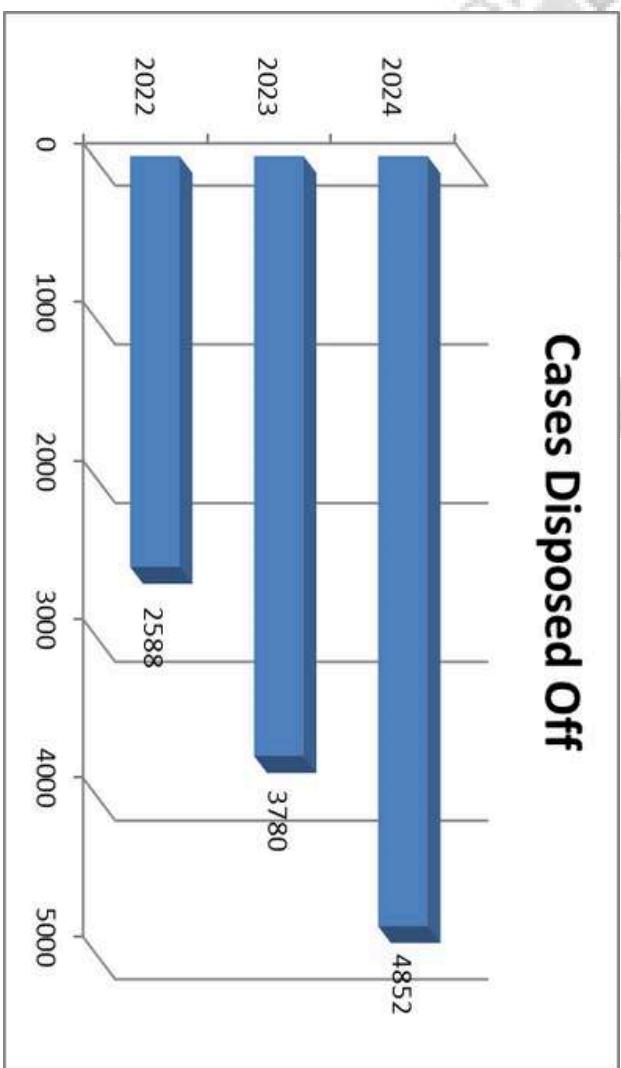
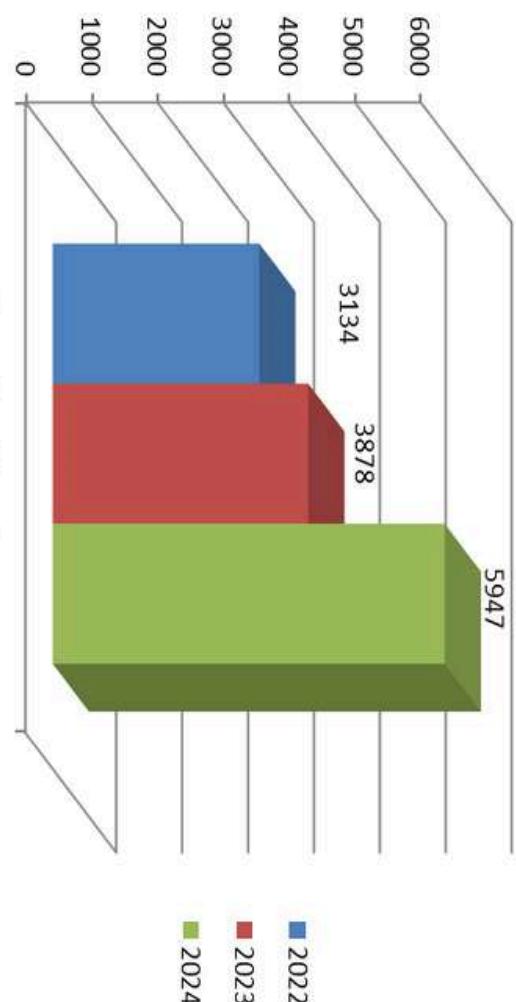
Ordinance, the Hon'ble FTO issued recommendations to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) regarding excessive withholding tax deductions made by the Punjab Council of Arts and Culture. The FTO's findings concluded that these deductions were unjustified as per departmental stance i-e u/s 156 of the ordinance . The recommendations ensured that tax deductions align with the appropriate sections of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001 i-e section 153 (1) (b) and also includes instructions for withholding agents to refrain from withholding taxes in cases below the threshold of Rs 30,000 thereby alleviating financial burdens on low-income individuals.

These developments underline a growing trust in the Tax Ombudsman's capability to protect taxpayers rights and promote fair tax practices. The FTO Secretariat enhanced performance and expanded mandate underscore its evolving role as a pivotal institution overseeing federal tax practices, ensuring transparency, accountability, and fairness in tax administration.

Six-Month Performance Highlights of the Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Office

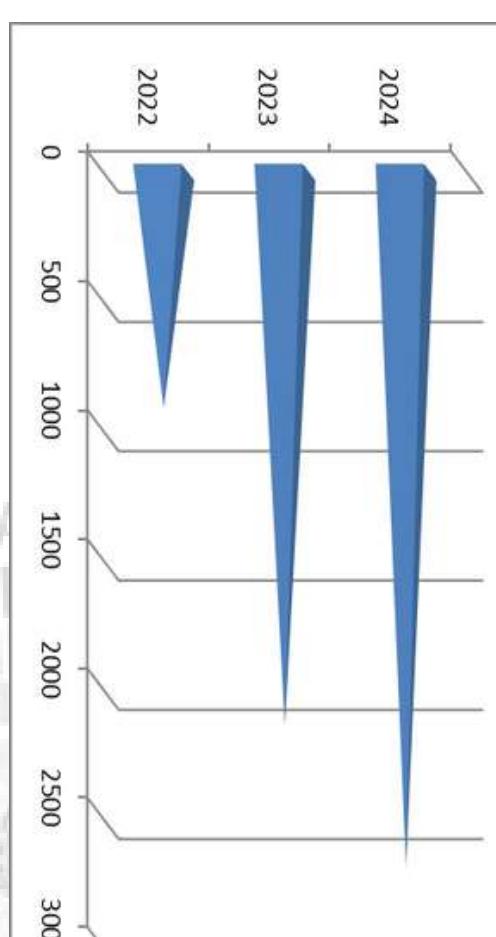
Comparative Analysis of Last 3 years

**Cases Registered in the first six months of the years
2022-2024 (Jan-June)**



Implementation in the first six months of 2024 in comparison with the previous years of the same period

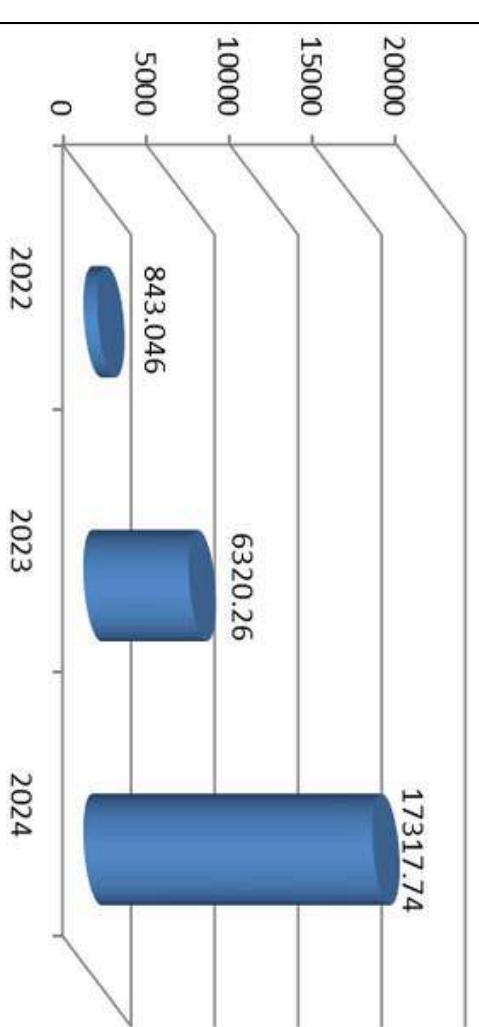
Implemented



Amount Refunded in Millions

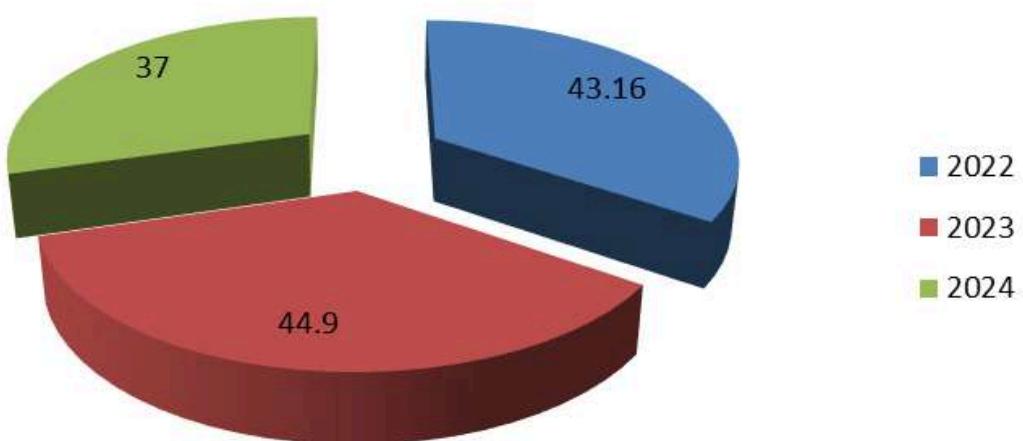
Rs. in Millions

Amount Refunded



Average Time taken for disposal of complaints

Average Days Taken



FOSPAH

Inclusive Justice Symposium-South Asia, Islamabad, 2024

“Implementation, implementation and implementation. That is crucial for ensuring access to constitutional guarantee of equal rights of citizens”. Ms. Fauzia Viqar, Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace, while speaking at the two-day regional symposium on inclusive justice organised by the Federal Judicial Academy, stated that the country has struggled with economic empowerment of women and, highlighted the gap between efforts and tangible outcomes. Despite numerous initiatives, progress on women's empowerment has been unsatisfactory. She stressed on the need for implementation of legislative and policy commitments to gender equality; accountability and; leadership to make access to justice inclusive. Leadership must be exercised not only at the strategic level but more importantly in everyday life to prevent casual sexism and discrimination against women if we want to achieve “Meaningful Inclusivity” Endorsing the Ombudsperson, UN country Director Ms. Sharmeela Rasool reiterated that “Enough is Enough” and that we should promote “HE FOR SHE” Campaign to place responsibility on male leadership also. The Federal Judicial Academy successfully concluded its two-day regional symposium on inclusive justice.



The presentation was followed by court proceedings in harassment and property complaints, which the Officers observed giving them a practical demonstration of the procedure followed at FOSPAH.

Meanwhile, The Youth General Assembly (YGA) organised the National Law Moot on Workplace Harassment from 09.03.2024 to 11.03.2024 in collaboration with Lord's College international in Islamabad. The finale of the moot was held at the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection held from August 28–29, 2024. Supported by

the European Union and UN Women, the event gathered key stakeholders to discuss and promote inclusivity within the judicial system. Meanwhile, "Defence Ministry Champions 'No Means No': Seminar Highlights Zero Tolerance Against Harassment" The Ministry of Defence has taken a proactive stance in implementing sexual harassment laws within its organization. On August 25th, 2024, the Federal Ombudsperson Secretariat for Protection against Harassment, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence, organized an enlightening seminar on "Protection Against Harassment." The event was attended by Mr. Fahim Zafar Khan Senior Joint Secretary, Mr. Arshad Mehmood Joint Secretary, Mr. Shahzad Ahmed Joint Secretary, and other staff from the MOD and Navy.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Tahir Pervez, the Deputy Secretary of Defence commended Ms. Fauzia Viqar Honorable Ombudsperson for her advocacy of women's empowerment, equal rights, and creating harassment-free workplaces. In her address Ms. Viqar elaborated on the mission and vision of FOSPAH, emphasizing the critical importance of consent and drawing a clear line against harassment. The legal team from FOSPAH delivered a comprehensive presentation on FOSPAH's mandate and operations, covering crucial topics such as harassment as a criminal offense, the rights of the Accused, timely reporting procedures, handling unwelcome advances, and the role of Inquiry Committees. The session concluded with a robust question and answer segment, where attendees engaged in detailed discussions on these vital issues. The seminar underscored a commitment to zero tolerance against harassment, marking a significant step towards fostering a safer and respectful work environment within the Ministry of Defence.

Federal Insurance Ombudsman

President Directs Insurance Ombudsman to Ensure Speedy Justice

President Asif Ali Zardari has directed Federal Insurance Ombudsman to provide speedy and cost-free justice to aggrieved insurance policy holders against maladministration of insurance companies.

Talking to newly-appointed Federal Insurance Ombudsman Mumtaz Ali Shah in Islamabad today, he stressed to ensure quick disposal of complaints to provide monetary relief to maximum number of citizens.



The President also advised FIO to use modern technology tools to increase disposal of complaints. Meanwhile, Federal Insurance Ombudsman Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah expressed satisfaction over the performance of the all officers Ombudsman Secretariat and other Regional Offices. Chairing a monthly performance review meeting here at FIO Secretariat, Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah directed that as per the rules, all complaints registered with the *insurance Ombudsman Secretariat must be redressed within 60 days. He asked all advisers and Consultants to spread awareness among the general public regarding institution of Federal Insurance Ombudsman so that they could be able to get remedy by filing Insurance related matters. He also directed them to visit Chamber of Commerce offices as mostly traders and business community members always facing insurance related issues.

Federal Insurance Ombudsman also asked officers concerned to distribute pamphlets and stick banners over offices to disseminate awareness among general public regarding the institution. He also announced to set up a cell to ensure implementation over decisions made by Federal Insurance Ombudsman office and asked all Insurance Companies are bound to implement decisions of the FIO office. The DG FIO Secretariat Mubashir Naeem Siddiqui, Advisers Syed Ayaz Mehmood, Abdul Subhan Memon, Consultants Nazar Muhammad Kalhoro, Umer Farooq and others were present in the meeting.

Punjab Ombudsman

Provincial Ombudsman of Punjab Calls on the President of Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman

Major Azam Suleman Khan (R), the Provincial Ombudsman of Punjab and member of Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman, paid a visit to Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, President of the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman and Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan. This meeting was held at the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman Secretariat and focused on the role of the Provincial Ombudsman of Punjab in addressing public grievances and raising



awareness about the Ombudsman's functions.

During the discussion, Major Azam highlighted the initiatives of his office in resolving public complaints in an efficient and transparent manner. He emphasized the importance of public education about the Ombudsman's role in ensuring justice and accountability within the provincial administration. Dr. Jah commended Major Azam's efforts and reiterated the significance of collaborative efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the Ombudsman institutions across Pakistan. Both officials agreed on the necessity of continuous dialogue and cooperation to improve public trust and ensure the timely redressal of grievances.

The Executive Secretary of the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman, Mr. Almas Ali Jovindah, was also in attendance, and offered his perspectives to further enhance and elevate the stature of Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman in promoting best practices of Ombudsman across all 14 Provincial and Federal Ombudsmen of Pakistan. The meeting concluded with Dr. Jah giving Major Azam Suleman Khan (R) a souvenir and shared commitment of both ombudsmen to strengthen the mission of Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman by ensuring that it serves as a platform for upholding rights of aggrieved Pakistani citizens and addressing their concerns against the public functionaries.

Punjab Ombudsperson

Honourable Nabila Hakim Khan Hands Over Cheque Worth Rs 4.4 Million to Aggrieved Women in Inheritance Case

In August, the Ombudsperson Punjab, Miss Nabila Hakim Ali Khan, made a significant contribution to protecting women's rights by ensuring a group of 11 individuals from the Regional Office Multan received their rightful inheritance. She handed over a cheque of 4.4 million rupees, reflecting her commitment to justice and fairness. The merit-based decision was met with immense gratitude and appreciation from the complainants, marking a crucial step towards securing women's inheritance rights and ensuring their well-being. Additionally, we were honored to host a delegation from the Sri Lankan High Commission. This visit facilitated a productive dialogue on collaborative efforts and the exchange of best practices in promoting and protecting civil rights, further strengthening bilateral relations.

Our dedication to empowering civil society was further demonstrated through a series of training sessions aimed at addressing critical issues such as workplace harassment and the enforcement of women's property rights. These sessions were well-received and highlighted our commitment to raising awareness and building capacity within the community. Moreover, we visited the office of the Insurance Muhtasib to explore opportunities for collaboration. This visit aimed at enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of our work through shared expertise and resources, ensuring that the rights of individuals are upheld more effectively.

August has been a month of significant progress and meaningful engagement for the Ombudsperson Punjab's office. Our various initiatives underscore our ongoing mission to protect and promote the rights of all individuals, with a particular emphasis on justice and equity for women. By fostering dialogue, providing education, and enhancing collaboration, we continue to work towards creating a just and equitable society. These activities not only reflect our commitment to this mission but also our dedication to continuous improvement and effective service delivery.



Sindh Ombudsman

Open Sale of LPG Cylinders: Sindh Ombudsman Takes Suo Motu Notice

Provincial Ombudsman Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput has taken suo motu notice on sale of LPG cylinders in residential areas and stockpiling of cylinders at food outlets. The Provincial Ombudsman has taken suo motu notice and said that the explosion of LPG gas cylinders in a residential



area in Hyderabad in the last few days which resulted in the loss of many precious human lives. The presence of a large number of LPG cylinders on food streets in residential areas can lead to tragic accidents on which the district administrations of Karachi and Hyderabad have not taken any adequate measures.

The provincial ombudsman has said in the order that Karachi and Hyderabad are the mega cities of Sindh and surprisingly no government agency, district administration and EPA Environment Protection Agency have taken any notice of the incident in Hyderabad and the presence of cylinders on the food street, and action has not been taken, which falls under the category of mismanagement; therefore, legal action should be taken under Section 9 (1) of Suo moto Notice Act on this matter in Karachi and Hyderabad keeping in mind the public interest.

Meanwhile, a workshop was held on Friday here at the Sindh Madressatul Islam University (SMIU) Karachi, which was chaired by Provincial Ombudsman Sindh Muhammad Sohail Rajput to select students of SMIU as Brand Ambassadors of Provincial Ombudsman Sindh. The students will be given task to disseminate information about the role and functions of the Ombudsman among fellow students and general public. In this connection the Ombudsman Sindh addressed a large number of students of SMIU at the Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto Auditorium of the varsity where he highlighted the role of Ombudsman Office in providing administrative justice to the public and the key features of his initiative of Brand Ambassador Program initiated through regional subsidy of International Ombudsman Institute with aims and objectives which includes disseminating the information, promoting civic responsibilities and raising community outreach through students being inspiring future leaders. He added that the students selected as Ambassadors will build a bridge between Ombudsman office and students in particular.

Ombudsperson Office, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

KP Ombudsperson Attended Annual Stakeholders Learning Session Held in Bhurban

The Ombudsperson of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ms. Rukhshanda Naz, and the Registrar, Ombudsperson, Mr. Muhammad Masood Afridi, attended the annual stakeholders learning session held from July 2, 2024, to July 3, 2024, in Bhurban. The KP Ombudsperson delivered a



session on July 3, 2024, shedding light on the role and responsibilities of the Ombudsperson in safeguarding women's property rights. She highlighted that a total of 1,840 complaints have been received from women to protect their right to property, out of which 34 complaints belong to women having property in Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) or Ex-FATA. The Ombudsperson is committed to handing over possession to the rightful owners at the earliest possible time. So far, 635 complaints have been resolved, 31 applications are on hold, and 153 complaints have been referred to the concerned institutions.

The Ombudsperson's Office was formerly conducting online hearings in certain cases for the ease and convenience of those women litigants who are either residing abroad or living in far-flung areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The online hearings were conducted through an official mobile device, which made it difficult to clearly see and hear both parties on the small screen. To address this issue, an LED screen, along with other connected accessories, has been installed in the office of the Ombudsperson. This ensures the audibility and visibility of litigants to other parties and helps better understand the stance of litigants appearing for hearings online.

OICOA in Media

REDPEPPER

IGG orders knifing of 25 Kyenjojo district officials over fake academic papers

The Chief Administrative Officer of Kyenjojo District has been directed to cause the District Service Commission to dismiss 25 Parish Chiefs for uttering forged diploma certificates to gain employment and delete them from the payroll.

The Deputy Inspector General of Government, Ms. Anne Twinomugisha Muhairwe, signed the order after investigations into the matter by the Inspectorate of Government's Fort Portal Regional Office were concluded. She also directed the CAO to handover the Parish Chiefs to the Kyenjojo District Police Commander for further investigations into the matter and cause prosecution of the same officers.

Kyenjojo District Local Government recruited 71 Parish Chiefs between September and October, 2021. However, 25 of them were found to have uttered forged diploma certificates, contrary to Section A-c (18) of the Public Service Standing Orders, 2021.

The diploma certificates were purportedly issued by Uganda Pentecostal University, Kyambogo University, Bishop Stuart University, Mountain of the Moon University, Nsamzi Training Institute of Social Development, Kampala University, Makerere University, Kampala International University, and Uganda Management Institute.

However, all these institutions discounted the diploma transcripts presented, noting that they do not have any records relating to the above-named persons.

The officers include; Mr. Thomas Kato Kyaligonza, Ms. Florence Nyeakuhuma, Mr. Saul Baganyire, Mr. Peter Nuwahereza, Ms. Constance Orikiriza, Mr. Mark Kato, Mr. Adeo Bagenda Kiiza, Mr. Amos Baguma, Mr. Richard Mwanguhyo, Mr. Wilfred Amanyire, Mr. Charles Kusemererwa, Mr. James Tusime, Ms. Alice Komuhimbo, Ms. Yosinta Kemigisa, Mr. Aloysius Twijuka, Mr. Timothy Mpuga Ruguruka, Mr. Yudita Twesige, Mr. Daniel Mugabe, Ms. Lucy Murangi, Mr. Peter Ivan Mwebaze K, Ms. Mary Gorret Aliganyira, Ms. Violet Kwikiriza, Ms. Zasm Kahwa, Ms. Mastura Karungi and Mr. John Isingoma.

LEADPakistan

OICOA formally initiated Internship Exchange Program between Pakistan and Morocco

Tayyaba Munir, the intern who was hosted by the Moroccan Ombudsman Institution expresses her experience in this article.

"The people of Morocco are more royal than the royalty itself" is a phrase which came to my mind when I was witnessing hospitality in every corner of Morocco. On the occasion of Fête du Trône (Throne Day), when His Majesty the King Mohammed VI formally ascended to the throne, I feel a special association with it just like the people of Morocco. My heart rejoices with the Moroccans on this day to celebrate with them the accession of a monarch who is truly devoted to its subjects, a monarch whose love drips from citizens of the kingdom, a monarch whose compassion makes his subjects feel regal. I had this wonderful opportunity to represent Pakistan and the Federal Tax Ombudsman Secretariat at L'Institution du Médiateur du Royaume (IMR) in Rabat, Morocco from 1 July 2024 till 21 July 2024. This opportunity was created under the umbrella of OIC Ombudsman Association and was the initiative of Secretary General OICOA, Honorable Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan Dr. Asif Jah. In this initiative a significant role was also played by Executive Secretary OICOA, Mr Almas Jovindah who considers it his passion to empower not only the OICOA members but also the youth. The proposal for this Exchange Program was put forward by them at the 10th OICOA Board Meeting which was approved by all the Board Members and thus opened the mighty gates of a scintillating opportunity for the youth of all OICOA member countries. In supporting this venture, the OICOA Board Member, Mediator of Morocco, Mr. Mohamed Benaliouf also actively participated which led to signing of an MoU between IMR and FTO in June 2024 during 11th OICOA Board Meeting which took place in Marrakech. Thus, due to the contribution and enthusiasm of all these honorable personalities I was honored to be among the first batch of this OICOA Exchange Program which took place in July 2024. Now coming towards my experience in Morocco, I would like to share the first few seconds when I entered the territory of Morocco and I landed at the Mohammed V International Airport in the famous Casablanca. The brilliant red flag which adorned every road, every street, every building of Morocco was pacifying for me in the same way the red soil of the country which I got to witness from the window of the plane. I was clueless about the attitude of the locals, however when the officials from the IMR received me I felt a bit at ease. I still remember the first few words they told me that, 'It is your home, so feel at home', which was taken by me as a formal statement at that time. But what I didn't know was the fact that after spending these three weeks I will feel as if Rabat really is my home. During this experience, I was not only able to observe the concept of institutional mediation with all its intricacies but also had the opportunity to engage with the citizens, both within the IMR or the general public. If I have to define an average Moroccan citizen in one sentence then without any second thought I would say, 'a quintessential friend with a wonderful smile and a heart of gold'. It will seem to be an exaggeration until one has first hand experience of interacting with the locals on the roads of Morocco which in itself is a delight for the eyes. The Medinas of Morocco are world famous maybe for their aesthetic appeal but for me they are much more than that. The people you meet in every shop will leave a long lasting impression on you not only by their ease of communication but also by the way they welcome you in their country, with open arms and making you feel like one of them. Now coming towards the food I had in Morocco, I would not hesitate to say that they not only have big hearts but also have big portion sizes! As the food was always too much for me, it allowed me to save some for the beautiful cats which inhabit the streets of Morocco. The way Moroccans treat animals is what I have always idealized to see: cardboard boxes by the doors of every shop and home, cat food placed nicely in small pots with water. This is not the end, as you will also see some stray cats who got injured somehow with small bandages and fresh dressing everyday! This is Morocco, this is how Moroccans are, this is how they make any foreigner feel a Moroccan at heart.

TURKMENPORTAL

The Report of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan for 2023 has been published

The Report of the Authorized Representative for Human Rights in Turkmenistan (Ombudsman) on his activities and the human rights situation in the country in 2023 has been published.

The purpose of the Report is to review the milestones achieved in the field of improving the standard of living of humans and citizens in the country, respect for human rights, as well as the work done by the Ombudsman within the limits of his powers in the field of protecting the rights and freedoms of humans and citizens.

The report covers the following key aspects:

- Review of the human rights situation in Turkmenistan;
- Civil and political rights;
- Economic, social and cultural rights;
- Analysis of citizens' appeals;
- Contribution to improving national legislation;
- Participation in public events and raising awareness of human rights;
- The international cooperation;
- Recommendations of the Ombudsman;

The document contains statistical data and quantitative indicators for each section.
The full text of the report is available on the website of the State News Agency of Turkmenistan.

Yazdansara Gurbannazarova has held the position of Ombudsman of Turkmenistan since March 20, 2017.

AZERNEWS

Azerbaijan's Ombudsman Sabina Aliyeva holds meeting with delegation from Uzbekistan

The Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Sabina Aliyeva, met with the First Deputy Director of the National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mirzatillo Tillabayev, and the Director of the Institute of State and Law of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Murodjon Turqunov. **Aznews** reports. During the meeting, the Commissioner noted the close friendship and brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, highlighting the effective cooperation in various fields, including the protection of human rights and freedoms. She expressed gratitude for the construction of a school in the liberated Fuzuli region by Uzbekistan.

The Ombudsman provided detailed information to the guests about her activities in the field of human rights and freedoms, emphasizing the importance of cooperation with international organizations and mentioning the existing relationships with foreign ombudsmen and national human rights institutions.

The Commissioner discussed the amendments to the Constitutional Law "On the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan," stating that her mandate has been expanded in areas such as the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and children, and the prevention of discrimination.

Aliyeva also talked about the activities of the National Preventive Mechanism, noting that visits are conducted to places where individuals cannot leave of their own free will, and the conditions of treatment and detention are investigated.

She highlighted that Azerbaijan will host the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change this year, and mentioned that preparations for the event are underway at a high level.

The Ombudsman also announced the upcoming Baku Forum of Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions.

During the meeting, the parties exchanged views on a number of other issues of mutual interest and future cooperation prospects.

malaymail

Govt plans unified ombudsman model to enhance public complaints resolution, Dewan Rakyat told

KUALA LUMPUR, July 3 — The government is considering creating a unique model of Ombudsman Malaysia that combines the Public Complaints Bureau and the Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (EAC), the Dewan Rakyat was told today.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) M. Kulasegaran said that the government is committed to establishing Ombudsman Malaysia as an independent body to receive and address complaints related to the federal public service delivery system.

He said that the proposal to establish Ombudsman Malaysia was presented at the Law and Institutional Reform Agenda Implementation Committee Meeting on April 29, where it was decided that a holistic engagement session would be held for three months to determine the mechanism for its establishment.

"This decision was also agreed upon in the Cabinet meeting on June 12. The process of appointing committee members from each involved agency for the engagement session is now underway.

"This engagement session is important to ensure that the views and needs of all stakeholders are transparently and comprehensively taken into account for the benefit of the people and the country," he said in reply to a question from Ahmad Tamizi Sulaiman (PN-Sik) regarding the latest plans to enact the Malaysian Ombudsman Act.

Meanwhile, Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo said that his ministry would study the suitability of provisions on personal data protection in the draft Data Sharing (Omnibus) Bill.

He said that the proposal to enact the Data Sharing (Omnibus) Act, expected this year, was still in the stage of setting the main principles.

"The proposed Data Sharing Bill aims to regulate data sharing between agencies in the public sector, and it is still in the stage of setting its main policy principles.

"The ministry is aware of the need to prevent any misuse of personal data when data is shared between agencies," he said.

He said this in response to a question from William Leong Jee Keen (PH-Selangor), who wanted to know if the ministry planned to include provisions on personal data protection in the Omnibus bill to prevent misuse of personal data by the government. — Bernama

OICOA at Glance

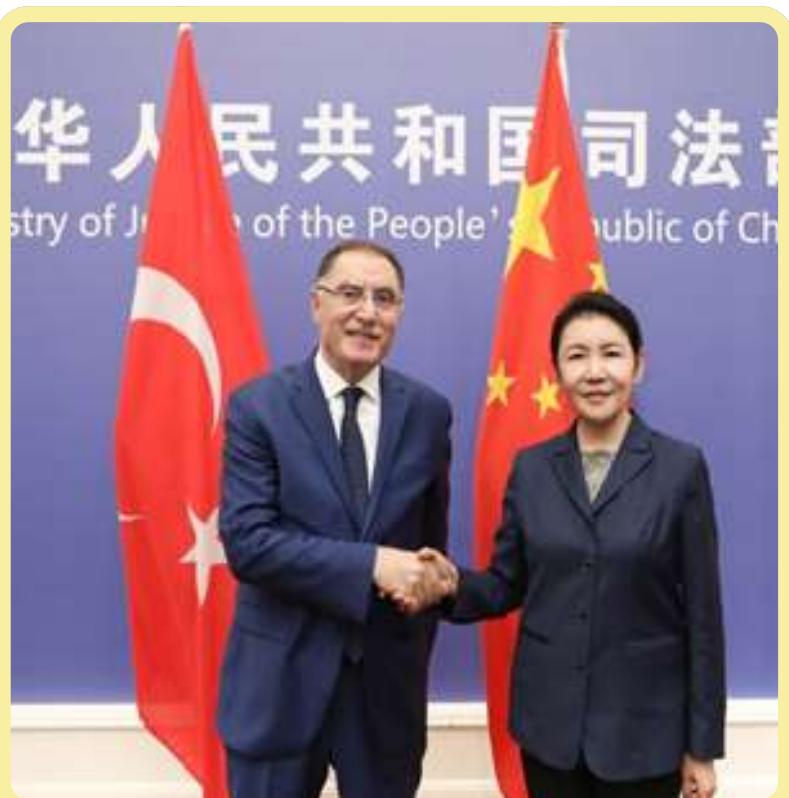
11 OICOA Board Meeting held in Marakech, Morocco









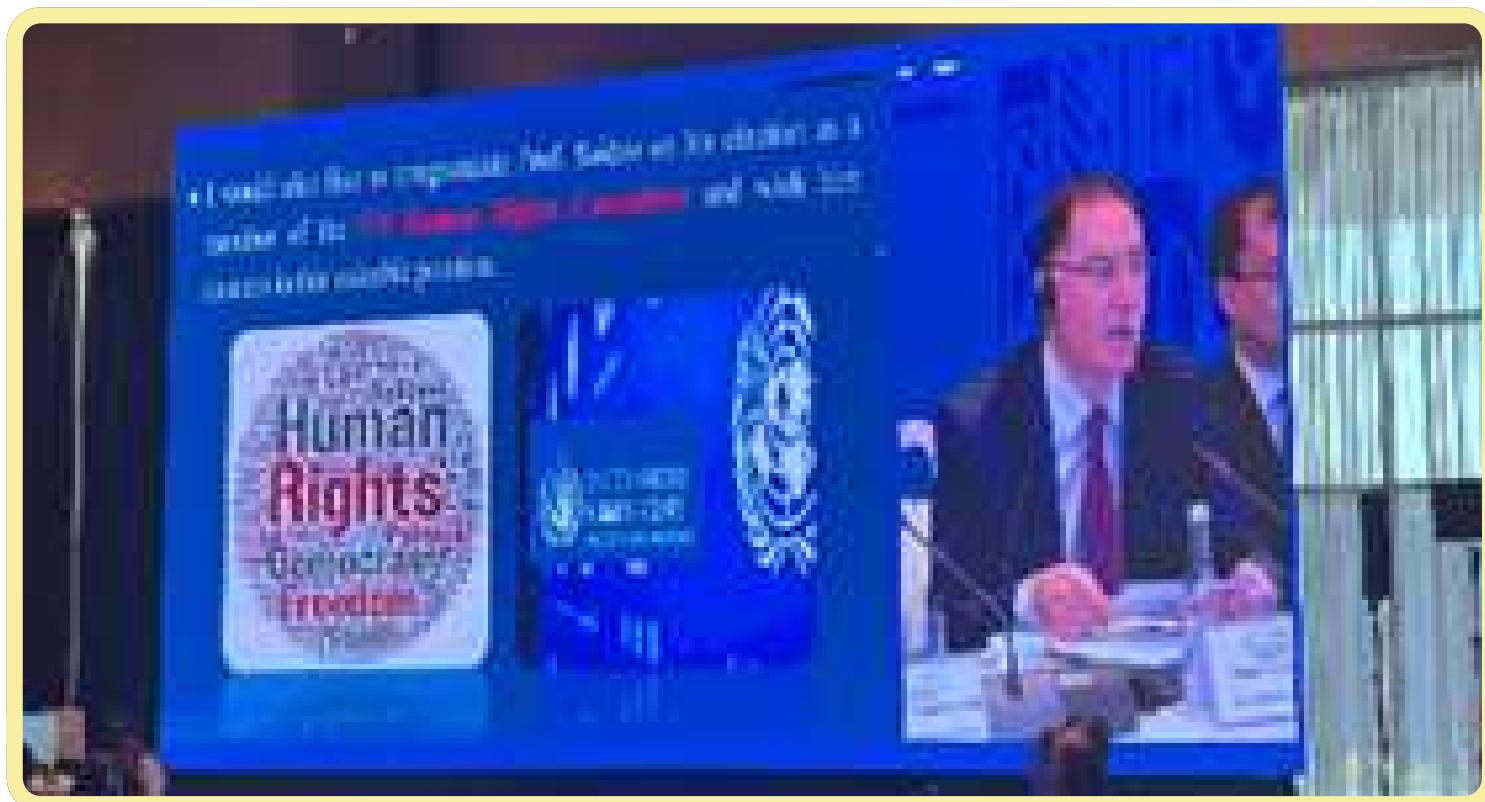




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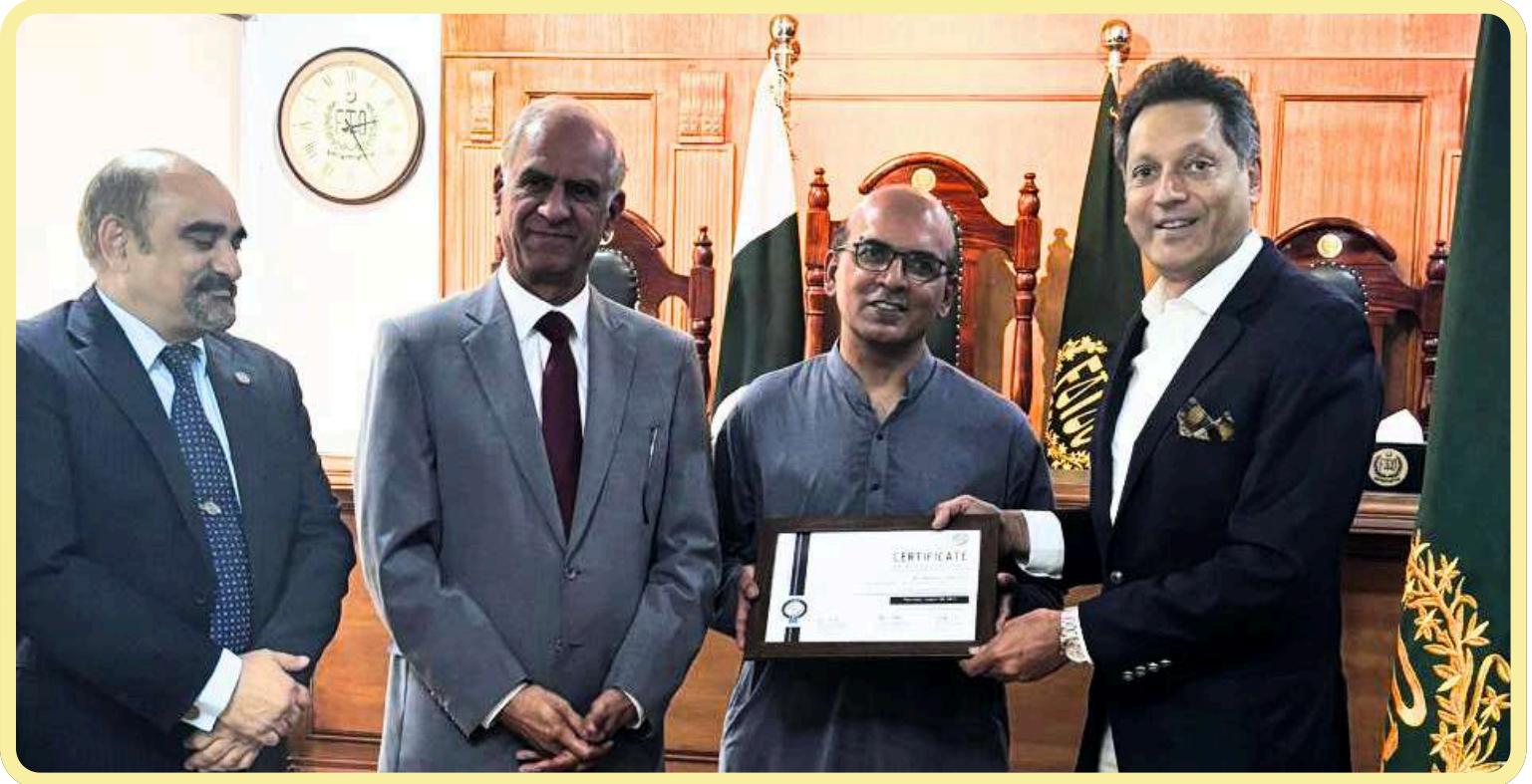






4th OICOA Training Session on 'Ways to Access Information Regarding Maladministration by Public Functionaries'.





Continuations

OICOA's International Internship Exchange Program commences between the Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan and Office of the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco

Continued from Page 8

This experience highlighted the tangible outcomes of OICOA's initiatives in promoting cross-cultural dialogue along with serving to enhance the professional acumen of the two interns. During their recent internship, Ms. Tayyaba Munir and Ms. Momina Zaigham had first-hand exposure to the concept of mediation from an institutional perspective which enabled them to understand the legal framework governing Office of Mediator of Morocco's operations and its vital role in serving as a bridge between the public administration and the citizens. The interns engaged closely with dedicated staff, discovering exemplary practices such as the institution's steadfast commitment to inclusivity for individuals with special needs and vulnerable communities. Another significant element was to observe the active involvement of the Mediator's Office in human rights research both nationally and internationally which further emphasizes its significance as a pivotal body within the Kingdom.