

OIC OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



January 2025



Top news

Farewell to OICOA President H.E. Şeref Malkoç

On 27th November, H.E. Şeref Malkoç, the outgoing Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye and President of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA), convened an online meeting to bid farewell to the board members of OICOA. The virtual gathering brought together Board Members, H.E. Sabina Aliyeva (Human Rights



Hon'ble Mehmet Akarca Officially Assumes Offices as Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye & OICOA President

Hon'ble Mehmet Akarca has officially assumed office as the Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye following a parliamentary vote. Mr. Akarca, who brings with him extensive experience in legal affairs and a strong commitment to justice and governance, was sworn in during a formal ceremony attended by key officials, dignitaries, and fellow members of the public sector.



Pakistan's Federal Tax Ombudsman's Delegation Attends 2nd Specialized Training Session in Bahrain, Organized by OICOA

A delegation from the Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan, led by Senior Advisor Mr. Rana Hassan Akhtar, has arrived in Manama to participate in the 2nd Specialized Training Session organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA).



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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2025

Azerbaijan's Human Rights Ombudsman, Sabina Aliyeva, Engages in Key International Efforts to Promote Democratic Transparency and Human Rights

In a significant demonstration of cross-border collaboration in support of democratic transparency, Sabina Aliyeva, the Human Rights Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, and her team assumed observer roles in Uzbekistan's elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Supreme Assembly and local councils.



Message From Secretary General

Dear Esteemed Members

The OIC Ombudsman Association extends its heartfelt appreciation to H.E. Mr. Seref Malkoc, the outgoing President of the Association and Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye, for his exemplary leadership and steadfast commitment to the cause of ombudsmanship during his tenure. His contributions have significantly advanced the mission of the OIC Ombudsman Association, and we are grateful for his dedication to the values of justice and accountability.

At the same time, we warmly welcome the new President of OICOA and Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye, the Honourable Mehmet Akarca. We have great confidence that under his leadership, we will continue to witness the same level of cooperation, commitment, and excellence that has characterized his predecessor's term. We look forward to working together to further strengthen the role of Ombudsman institutions in promoting good governance across the OIC member states.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the members for rendering great services to our communities across Islamic countries in the year 2024. We have been a flag bearer of protection of human rights and will continue to do so.

Finally, we stand in unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people as they continue to endure unimaginable suffering. We strongly condemn the ongoing Israeli military actions in Palestine, which have led to the tragic loss of over 50,000 Palestinian lives. The OIC Ombudsman Association calls for an immediate end to the violence and urges all parties to prioritize peace, justice, and the protection of human rights in accordance with international law.



Let us continue our work to promote justice, peace, and accountability across our member states and beyond.

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

Message From Executive Secretary

Dear Members and Colleagues,

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to H.E. Mr. Seref Malkoc, outgoing President of OICOA, for his exceptional leadership. We welcome Honourable Mehmet Akarca as the new President of OICOA and Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye, and we're confident that under his leadership, OICOA will continue to thrive.

We also extend a warm welcome to H.E. Ms. Ayesha Hamid, the newly appointed Provincial Ombudsman of Punjab, Pakistan, and a worthy member of OICOA. As a renowned attorney and human rights activist, her expertise will undoubtedly enrich our community.

I express my sincere gratitude to Honourable Ghada Hameed, the Ombudsperson of Bahrain, for hosting the delegation from FTO, Pakistan, under the OIC Ombudsman staff-level exchange program. This initiative highlights the importance of fostering stronger ties and knowledge-sharing among our member countries.

I commend Honourable Sabina Aliyeva for her outstanding leadership in organizing the Conference on Climate Change in Baku. Her efforts have provided a valuable platform for discussing global challenges, reflecting our commitment to collaboration and mutual support.



As Executive Secretary, I strongly encourage active participation from all member countries in the Exchange Program. Enhancing cooperation in this regard is crucial, enabling youth and staff to learn and grow within the field of Ombudsman across OIC member states.

Together, let us continue to advance justice, cooperation, and the values of good governance throughout our member states.

Almas Ali Jovindah
Executive Secretary, OICOA



Upcoming Event

Iran to host Fourth General Assembly and Twelfth Board of Directors Meeting of OIC Ombudsman Association

The Islamic Republic of Iran has officially announced its readiness to host the Fourth General Assembly and the Twelfth Board of Directors Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA). These events are scheduled to take place on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 13–14, 2025, in Tehran.

President of the General Inspection Organization of Iran and Vice President of the OICOA Justice Zabihollah Khodaeiyan, emphasized the importance of enhancing international cooperation among Islamic countries to promote justice, peace, and the protection of Muslim rights.

The meeting is expected to provide a platform for the exchange of experiences and collaboration to advance good governance and social justice across member states.



OCIOA Board Meeting marks Successful Tenure of H.E. Şeref Malkoç as President of OICOA



On 27th November 2024, H.E. Şeref Malkoç, the outgoing Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye and President of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA), convened an online meeting to bid farewell to the board members of OICOA. The virtual gathering brought together Board Members, H.E. Sabina Aliyeva (Human Rights Commissioner of Azerbaijan), H.E. Justice Zabiullah Khodaeian (Vice President OICOA & President General Inspection Organization of Iran), H.E. Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah (Secretary General OICOA & Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan), H.E. Ghada Hameed (Ombudsman of Bahrain), and H.E. Mohamed Benalilou (Mediator of Morocco) to honor his contributions and reflect on the association's achievements under his leadership. Hon'ble Executive Secretary, Mr. Almas Ali Jovindah also joined the meeting online. During the meeting, Seref Malkoç expressed his gratitude to the board members for their unwavering support throughout his tenure. Board members commended H.E. Malkoç for his visionary leadership and dedication, which helped in breathing a new



life in OICOA. They noted that his tenure saw increased cooperation among OIC Ombudsman Institutions and the initiation of key projects aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of ombudsman institutions within the Islamic world. Secretary General, Dr. Asif Jah was particularly appreciative of Mr. Seref's fierce advocacy for Palestinians and publication of the Special Report on Gaza during his tenure. As he steps down in the coming days, H.E. Malkoç encouraged the Board members to continue OICOA's mission with renewed vigor. "The pursuit of justice is an ongoing journey. I am confident that the OICOA will reach new heights under new leadership," he added. The meeting concluded with heartfelt messages and well wishes for H.E. Malkoç's future endeavors. His tenure will be fondly remembered as a period of growth and strengthened ties within the OICOA community.

Training Session

Pakistan's Federal Tax Ombudsman's Delegation Attends 2nd Specialized Training in Bahrain, Organized by OICOA

A delegation from the Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan, led by Senior Advisor Mr. Rana Hassan Akhtar, has arrived in Manama to participate in the 2nd Specialized Training Session organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA). The session is being held in collaboration with the General Secretariat of Grievances (Ombudsman) of Bahrain and aims to enhance the institutional capacity of OICOA member institutions while facilitating valuable knowledge-sharing among them.



This training session represents a significant step in OICOA's ongoing efforts to improve grievance redressal systems and enhance public service delivery across its member states. The focus of the training is to promote transparency, accountability, and citizen-focused governance through the exchange of best practices and the development of new skills for ombudsman institutions.

By fostering collaboration among OICOA members, this initiative not only strengthens the ability of member institutions to address public grievances effectively but also promotes the sharing of experiences and strategies to overcome common challenges. The specialized training sessions play a critical role in building capacity within institutions, ensuring that they are better equipped to serve citizens and uphold the principles of justice and fairness.

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ACTIVITIES OF OICOA MEMBERS

Türkiye

Hon'ble Mehmet Akarca Officially Assumes Offices as Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye & OICOA President

Hon'ble Mehmet Akarca has officially assumed office as the Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye following a parliamentary vote. Mr. Akarca, who brings with him extensive experience in legal affairs and a strong commitment to justice and governance, was sworn in during a formal ceremony attended by key officials, dignitaries, and fellow members of the public sector.

As the new Chief Ombudsman, Mr. Akarca is poised to lead Türkiye's Ombudsman Institution in its vital mission to safeguard citizens' rights, address grievances, and promote transparency and accountability across governmental institutions. His leadership will be instrumental in enhancing the institution's role as an independent body that upholds the principles of justice and fairness in public administration.

This appointment marks the beginning of a new chapter for the Ombudsman Institution, reinforcing its crucial role in strengthening public trust and fostering good governance. Under Mr. Akarca's leadership, the institution is expected to continue its efforts in protecting the rights of citizens, ensuring that complaints and injustices are addressed in a timely and effective manner, and promoting a transparent and accountable relationship between the government and the people.

Moreover, Mr. Akarca's extensive background and dedication to public service are anticipated to further elevate the institution's work, enabling it to adapt to emerging challenges and continue to serve as a cornerstone of democracy and justice in Türkiye. His vision for the future of the Ombudsman Institution is one of progress, innovation, and responsiveness to the evolving needs of Turkish society. As Chief Ombudsman, Mr. Akarca is also expected to build on Türkiye's strong tradition of engaging with international standards of human rights and governance, and to further deepen the cooperation between Türkiye's Ombudsman Institution and other Ombudsman bodies around the world, particularly within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA). This collaborative approach will strengthen the global Ombudsman network and contribute to the shared goals of justice, equality, and accountability on the international stage.

In conclusion, the appointment of Hon'ble Mehmet Akarca marks a momentous occasion for both the Turkish Ombudsman Institution and for the broader efforts of ensuring human rights and good governance. His leadership promises to lead the institution into a future where citizens' rights are more effectively protected, and the government remains accountable and responsive to the needs of the people.



Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's Human Rights Ombudsman, Sabina Aliyeva, Engages in Key International Efforts to Promote Democratic Transparency and Human Rights

In a significant demonstration of cross-border collaboration in support of democratic transparency, Sabina Aliyeva, the Human Rights Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, and her team assumed observer roles in Uzbekistan's elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Supreme Assembly and local councils. The delegation's primary focus was to assess Uzbekistan's electoral preparedness, including evaluating the infrastructure at polling stations, voter access, and the administrative framework. This scrutiny is particularly crucial as Uzbekistan continues to reinforce its democratic institutions through ongoing political reforms.

through ongoing political reforms. Ms. Aliyeva's participation highlights Azerbaijan's commitment to supporting electoral integrity and democracy in the region, building on its strong foundation of human rights advocacy. In another key diplomatic engagement, H.E. Sabina Aliyeva, Board Member of the OIC Ombudsman Association and Azerbaijan's Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman), met with the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hon'ble Hissein Brahim Taha, during a visit to the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Their meeting centered on Azerbaijan's human rights initiatives, the Ombudsman's association with

OICOA and opportunities for collaboration within the OIC framework. Ms. Aliyeva presented a detailed overview of her office's work in promoting and protecting human rights in Azerbaijan, with particular emphasis on the ongoing efforts to align national practices with international human rights standards.

The meeting also highlighted shared goals among OIC member states, with both parties emphasizing the importance of strengthening partnerships to address pressing human rights challenges globally. The Secretary-General praised Ms. Aliyeva's efforts and reaffirmed the OIC's support for initiatives that uphold human dignity and promote human rights across its member states.

Furthermore, the Azerbaijani Ombudswoman participated in a meeting of the International Council of Turkic World Mediators Union, titled "Karabakh Night," which took place during the first gathering of the International Council of the Turkic World Mediators Union (TDAB). During her speech, Ms. Aliyeva underscored the profound significance of the Victory achieved during the Patriotic War for the entire Turkic world, emphasizing the importance of peace and security globally and the new relations emerging in the region. She expressed satisfaction with the active participation of the Chief Ombudsman of Turkey and the Chairman of the Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution in fact-finding missions conducted in the formerly occupied territories. She also commended Turkey's unwavering support for Azerbaijan's just cause.

The Ombudsman further highlighted Azerbaijan's ongoing efforts to resettle internally displaced persons and the extensive reconstruction work being carried out in the regions that were previously under occupation. She noted that the return of displaced citizens to their native lands is now being facilitated, ensuring that long-term peace, security, and prosperity are being fostered in these areas. These engagements reflect Azerbaijan's proactive approach to human rights advocacy, both within the OIC framework and beyond, and reinforce the country's commitment to regional peace, democratic integrity, and the protection of human rights. Through her participation in such initiatives, Ms. Aliyeva continues to contribute to the strengthening of international cooperation on human rights and democratic governance across the Turkic world and the broader OIC region.



Bahrain

Ambassador Dr. Esen Çakıl of Türkiye Calls on Bahrain's Ombudsman H.E. Ghada Hamid Habib



At the conclusion of her diplomatic term in the Kingdom of Bahrain, H.E. Dr. Esen Çakıl, Ambassador of Türkiye to Bahrain, paid a courtesy farewell visit to H.E. Ghada Hamid Habib, Ombudsman of Bahrain and Board Member of the OIC Ombudsman Association. During the meeting, Ambassador Çakıl expressed her sincere gratitude for the collaboration and support she received throughout her tenure in Bahrain. She highlighted the solid foundation of bilateral cooperation between Bahrain and Türkiye, and voiced her hope for the continued growth

of their relations in the years to come.

Ambassador Çakıl acknowledged the strong diplomatic ties between the two countries, emphasizing shared interests, particularly in the areas of human rights, regional stability, and mutual support within international forums. She conveyed her confidence that these bonds would continue to evolve and strengthen in the future, benefiting both nations and their peoples.

In turn, Ombudsman Ghada Hamid Habib praised Ambassador Çakıl for her dedicated service to Bahrain and Türkiye, particularly her efforts in advancing initiatives that align with the common goals of both countries. She expressed deep appreciation for Ambassador Çakıl's commitment to fostering stronger partnerships, especially in areas critical to regional peace and prosperity, such as human rights and governance.

Ombudsman Ghada Hamid Habib also extended her best wishes to Ambassador Çakıl as she transitions to new diplomatic endeavors, acknowledging her contributions to enhancing bilateral ties and her role in advancing cooperation between their two countries. She conveyed her hope that Ambassador Çakıl's future career would continue to reflect the same commitment to diplomacy and international collaboration.

The meeting served as a warm and respectful farewell, underscoring the enduring friendship between Bahrain and Türkiye, and the mutual desire to continue strengthening cooperation in the future.

Morocco

Bahrain's Investigation Officers Visit Morocco's Mediator Office for Knowledge Exchange and Strengthening OIC Ombudsman Collaboration



A delegation of Investigation Officers from the General Secretariat of Grievances (Ombudsman) of Bahrain recently embarked on an official study visit to the Office of the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco. This visit was held under the auspices of the OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA), following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ombudsman Offices of Bahrain and Morocco at the 11th OICOA Board Meeting in Marrakech in June 2024. The MoU outlines key areas of collaboration, with a specific focus on "exchanging training programs, acquiring experiences, and exploring the latest practices in public service. "This partnership is designed to enhance the capabilities of both institutions in delivering better services to the public, reinforcing their shared commitment to upholding transparency, justice, and accountability within their respective governments.

During their visit, members of the Bahraini delegation engaged with senior officials at the Office of the Mediator of Morocco. The discussions centered around the operational mechanisms of the Moroccan institution, particularly in how it processes requests and addresses public grievances. The delegation also had the opportunity to learn about Morocco's approach to handling public service challenges, such as managing public blackouts, which have become a crucial aspect of ensuring transparency and accountability in the public sector.

The study visit is part of a broader initiative under the OICOA International Exchange-Based Specialized Training Sessions. These sessions aim to foster cooperation between member countries by enabling them to share expertise, adopt best practices, and refine operational methodologies. A key objective is to improve the human resource capacity of Ombudsman institutions through cutting-edge training programs, enabling them to better serve their citizens. Through such exchange programs, both the Bahraini and Moroccan Ombudsman institutions are working together to evolve their practices, adopt innovative approaches to public service delivery, and improve their responsiveness to citizens' needs. The collaboration will contribute to the continued development of ombudsman services across the OIC member states, ensuring that institutions are well-equipped to handle emerging challenges and uphold the principles of justice and accountability.

This partnership not only strengthens bilateral ties between Bahrain and Morocco but also aligns with the broader goals of OICOA in promoting cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and the continuous improvement of Ombudsman practices across the Islamic world. The OICOA remains committed to fostering a collaborative environment that enhances the operational effectiveness of Ombudsman institutions, ensuring they can better serve the interests of the public and uphold fundamental human rights.

Nigeria

Niger's Ambassador to Türkiye Discusses Strengthening Ties and Human Rights Issues with H.E. Şeref Malkoç

Niger's Ambassador to Türkiye, Hon'ble Salou Adama Gazibo, recently met with H.E. Şeref Malkoç, President of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA) and Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye, to discuss ways to strengthen diplomatic ties and address pressing regional human rights challenges.

During the meeting, Mr. Malkoç presented Ambassador Gazibo with the latest comprehensive report from Türkiye's Ombudsman



Institution, which specifically addresses the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The Special Report offers an in-depth analysis of the situation, highlighting critical issues such as access to basic resources, security, and the protection of human rights. It also includes concrete recommendations aimed at fostering international dialogue and encouraging actions to alleviate the suffering of civilians in Gaza. The report calls on OICOA member states to work together in a spirit of solidarity and collaboration to address the dire humanitarian needs in the region.

Ambassador Gazibo expressed Niger's full support for the promotion of human rights and justice across OICOA member states, emphasizing the importance of unity and cooperation within the Islamic world in responding effectively to humanitarian crises. He commended the Turkish Ombudsman Institution for its leadership in advocating for transparency, equity, and accountability, which are essential principles for safeguarding the rights and well-being of citizens in the OIC member states.

Ambassador Gazibo also underscored the critical role of ombudsman institutions in advancing the values of justice, fairness, and human dignity. He noted that these institutions are uniquely positioned to hold governments accountable, protect the rights of vulnerable populations, and ensure that state actions align with international human rights standards. In this context, he praised the Turkish Ombudsman's efforts in championing the role of ombudsmen as key actors in promoting good governance and ensuring transparency in public administration.

The discussions concluded with a reaffirmation of both Türkiye and Niger's commitment to advancing the goals of OICOA and working together on initiatives that strengthen regional cooperation, uphold human rights, and ensure greater protection for the most vulnerable populations in the Islamic world. The meeting served as an important step in reinforcing diplomatic relations between Niger and Türkiye and underscored the shared commitment to fostering peace, justice, and solidarity across the OIC member states.

OICOA MEMBER OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTIONS FROM PAKISTAN

Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan

Federal Ombudsman Addresses International Ombudsman Summit – 2024 at Hong Kong

The Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman), Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has said that addressing maladministration and protection of human rights is inextricably linked to good governance, accountability and inclusivity. He was addressing the International Ombudsman Summit – 2024 in Hong Kong organized on the eve of the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman in Hong Kong, China.

Mr. Qureshi, who is the current President of the 47-member strong Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), said that the United Nations, too, recognizes the importance of the



institution of Ombudsman in strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law. Good administration and efficient service delivery constitute the most essential features of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he added. He further said that these goals have a direct bearing on the role and functions of Ombudsman institutions working to

build peaceful and inclusive societies, accountable institutions at all levels and providing easy access to justice. He added that the scope of work of Ombudsman institutions is witnessing speedy expansion and now includes issues like the climate change, business rights, public accessibility and inclusivity.

Alluding to Pakistan's experience, Mr. Qureshi said that Ombudsman has taken firm roots in the country. Following the success of Wafaqi Mohtasib Institution in providing free and expeditious administrative justice to the general public, the concept has been replicated to other essential areas impacting the welfare of general public. He added that 14

Ombudsman Institutions are functioning in the country at the Federal and Provincial levels and contributing in improving service delivery of the government agencies in their respective areas of competence.

The International Ombudsman Summit at Hong Kong is being attended by over 140 Overseas participants, representatives of the UN bodies including a large number of the member institutions of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA).

Banking Ombudsman of Pakistan

Banking Ombudsman Reduces Response Time for Bank Complaint Resolution to 30 Days

The Banking Ombudsman of Pakistan has revised regulations to require banks to respond to customer complaints within 30 days, down from the previous 45-day window.

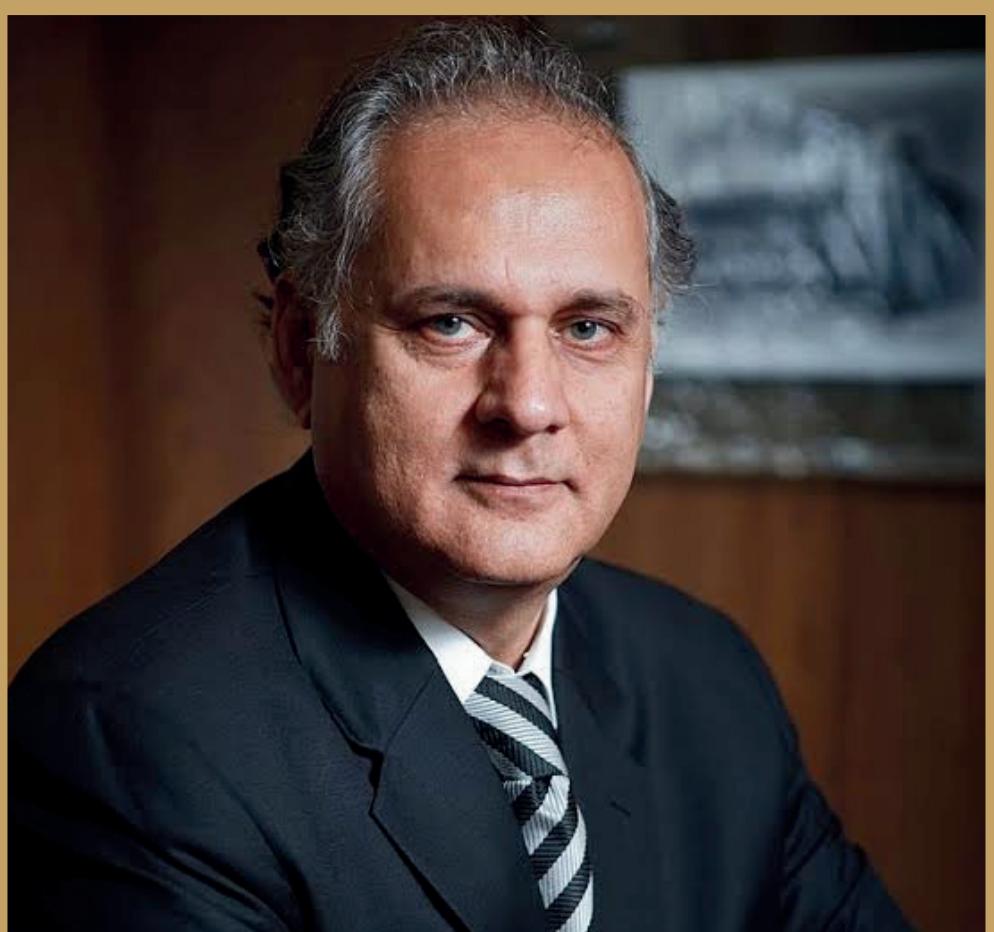
According to the Banking Ombudsman of Pakistan, customers now have the option to approach the Banking Mohtasib (Ombudsman) for further action if a bank's response remains unsatisfactory or delayed, with an additional 30-day period to file a complaint after the bank's response.

Under the updated rules in the Banking Companies Ordinance, 1962, Section

82D now mandates that banks address grievances within a month, with the ombudsman authorized to accept delayed complaints if valid reasons are presented. The revised guidelines were published in Pakistan's official Gazette.

The Banking Mohtasib's office has resolved 18,836 complaints in the first nine months of 2024, providing over Rs1.06 billion in monetary relief. This was an increase over the

previous year's Rs972.33 million relief for 18,431 complaints during the same period. Highlighting rising fraudulent activities, the Banking Mohtasib, Sirajuddin Aziz, advised customers to safeguard their personal and financial information. He warned against sharing details with third parties or clicking on unverified links, urging customers to report any suspicious calls to their banks or the FIA Cyber Crime Wing.



Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan

Federal Tax Ombudsman Honourable Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah Visited Trade Bodies in Karachi

The Hon'ble Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) recently visited Karachi as part of an ongoing campaign aimed at raising awareness about the role and functions of the Federal Tax Ombudsman's Office. The visit focused on meaningful engagement with trade bodies and creating greater public understanding of the FTO's initiatives. The two-day tour comprised a series of pre-scheduled meetings with prominent trade associations, including the Association of Builders and Developers of Pakistan (ABAD), the Korangi Association of Trade & Industry (KATI), and the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCC&I). These meetings served as a platform for constructive dialogue on tax-related issues and showcased the FTO's commitment to addressing grievances and promoting transparency within the taxation system. Through these efforts, the Federal Tax Ombudsman continues to reinforce its mission of ensuring fair and just tax administration across Pakistan. On the first day of his visit to Karachi, the Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), accompanied by a team of Advisors, visited the office of the Association of Builders & Developers of Pakistan (ABAD) at the association's invitation. The



delegation was warmly welcomed by the President and Executive Body members of ABAD. The meeting was attended by a large number of business representatives. In his opening remarks, the President of ABAD extended his gratitude to the Hon'ble FTO and highlighted the importance of consistent interaction between ABAD and the FTO's office. He laid stressed on the need to collaboratively identify challenges faced by the business community and work towards their practical

solutions. To enhance awareness among the business community, a comprehensive presentation on the role, functions, and achievements of the FTO's office was delivered. Informative materials, including newsletters and brochures, were distributed to the attendees. During the interactive question-and-answer session, the Hon'ble FTO and his Advisors addressed various concerns raised by participants, offering clarifications and guidance.

The FTO encouraged the participants to approach FTO's office for the resolution of their legitimate grievances against tax authorities. In his concluding remarks, the President of ABAD expressed his appreciation for the initiative to conduct awareness sessions and assured the FTO of ABAD's full cooperation. He pledged to encourage ABAD members to utilize the FTO forum for addressing issues relating to tax maladministration.

FOSPAH

Federal Ombudsperson, Honourable Fauzia Viqar Addressed Awareness Seminars



Federal Ombudsperson, Ms. Fauzia Viqar, led a crucial meeting with representatives from the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination Islamabad, Pakistan Medical and Dental Council, Poly Clinic, National Institutes of Health Pakistan (NIH) and Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, (PIMS), Islamabad to address the challenges faced by female healthcare workers in Pakistan. The Office held a seminar on creating harassment-free workplaces at the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) office. The session highlighted the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010 and explored actionable strategies to ensure compliance across government bodies. FOSPAH's Lahore Office launched the 16 Days of Activism campaign with an inspiring awareness session at Pakistan Post's Head Office. Together, through education, outreach, and meaningful discussions, we're working toward a future where every workplace is a space of respect, dignity, and equality. FOSPAH conducted an awareness session at the Federal General Hospital, where Assistant Registrar Mr. Waqar Ahmed explained what constitutes workplace harassment, the penalties for it, and how hospitals can foster a safe and respectful working environment. At Lords College Takht Bhai, FOSPAH's Peshawar team educated female students on how to identify harassment, protect their rights, and advocate for a respectful environment. Ms. Amina Rafique, Assistant Registrar, emphasized recognizing harassment and said that it is crucial to understand what harassment is.

The Auditor General of Pakistan, in collaboration with UN Women Pakistan, hosted a seminar on the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010. Mr. Muhammad Ajmal Gondal (Auditor General of Pakistan) highlighted the Auditor General's office's zero-tolerance policy toward workplace harassment. Ms. Louise Nylion (Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan) emphasized the importance of collective responsibility in addressing workplace harassment and ensuring gender equality. Ms. Fauzia Viqar, Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment, was the guest of honor at the seminar. She highlighted the significance of the Act 2010, the establishment of FOSPAH, and the critical need to challenge societal mindsets about workplace harassment. Ms. Fauzia emphasized the fine line between acceptable and inappropriate behavior and the importance of creating respectful workplaces where everyone feels safe and valued.

Federal Insurance Ombudsman

Federal Insurance Ombudsman Honorable Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah held Review Meeting at FIO Secretariat

A Review Meeting of the Federal Insurance Ombudsman held at FIO Secretariat to assess the performance, challenges, and progress of the FIO office. The meeting aims to ensure that the Ombudsman office is fulfilling its mandate of providing fair and efficient resolution of disputes between insurance policyholders and companies.



In the meeting, it informed by all the Officers and Incharge Officers of Regional Offices that there has been a significant increase in the complaints directly received in the regional offices in the month, and similarly, there has also been a considerable improvement in resolving complaints. This indicates that the performance of the institution is improving day by day. All officers informed the Honorable FIO about the activities of the awareness campaign and also briefed about the actions taken in this regard. The Ombudsman expressed satisfaction and further stated that all officers



should make every possible effort to raise awareness about the importance of the institution among the general public and strive to resolve all complaints within the time frame prescribed by law.

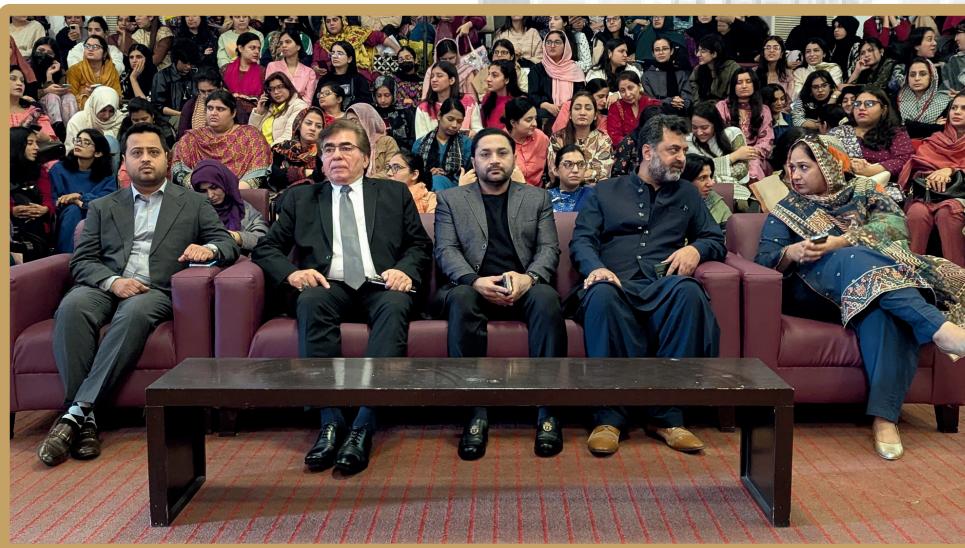
Punjab Ombudsman

Punjab Ombudsman Office Conducts Awareness Sessions

Under the leadership of advisor Media, the media team of the Ombudsman Punjab visited Kinnaird College for Women University, where they provided valuable insights to faculty and students about the Ombudsman's Office. The session highlighted the significance of the institution and outlined the procedures for registering complaints. On this occasion, Advisor Media, Abdul Basit Khan, along with the Senior Registrar, addressed the students. A Q&A session was also conducted, allowing participants to engage actively. Both faculty and students appreciated this awareness initiative and extended warm gestures by presenting tokens of appreciation to the guests.



Meanwhile, as part of the awareness campaign by the Punjab Ombudsman's office, a seminar was held at Government Islamia College, Railway Road. The event was presided



over by the college's principal, Dr. Ibad Nabeel. On this occasion, Punjab Ombudsman's Media Advisor, Abdul Basit Khan, addressed the students and emphasized the importance and efficiency of the institution in providing quick and affordable justice. He explained that the Punjab Ombudsman's office ensures justice within 45 to 60 days without requiring a

lawyer. Advisors are available in all districts of Punjab to assist the public, and complaints can be registered 24/7 through the helpline 1050, he added.

Punjab Ombudsperson

Ombudsperson Punjab, Honorable Nabila Hakim Ali Khan, Addressed at Civil Services Academy for Awareness on Workplace Harassment

Ombudsperson Punjab, Ms. Nabila Hakim Ali Khan, has recently conducted two significant events that have left an indelible mark on the community, emphasizing the need for safer workplaces and the power of volunteerism.

In a thought-provoking session at the Civil Services Academy, Ms. Hakim Ali Khan addressed a full auditorium of officers and trainees on the crucial topic of workplace harassment. She delivered

a comprehensive lecture on the laws surrounding harassment and stressed the importance of fostering a respectful and safe environment within workplaces, covered the legal framework for addressing harassment, focusing on the steps organizations must take to create an environment free of discrimination and harassment. Ms. Hakim Ali Khan highlighted the role of leaders in promoting inclusivity and respect, encouraging the officers and trainees to be proactive in tackling harassment, whether it is physical, verbal, or psychological in governmental and public service sectors. The session "Creating a culture of zero tolerance towards harassment is not just a legal requirement, it is a moral imperative," she remarked during her speech. "It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every individual, regardless of their gender, race, or position, feels safe and valued at their workplace."

Her talk was met with great appreciation from the attendees, many of whom expressed that the session was enlightening and provided them with valuable tools to prevent and address harassment in their future roles as public servants.

Ms. Hakim Ali Khan also took part in an event marking International Volunteers Day, organized by Bargad, in collaboration with the Youth Affairs Department Punjab and VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas). The event celebrated the spirit of volunteerism, recognizing the invaluable contributions of volunteers in shaping communities and empowering youth.

Addressing the gathering of young volunteers, community leaders, and stakeholders, Ms. Hakim Ali Khan delivered a powerful speech that emphasized the importance of volunteerism in promoting social change and addressing societal challenges. She commended the volunteers for their dedication and selflessness, highlighting how their efforts make a tangible impact on the lives of the underprivileged and marginalized communities.

"Volunteering is not just an act of service; it is a catalyst for positive change," she said. "The youth have the power to shape a better future through their actions. It is crucial that we empower and support them in this journey."

The event was a great success, fostering collaboration among key stakeholders and inspiring attendees to take action in their own communities. Volunteers and organizations came together to share experiences, learn from each other, and discuss new initiatives to promote social good across Punjab. Both events hosted by Ombudsperson Punjab, Ms. Nabila Hakim Ali Khan, were a testament to her commitment to creating a safer and more inclusive society. Through her work, she continues to champion the rights of individuals, whether in the context of combating harassment or empowering youth through volunteerism. The sessions not only enhanced understanding and awareness among public officers and trainees but also ignited a sense of responsibility among the youth to contribute positively to their communities. As Ms. Hakim Ali Khan aptly concluded, "It is through collective action, respect, and compassion that we can build a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and contribute."



Sindh Ombudsman

Ombudsman Sindh, Honourable Suhail Rajput, Participated at 35th Anniversary of Office of Ombudsman in Hong Kong

Ombudsman Sindh, Honourable Suhail Rajput, recently had the distinguished honor of representing Sindh at the 35th Anniversary celebrations of the Office of the Ombudsman in Hong Kong. The event, held in the vibrant city, showcased a series of inspiring social and cultural programs while underscoring the global commitment to justice, accountability, and good governance.

The anniversary celebration marked a significant milestone for the Office of the Ombudsman in Hong Kong, which has played a pivotal role in promoting transparency, fairness, and accountability in both the public and private sectors over the past three decades. As part of the event, various sessions were held, focusing on the importance of strengthening ombudsman offices worldwide and enhancing their role in protecting citizens' rights.

During the event, Honourable Suhail Rajput addressed a distinguished audience of international dignitaries, officials, and experts in the field of governance. He highlighted Sindh's ongoing efforts to uphold justice and ensure the protection of citizens' rights, emphasizing the vital role of the Ombudsman's office in resolving grievances and fostering trust between the public and government institutions.

"We are deeply committed to strengthening the framework of justice in Sindh," said Ombudsman Rajput. "Our participation in this global event not only reflects our shared commitment to accountability but also opens avenues for collaboration and learning from global best practices in governance."

The event also featured discussions on the evolving role of ombudsman offices in an increasingly complex global landscape, and how these institutions can continue to adapt to meet the challenges of modern governance. Cultural performances and social programs were also a highlight, showcasing the rich diversity and vibrant heritage of Hong Kong, further emphasizing the importance of unity and cooperation in achieving global justice and accountability.

Rajput's participation in the 35th Anniversary event is seen as a significant step towards strengthening international cooperation in the field of ombudsman practices. His involvement underscores Sindh's dedication to promoting transparency, fairness, and the rule of law, both domestically and on the global stage.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment among global stakeholders to continue advancing the cause of justice and accountability through ombudsman institutions, with Honourable Suhail Rajput representing Sindh as a key player in these efforts.



Sindh Ombudsman

Provincial Ombudsman Office Conducts Training on Workplace Harassment Laws

The Office of the Provincial Ombudsman Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace organized a comprehensive training session on the "Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010" and its Amendment Act of 2022. The event took place on Wednesday and aimed to raise awareness and ensure compliance with workplace harassment laws.

Participants included representatives from the Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC), the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Central Standing Committee on Women Education and Training, and Pakistan Wire Industries (Pvt) Ltd.



The session highlighted the critical aspects of the laws, offering insights into legal frameworks, the roles of employers and employees, and mechanisms for addressing complaints of harassment. The training aimed to foster a safer and more inclusive workplace environment by empowering organizations to implement effective policies and procedures.

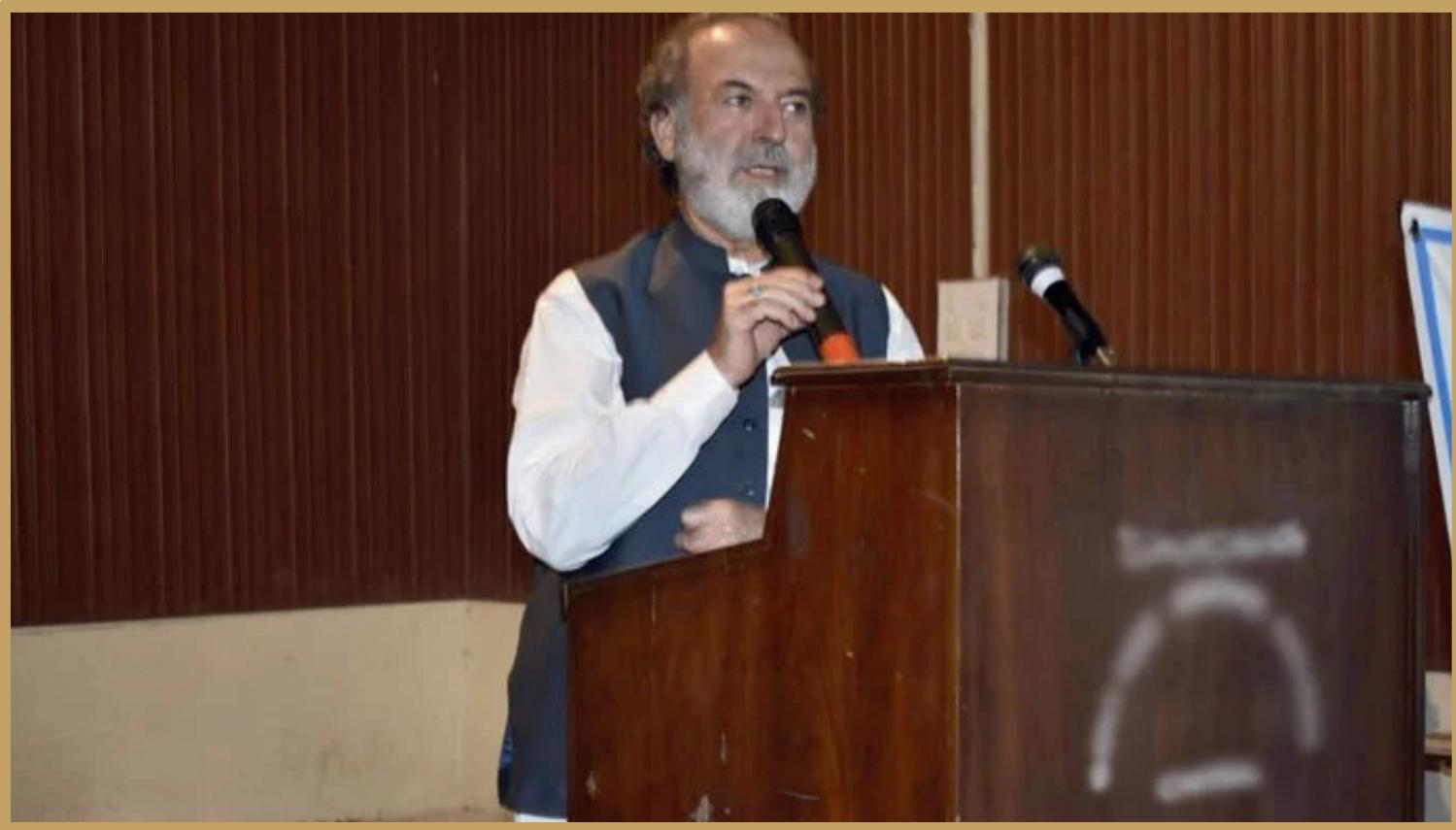
Speakers at the session emphasized the importance of promoting awareness about workplace harassment laws to protect women's rights and ensure gender equity in professional spaces. Participants commended the Provincial Ombudsman's Office for its efforts in enhancing workplace safety and pledged their commitment to uphold the legal standards outlined in the Acts.

Such initiatives reflect the growing commitment across sectors to create respectful and equitable work environments, safeguarding employees' dignity and well-being.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ombudsman

KP Ombudsman Committed to Addressing Complaints

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ombudsman Syed Jamalud Din Shah on Wednesday renewed the commitment to provide speedy justice to the complainants impartially and equitably. He said this while chairing the monthly review meeting of the secretariat here. The meeting was attended by Secretary of Ombudsman Secretariat Johar Ali Shah, Director General Barkatullah Khan and all senior staff members, according to a press release.



The KP Ombudsman said it was the staff's responsibility to address the complainants without succumbing to any pressure and dispose of cases within the stipulated time as per the Ombudsman Act.

He said that the provincial government had established the institution for the common citizens to ensure inexpensive justice on an expeditious manners. "It is our responsibility to take cases of aggrieved persons to have them resolved on merit," he added. Earlier, a detailed presentation was given by Assistant Director Akhunzada Kamran Ali.

Balochistan Ombudsman

Balochistan Ombudsman Honourable Nazar Baloch Urges Teachers to Ensure Provision of Quality Education

Balochistan Ombudsman Nazar Muhammad Baloch urged the teachers that they should ensure the provision of quality education to the students by bringing all their capabilities to bear. Balochistan Ombudsman Nazar Muhammad Baloch urged the teachers that they should ensure the provision of quality education to the students by bringing all their capabilities to bear.

He expressed these views while visiting the College of Agriculture (Baleley), Quetta. He was accompanied by Director Ombudsman Saeed Shahwani and Director Noorul Amin Zehri inspected various departments of the college and reviewed the teaching process.

The Provincial Ombudsman was given a detailed briefing by the Principal of the College of Agriculture, Dr. Sardar Waseem Baran regarding the problems being faced by the college. The Provincial Ombudsman also met the academic staff and students of the college and listened to their complaints.

On this occasion, he said that the teachers should ensure the provision of quality education to the students by bringing all their capabilities to bear. He said that students are the guarantee of a bright future for the country and the nation saying that the agriculture department plays a vital role in the economic development of the country.

Therefore, all resources should be utilized so that we can succeed in creating an educated and skilled society, he said adding that students would be graduated from the teaching process and achieve a prominent position in the agricultural industry, he said.



OICOA in Media



Ombudsman Institution of Türkiye boosts capacity to ensure human rights in migration

Staff from the Ombudsman Institution of Türkiye have sharpened their skills to better protect the rights of persons in the context of migration, thanks to a two-day training "Human Rights and Migration" held in Ankara on 4-5 November. This training was organised in the framework of the European Union and Council of Europe joint action, "Strengthening Human Rights Protection in the Context of Migration in Türkiye".

The training provided 28 participants with a deeper understanding of both international and national legal frameworks on asylum and migration. Key topics included the prohibition of torture and degrading treatment, the principle of *non-refoulement*, access to asylum, the right to liberty, and immigration detention. Special attention was given to the needs of persons in a vulnerable situation, including women and children.

Speaking at the certificate ceremony, Mr William Massolin, Head of the Council of Europe Programme Office in Ankara, expressed his gratitude to the Ombudsman Institution for the ongoing co-operation in protecting and promoting human rights in migration.

According to Mr Şeref Malkoç, Chief Ombudsman, migration is one of the most painful challenges of the 21st century. The primary duty of institutions dealing with human rights such as the Ombudsman Institution is to protect the rights of people who are victimised due to migration.

The Ombudsman Institution of Türkiye aims at protecting and promoting human rights, ensuring equal treatment for all through its activities and reports. This initiative aims to enhance the ability of the Ombudsman Institution's staff to handle migration-related complaints more effectively.

AZERNEWS

Azerbaijani Ombudsman's office hosts awareness event for civil society on human rights



Akbar Novruz

The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Ombudsman), Sabina Aliyeva, continues efforts to raise awareness about human rights protection and promotion through events across the country, *Azernews* reports.

As part of the 2024 action plan, a recent awareness-raising seminar at the Ombudsman's Office focused on protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, promoting equality, and combating discrimination. The event was attended by representatives from civil society institutions and regional Ombudsman centers, including the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

Zaur Valimammedli, Head of the Department for Cooperation with International Organizations and Civil Society Institutions, highlighted the Ombudsman's role in fostering human rights practices nationally and internationally. He emphasized the establishment of monitoring groups under the Constitutional Law amendments to oversee the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Valimammedli called for strengthened collaboration with civil society to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives.

The seminar featured presentations by Ombudsman's Office staff Shahla Aslanova and Sevinj Shener, who discussed monitoring activities related to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, equality promotion, and discrimination prevention. The event also included an interactive exchange of views with participants, encouraging dialogue and cooperation for advancing human rights.



Vice President Iotova Meets with Bahrain Ombudsman Ghada Hameed Habib

DESLAVA TONCHEVA

Vice President Iliana Iotova spoke with the Ombudsman of the Kingdom of Bahrain Ghada Hameed Habib, who is in Bulgaria at the invitation of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation. During the meeting, a wide range of issues related to human rights were discussed, from the rights of people with disabilities to equality between men and women to an equal start in life for every child, said the press centre of the head of State on Wednesday.

"In today's anxious world, the thought of people, especially vulnerable groups, seems to remain in the background. At the global level, there is a regression in the protection of human rights. Among the main reasons for this is that we have difficulty finding solutions to the many challenges we face," the Vice President pointed out.

Iotova pointed out that Bulgaria is a model country for religious tolerance. "Bulgaria is an oasis in this regard against the backdrop of global conflicts, which are often religiously based," she said.



Morocco Urges Reform of Ombudsman Institutional Model amid Public Service Crisis

International Ombudsman Institute, emphasized the importance of adopting new measures to bridge the gap between governance policies and human rights demands in an era of constantly evolving global dynamics. He stressed that international cooperation must be addressed through innovative governance approaches, which he described as advanced mechanisms for reinterpreting institutional parameters and human rights within the framework of relationships between ombudsman institutions.

Benalilou highlighted the necessity of establishing administrative governance with shared characteristics to ensure institutional alignment and effectively tackle the significant challenges posed by governance across its many dimensions. This, he explained, involves making better use of the legal and political spaces available within individual legal systems, according to a statement from the Ombudsman Institution.

He also pointed to the obstacles faced by some institutions in positioning the Ombudsman's work as "a cornerstone of official international cooperation." These challenges, he noted, often stem from the demands for institutional independence or the scope of their interventions, particularly in addressing social tensions, public service deficiencies linked to management policies, or the need for greater political flexibility to manage such issues.

Additionally, Benalilou cautioned against the narrow perception that cooperation between ombudsman institutions is limited to strengthening institutional capacities, enhancing skills, and developing competencies.

He argued that this view mistakenly assumes a lack of administrative and managerial capabilities within these institutions. Instead, the real challenge lies in integrating governance, policy, human rights, and development dimensions into cooperative efforts.

These dimensions, he emphasized, are essential for fostering sustainable and meaningful impacts that gradually enhance the operational effectiveness of ombudsman institutions. By doing so, they ensure the sound governance of public services through the Ombudsman platform, thereby addressing both immediate and long-term governance challenges.

Concluding his remarks, Benalilou stressed that the success of any international cooperation framework hinges on involving both the media and the public in ombudsman programs, noting that, such participation, is key to fostering a shared sponsorship of existing cooperation projects, particularly in a global context shaped by the competitiveness of standards. By engaging these stakeholders, ombudsman institutions can build stronger, more collaborative frameworks for addressing pressing governance and public service issues.

Morocco's Ombudsman Mohamed Benalilou underscored on Tuesday in Hong Kong the critical need to address the institutional model of the Ombudsman amidst the ongoing public service crisis.

Daily Parliament Times

Bureau of Immigration & Overseas Employment starts delivering online e-Protector Stamp Facility at Airports on directions of Wafaqi Mohtasib

Altaf Hamid Rao.

MIRPUR (AJK) , (Parliament Times) : In response to the directives of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, who intervened to resolve the long-standing issue of affixing of e-protector stamp on the passports of Pakistanis intending to proceed abroad for employment or higher education, Bureau of Immigration has now started online e-protector facility also, which has been now made available at the airports too, official sources disclosed.

According to a press release issued by Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman)'s Secretariat on Monday, it was informed that it was obligatory for all those travelling to middle eastern or other countries for employment to get the protector stamps affixed on their passports otherwise they have not been granted permission to travel abroad and many had to return from the airports due to its non-availability.

"This resulted in not only the loss of foreign employment but also the money spent on buying the tickets", the PR said.

On the directions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib online e-protector stamp facility is now available at all international airports of the country on 24/7 basis so that a protector stamp may be affixed on the passports of anyone desirous of going abroad who might have forgotten to get his passport stamped.

During this year 14,339 Pakistanis have already availed themselves of this facility till date, the Press release concluded.

BUSINESS RECORDER

Founded by M.A. Zuberi

FTO resolves 12941 complaints in 2024

ISLAMABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) has promptly resolved 12,941 complaints filed by taxpayers against the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) during 2024 against highest number of 13,506 complaints received during this period.

Senior FTO officials informed media here on Wednesday that the number of complaints filed against the FBR remained highest during 2024. This record number of 13,506 complaints has been received by the FTO office during 2024.

In this regard, during last calendar year ending December 31, 2024, FTO office received all time high number of complaints at 13,506.

Simultaneously, FTO Secretariat, and all Regional Offices disposed of 12,914 complaints, which works out for 95.6% of total complaints. This all time high number of complaints is due to vigorous awareness sessions conducted by the FTO and his Advisors throughout the country. The Chambers of Commerce & Industries of all big cities, Tax Bar Associations, business community Associations and Tax law practicing bodies were targeted to disseminate information about the role and functions of FTO organisation, which resulted into this colossal number of complaints.

As a result of outreach and awareness sessions, a record number of complaints and decisions of FTO were rolled out. Resultantly, grievances of thousands of Complainants were redressed.

During the year under consideration, in addition to regular complaints, the FTO also encouraged poor and less privileged Complainants for informal resolution of their grievances. "As such we received 1540 informal complaints and the same were resolved. In addition to that we received 143 reference cases which were also disposed of. The total number of Own Motion initiatives stood at 32 through which relief was granted to large number of Complainants/ individuals."

Since FTO organisation is a relief-oriented entity; therefore, this Secretariat provided relief to low paid employees by holding proper taxation of the same. In addition, thousands of Folk Artists were provided relief by ameliorating the situation in the then ongoing withholding taxes. Similarly, relief on account of tax rebate to teachers, in the relevant year, were also provided in a large number of cases, FTO officials added.

OICOA at Glance



**An Online Board Meeting of OICOA was Convened to bid Farewell to
H.E. Şeref Malkoç**



**A Ceremony was held at Ombudsman Institution of Turkiye to Welcome
Mr. Mehmet Akarca as Chief Public Ombudsman of Turkiye**



President of the Public Procurement Agency, Mr. Hamdi Güleç, paid a visit to the Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye to Felicitate Mr. Mehmet Akarca.



Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan and General Secretary OICOA Honourable Asif Mahmood Jah presided over the Meeting of Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman held in Lahore, Pakistan



Azerbaijani Ombudsman Calls for Justice at International Conference on Right to Return



Ministry of Emergencies and the Ombudsman Institution Jointly Organized a Conference “Great Leader Heydar Aliyev and Human Rights Reforms in Azerbaijan”



Memorandum of Cooperation Signed Between OIC Ombudsman Association Board Member, H.E Ghada Hameed, Ombudsperson of Bahrain, and Honorable Ana Dzhumalieva, Chairlady of the Bulgarian Committee for Protection Against Discrimination.



Ombudsman of Morocco Ombudsman Institution and First Deputy to the President of the International Institute of Ombudsman, Mohamed Benalilou, Addressed International Ombudsman Summit held in Hong Kong



Ombudsman of Morocco Ombudsman Institution and OICOA Board Member, Mohamed Benalilou, Participated International Ombudsman Summit held in Hong Kong



Board Member of OIC Ombudsman Association and Azerbaijan's Human Rights Commissioner, H.E. Sabina Aliyeva met with the Secretary-General of OIC, Hon'ble Hissein Brahim Taha



Secretary General of the Mediator of Ivory Coast, Haddad Suzzane Inaugurates Abidjan's 'PROFESSIONAL MEDIATION SYMPOSIUM' on the Theme of "Interculturalism, Citizenship, Ethics and Social Understanding"



Wafaqi Mohtasib Addresses International Ombudsman Summit - 2024 at Hong Kong



A Delegation from the Australian High Commission, led by Australia's Ambassador for Gender Equality, Ms. Stephanie Copus Campbell AM, met the Hon'ble Ombudsperson, Ms. Fauzia Viqar at FOSPAH's Head Office.



Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan Dr Asif Mehmood Jah along with his Advisors Visited Association of Builders and Developers House to Discuss the tax Problems Faced by the Community of Builders and Developers.



Wafaqi Mohtasib Honourable Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi Presenting Shield to Federal Insurance Ombudsman Honourable Mumtaz Ali Shah on the eve of Seminar held at Federal Ombudsman Secretariat Islamabad



Pakistan's Federal Tax Ombudsman's Delegation Attends 2nd Specialized Training in Bahrain, Organized by OICOA