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Plea for International Mediation on Sindh

Washington D.C., May 2000, In his invited speech at the Sindh Conference in Washington, D.C., Dr. Safder Sarki, Chairperson of the World Sindhi Congress, called for international mediations for peaceful resolution of conflicts in Pakistan. This conference was organized by the World Sindhi Institute (WSI) with the theme "Sindh, National Question in Pakistan and Peace in South Asia." The following are excerpts from Dr. Sarki's speech.

"Today, we see many regional conflicts in different parts of the world, escalating to full-fledged wars and organized genocide in some cases. One may think that human beings have not yet learned lessons from our history and still resort to violence. But on the other hand, looking at various disputes being resolved by peaceful negotiations, we still feel hopeful. Human rights activists, like myself, seek equality for our people—but not at the cost of bloodshed. Obviously, in order to persuade the international community to lend its ears to our problems, we have to create the awareness of Sindhi issues, go through tedious processes of defining problems, and exploring specific means for a peaceful solution. I see this conference as one step towards such a goal.

We believe that crisis and instability in Pakistan derive from the country's composition in the present form, in which one province, namely Punjab, has an overwhelming domination in all spheres of power. Peoples of smaller provinces, especially Sindh and Baluchistan, are being denied their due political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

Looking at the history of so-called freedom in the last 52 years, the Pakistani establishment has adamantly maintained its dominance intact. The insistence on status quo and the refusal to negotiate even a little



Dr. Safder Sarki, Chairperson WSC

on sharing the power have created the chaotic state named Pakistan. Pakistani State (that is, the government, military, and ruling elite) is involved in all kinds of violence against its own people as well as other peoples across the borders. Today, Pakistan is a symbol of intolerance, human rights abuse, Is-(Continued on Page 2)

Statement Presented at UNCHR 56th Session Item 10 – Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Pakistan has been under military rules for 40 years out of its 52 years of existence. This unfortunate condition derives from the country's composition in the present form, in which one province, namely Punjab, has an overwhelming domination in all spheres of power. Peoples of smaller provinces, especially Sindh and Baluchistan, are being denied their due economic, social, and cultural rights. The facts stated below illustrate economic and cultural exploitations inflicted upon the people of Sindh by the Government of Pakistan in recent years.

1) Unequal Allocation of Financial Resources

For the last ten years, an illegal and unconstitutional body (consisting of selective non-representative individuals) called the National Finance Commission is managing taxes as well as other financial resources in Pakistan. Despite the fact that Sindh remains the largest contributor to the country's federal income (70% of federal taxes and 50% of overall income are generated from Sindh), the province is currently bankrupt and unable to carry out its day to day operations—not to speak of any meaningful development.

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WSC Speaks at the 56th Session of UN Commission on Human Rights

Geneva, April 2000, The delegation of the World Sindhi Congress, led by Dr. Rubina Shaikh, Vice Chairperson, participated in the 56th Session of UN Commission on Human Rights held in Geneva (March 20 - April 28, 2000). During her visit to Geneva, Dr. Shaikh met several UN officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and delegates of countries participating the session. Dr. Shaikh got an opportunity to read and submit statements on items related to the right to development for under-developed areas of Sindh, fundamental human rights, women's rights, and economic, social and cultural rights of Sindhis in Pakistan. (Continued from Page 1-Plea for International Mediation)

lamic fundamentalism, and terrorism.

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Pakistani establishment has never shown any sign of willingness to negotiate in a peaceful manner. It has always resorted to violence, be that against Bangladeshis in 1971, Baluchis in 1947 and 1973, or Sindhis in 1983, 1986 and the 1990's. State violence continues against Ahemadis, Christians, Shiites, and Hindus everyday! I want to add, my friends, that our own organizational leaders have been victims of state aggression too. Our leader Saeen G. M. Syed was imprisoned for 36 long years and was denied adequate medical treatment—the condition ultimately resulting in his death. Also, our Vice-Chairman Late Yousuf Jakhrani was brutally murdered by the military in 1992.

Such aggression has created a serious dilemma for the people of Sindh, who seek equal rights and prosperity for their region by peaceful means only. The situation is very troubling!

In this situation we appeal to the international community for mediation. We plea to the world players and people in international agencies to assist us achieve a peaceful resolution. Everyday, people of Sindh are getting distraught. We see the stress changing into hopelessness. Self-defeating behaviors are increasing among our people, manifest in the rising rates of suicides, intertribal clashes, violent crimes, drug addictions, and violence against women. Needless to say, hopelessness and selfdefeating behaviors are dangerous and end up in violence! So, it is imperative that international activists and intellectuals give considerations to the case of Sindh.

On our part, we peoples of Sindh and other regions of Pakistan need to unite. In order to make the world aware of the sad state of affairs and seek alliances in creating a peaceful resolution, we must join our hands. The formation of PONAM is one step in this direction. I wish we could incorporate all sectors of populations in Sindh, Baluchistan, and NWFP in this alliance. We need to work more in this direction.

Now, what is the case of Sindh? Let me try to describe it briefly.

1) We believe that current strong federal structure leaves no room for negotiating a fair sharing of power and resources. That is why Sindhis are now demanding the right of selfdetermination. The right of self-determination was promised to all provinces in the Pakistan Resolution of 1940, under which condition Sindh accepted to join the Federation of Pakistan. We also believe that the right of self-determination is Sindhis' inherent and inalienable right, as per the UN Charter and International Convent. By virtue of this right, Sindhis should be allowed to determine their own political status and pursue economic, social, and cultural developments.

2) Sindhis are frustrated with the cultural hegemony of Punjabi and Urdu speakers. In this setup, the Sindhi language and culture have been marginalized. The suppression of Sindhi culture and the dominance of state-imposed social life created hopelessness among Sindhis. In addition, federal policies are widening the gap between rural and urban people of Sindh. Such policies are detrimental to Sindh.

3) Sindh is subjected to unfair distribution of finances and natural resources such as water, gas, and oil. Sindh is the largest contributor to the country's federal income and the largest producer of natural resources, but the province is currently bankrupt and unable to carry out its day to day operations—not to speak of any meaningful development. *Especially, the region's agricultural industry is victim to the unequal water distribution from the Indus River.*

4) The current setup in Pakistan thrives on religious dogmatism and intolerance. There exist numerous laws and policies that diminish sociopolitical status of religious minorities and sects.

5) Pakistan engages in regional wars. We Sindhis find this engagement neither morally justifiable nor economically viable.

6) The people of Sindh are too distressed to deal with social problems among their own people, such as discriminations against women, the feudal structure, and the urban-rural divide.

Many in the world perhaps agree with us in theory. But we need actual alliances. How do we achieve this? How do we realize international alliances and obtain help? There is a large number of Sindhis in Diaspora, living in various countries of the world. This population lives in relatively free societies and has access to resources. All Sindhis, living in Sindh or elsewhere, as well as all other interested peoples must come together on one platform. We must form a unified entity, whose purposes would be to highlight our plight and to convince the world to intervene and assist our struggle for basic human rights and freedom.

Let's try to form some kind of alliance, consisting of Sindhi, Baluchi, Seraiki, and Pakhtoon activists as well as interested international individuals like our respected guests. I propose that we form a committee. Its objective would be to influence Pakistan's major financial supporters—namely, the USA, Japan, UK—and international agencies to convince the Pakistani government to sit for negotiations with the Sindhi people."

(Continued from Page 1—WSC Speaks at UN)

In her speech for Item 7 (Right to development), Dr. Shaikh, drew attendee's attentions towards under-developed and deprived situation of Sindh, especially in the region of Thar. She informed that recent drought in Thar has resulted in deaths of more than 300 people in that area. Furthermore, she criticized the Pakistani government for its historical negligence of this region and mentioned the absence of basic facilities such as clean water system, sewerage, schools, emergency health care units, and hospitals in Thar. In her statement, she brought the Commission's attention towards discriminatory policies resulting in the violation of Sindh's right to development. She also reported the Government's intention to carry out the controversial construction of Kalabagh Dam, which has been opposed by all three provinces except Punjab. Various studies have shown detrimental effects of this dam on the populations and economies of Sindh, Baluchistan and Pakhtoonkhawa. She further reported that there is a growing unemployment in Sindh, and recently numerous Sindhi employees were retrenched from Pakistan Steel Mills. She pleaded to the international community to help Sindh and Sindhis in obtaining the equal opportunities and rights to development and prosperity.

In her brief position statement submitted for **Item 9** (Human rights and fundamental freedoms), Dr. Shaikh condemned the undemocratic military rule in Pakistan. She stated that Sindh is disadvantaged in current set-up of Pakistan and demanded that the right of self-determination be granted to Sindh as promised in the 1940 resolution of Pakistan.

NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

WSC Attended a Seminar by *Liberation* at the House of Commons, UK

London March 2000, A delegation of WSC participated in a seminar organized by the Europe-based non-governmental organization *Liberation*. The title of the seminar was "Democracy and Militarisation in Pakistan," and the seminar was held in the House of Commons, London. The WSC delegation consisted of Dr. Rubina Shaikh (Vice Chairperson), Dr. Haleem Bhatti (Secretary General), Ms. Ambreen Hisbani (Cultural Secretary), and Mr. Omar Memon (UK Organizer).

In their presentations both Dr. Shaikh and Dr. Bhatti condemned the current military rule in Pakistan. They presented a brief account of undemocratic and anti-Sindh policies, unconstitutional measures, anti-women laws, and violations of basic human rights by the Pakistani Government. They also highlighted the insensitivity of the Government in providing any relief to drought victims in Khuzdar, Baluchistan and Thar, Sindh.

WSC Condemns Assault and Arrests of Sindhi Activists

Sacramento, July 2000, WSC expressed its extreme concern over the recent assault and arrest of Sindhi activists in Sindh. Several thousands of activists belonging to the Jeay Sindh Qoumi Mahaz (JSQM) - a party that advocates the freedom of Sindh - were gathered at various places throughout Sindh to protest about the shortage of water in the region. Sindh is facing an acute shortage of irrigation water affecting its agriculture. This shortage of water is attributed to unfair federal policies, which violates the water accord agreed by all provinces of Pakistan. The police baton-charged a procession in Khairpur, in which 11 workers were injured. WSC appealed to Sindhis and other activists all over the world to protest against these arrests by writing to Pakistani authorities and international human rights groups.

Drought and Water Shortage in Sindh—Highlights

- ⇒ Shortage of water in the River Indus has severely affected rice crop and farmers in upper Sindh are worried about their livelihood.
- \Rightarrow Haleji Lake, an internationally recognized heritage site under the Ramsar Agreement (1971), is under imminent threat of drying up completely. The level of water has dropped to four to six feet from an average of 12 feet. One third of the lake has no water at all.
- ⇒ A group of drought-affected people blocked Quetta-Panjgur highway in Kharan district to protest against not getting relief goods at their camps set up by the government. (*May 13, 2000*)
- ⇒ The drought situation in Pakistan is rapidly developing into one of the worst natural disasters in the country's history. Baluchistan and Sindh are most heavily affected. (*UN Report, May 11, 2000*)
- \Rightarrow Conditions are expected to deteriorate in the provinces of Baluchistan and Sindh, where hundreds of thousands of people are migrating in search of food and water (*BBC*, *May 9*, 2000).

40	ACTIVITIES					
	Justice Delayed is Justice Denied !					
		Cases pending per 1000 persons	Persons per Judge	Cases pending per Judge		
	Pakistan	5	85,000	450		
	Courtesy: UN Human Development Report 2000					

UN Human Development Report 2000 and Pakistan's Ranking

New York, June 2000, Due to its bad record of human rights situation, Pakistan was ranked the 135th (out of 174 countries) in the UN Report of Human Development 2000. This ranking is based on the Human Development Index that takes into consideration life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income. Pakistan also maintained very low ranks in the Human Poverty Index, Gender-related Development Index and Gender-related Empowerment Index. The UN Human Development Report 2000 is available on the Internet at http://www.undp.org/hdr2000/home.html.

UK Sindhi Association and WSC Work Jointly to Organize Sindhi Community

London, April 2000, The delegate of UK Sindhi Association (UKSA), Mr. Murli Mukhi (President) and Mr. R. Daswani, met representatives of WSC. UKSA and WSC appreciated each other's contribution to the UK Sindhi community. Both organizations observed that more cultural activities are needed in the UK. UKSA and WSC will collaborate in arranging events and reaching out to community members to promote more interactions.

Continued from Page 2-WSC Speaks at UN

In a detailed statement for **Item 10** (Economic, social and cultural rights), read by a non-governmental delegate to UN (*Liberation*), Dr. Shaikh high-

lighted unequal allocation of financial resources, unfair water resource distribution, and the suppression of Sindhi language and culture in Pakistan (*For full text see box on Pages 1 & 4*).

For the past several years, WSC has been regularly participating in this and other UN events. WSC considers the participation as an important achievement because Sindhis get chances to present their case in front of the international



Dr. R.. Shaikh, Vice Chairperson WSC

community and challenge "official" governmental stands of Pakistan.

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Status of Sindhi Language in India — By Ramesh Kateja

There are approximately 40 lakh Sindhis in India. The majority is settled in the Indian states of Maharashtra, Gujrat, Madhya Pardesh, Rajsthan and Utter Pardesh. Other states and Union Territories also have a fair share of Sindhi population.

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In Maharashtra, Sindhis of Ulhasnagar, Kopri Colony (Thane), Pimpri (Pune), Jari Patka Colony (Nagpur), Gandhi Nagar (Kolhapur), Deolali (Nashik), Sindhi Colony (Amravati) and others have retained the language in its almost original form. Most second generation Sindhis in these localities studied in Sindhi medium schools. Later, since the Sindhi language could not attain any significant academic value in India, most Sindhi medium schools switched over to English medium. The introduction of Devnagri script and the controversy that followed also forced parents to send their children to English medium schools. Today, most parents of third/fourth generation Sindhis are opting for English medium schools, although a few Sindhi medium schools are still surviving due to the patronage of financially poor Sindhis who are unable to afford English education.

It is only due to the presence of large Sindhi populations in these areas that the Sindhi language is still spoken there, though many of them do not know how to read and write it.

Shah Lateef Bhitai, Sami and Sachal could be understood by second generation (my generation) Sindhis, but for the third generation, the poetry of these great poets is no simpler than Sanskrit verses.

Bombay has a substantial population of Sindhis (probably the largest in India), but they are all scattered throughout the length and breadth of the vast city and have hardly any dominant area, maybe except areas like Mulund colony, Chembur colony and perhaps some parts of Colaba, Bandra, Khar and Mahim. The Sindhis of this city are more of a "hi-fi" category (at least that is what they pretend to be) and have strayed away to opt for English. The Sindhi spoken here is more of English than Sindhi with lots of Mumbai Hindi words used in-betweens.

Gujrat has numerous Sindhi colonies such as Sardar Nagar and Kuber Nagar in Ahmedabad; Sindhi colonies of Baroda, Surat and Jam Nagar; Kutiana, Baatwaan, Verawal, Porbandar, Dhoraji and many other colonies in Saurashtra and Kathiawad regions. Gujrati speaking population mostly surrounds these areas/colonies, and hence the residents speak Sindhi with a Gujrati accent. The same thing applies to Sindhis of Kuchh region, where Sindhis are often mistaken for Kutchhis. Here too, written Sindhi is known only to post-Partition second generation Sindhis.

In Rajsthan, Ajmer is the only city where Sindhi is still spoken in its almost original form due to the presence of a substantial Sindhi population. In other cities, the language has acquired Marwadi type of accent.

Madhya Pardesh and Uttar Pardesh are Hindi heartlands, and Hindi heavily influences the Sindhi spoken in smaller Sindhi colonies in these regions. Bigger Sindhi colonies in Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior, Agra and Lucknow are exceptions. Sindhi is still spoken here in somewhat original form, using typical Hindi words of day-to-day use. Sindhis here prefer using Devnagri script for most community tabloids.

In the rest of India, in cities like Sikanderabad (Hyderabad), Bangalore, Chennai (Madras) and Calcutta, Sindhi is mostly restricted to homes and at times used as a confidential language to avoid exposing business deals/secrets to non-Sindhis.

Thirty years back, when I was 20 years old, I used to hear from our elders that the future of the Sindhi language in India is bleak and it would not survive more than a couple of decades.

Today, after five decades after Partition, Sindhi is still spoken in India in one form or other and hopefully will retain the "spoken" status forever. I am sure some Sindhis will definitely take special interests in not only to understanding Shah, Sami and Sachal but spreading their gospel too!

(This article is based on my personal observations, experiences and interviews with Sindhis in different parts of India.)

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(Continued from Page 1—Statement on Item 10 at UNCHR)

The unconstitutional government and its crony bureaucrats constantly manipulate population census figures and Sindh's budget requirements, and charge false federal expenses to the province to justify discrimination.

2) Suppression of Sindhi Language and Culture

The majority of people speak the Sindhi language in Sindh, and Sindhi was the official language of the region even under the British rule. In the current undemocratic setup, however, the Sindhi language has been marginalized to such an extent that its survival is under threat. The state-controlled media only provide less that 30 minutes a day of Sindhi broadcast. Sindhi schools are systematically shut down throughout the province, especially urban areas of Sindh. This is widening the gap between rural and urban people of Sindh. The gap has been a central factor of many social conflicts in the province, resulting in deaths of tens of thousands of people. Federal policies that increase the urban-rural divide are detrimental to Sindh. Furthermore, Sindhi Sufi thoughts, which are more secular in character than the orthodox Islam, have been systematically threatened, as the state engages itself in pan-Islamic propaganda. The suppression of Sindhi culture and the dominance of state-imposed social life created hopelessness among Sindhis. *3) Water Resources Distribution*

Agriculture remains the major source of income in Sindh, but the region's agricultural industry is victim to the current unequal water distribution from the River Indus. The Punjab-dominated government takes no shame in deviating from the 1991 Water Accord. The Accord entailed unfairness to begin with, due to its passage by unconstitutional and non-representative bodies, and the government is not even complying with that.

Having experienced the economic, social, and cultural repression summarized above, Sindhis are now demanding the right of self-determination. The right of self-determination was promised to all provinces in the Pakistan Resolution of 1940, under which condition Sindh accepted to join the Federation of Pakistan. Sindhis also believe that the right of self-determination is their inherent and inalienable right, as per the UN Charter and International Convent. By virtue of this right, Sindhis should be allowed to freely determine their political status and to pursue their economic, social, and cultural developments.

Community News

Plight of Sindhis Discussed at a Conference Organized by WSI

Washington D.C., May, 2000, The World Sindhi Institute organized its first international one-day conference with the theme "Sindh, the National Question in Pakistan & Peace in South Asia." It was held at a local hotel in Washington D.C. A number of important political figures from Pakistan attended this conference: Mr. Mumtaz Bhutto of SNF, Mr. Afrasiab Khattak of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Mr. Mohammad Yousaf Talpur of PPP, Mr. Syed Imdad M. Shah of PONM, and Dr. Dodo Maheri of STPP. Other notable personalities included Mr. Selig Harrison, a US expert on Pakistan, Mr. K. R. Malkani, ex-member of the Indian Parliament, Dr. H. Gardezi, and Dr. Safdar Sarki of WSC. This conference declared that Pakistan is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-faith and multi-ethnic country. Such a situation requires that the state adopts policies of secularism and that practices constitutional democracy based on the following principles:

- Periodic elections based on the principle of universal adult franchise

- Scrapping of the so-called Shariat Law

- Affirmations of the rule of law and of self-determination of all the provinces

- Establishment and implementation of a national charter of rights and freedoms

- Immediately stopping the abuse of 'honor killings' in Pakistan and treating the offenses as murders

- Recognition of Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto and Punjabi as national languages. Allocation of resources to the preservation and promotion of ethnic languages such as Urdu, Siraiki, Dathkee, Bahauhi, Kacchi, Pothwari, Balti, and Kashmiri.

• Would like to participate in WSC sponsored activities?

Doctors from UK Organize a Medical Camp in Sindh

Larkano, October, 1999, A large medical camp organized by the Sindhi Doctors Association (SDA), UK took place in Larkana, Sindh between the 22nd to 30th of October 1999. The internationally renowned surgeon Mr. John Kelly led a number of well-known gynaecologists from Hyderabad and Karachi. The teams operated on ninety eight women of various conditions with a particular emphasis on fistula disease. SDA announced that their second camp project was proposed to be held in Hyderabad, Sindh, which will cover rural districts of Tharparker and Mirpurkhas.





North American Sindhis Met at SANA Convention

St. Louis, July 2000, The 16th Annual Convention of Sindhi Association of North America (SANA), was held on July 1-3, 2000. Hundreds of Sindhis from all over the North American continent attended this event. Several social activities and events were arranged, including the Sindhi Adabi Sangat, Sindhi music concerts, Sindhi food exhibition, stalls of Sindhi books and music, and a picnic. Special sessions for Sindhi youths and women were also organized. The annual general meeting of SANA members was also held during the convention. Several resolutions regarding Sindh and Pakistan were passed. For more information visit http://www.sanalist.org.

Sindhi Sammelan 2000

The Alliance of Sindh Associations of Americas, Inc. is organizing its Seventh Annual International Sindhi Sammelan on August 4th-6th, 2000 at Holiday Inn O'Hare, 5440 North River Road, Rosemont, IL 60018. For further information, visit http://www.sindhisammelan.com or call +1-847-671-6350.

Malaysian Sindhis Celebrate Sindhi New Year

Kualalampur, April, 2000, The Sindhi Association of Malaysia organized an event celebrating "Cheti Chaand" (a Sindhi new year). Sindhis from different parts of Malaysia participated in this event. For more information visit http://members.xoom.com/_XMCM/samal/ index2.htm.

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Invited Guests/Speakers and Provisional Program

Mr. M. K. Achkazai, Baluchistan	Dr Dodo Maheri, Sindh	Mr. G. Raisinghani, UK
Mr. Keerat Babani, India	Mr. Zahid Makhdoom, Canada	Mr. Sujjan Rawtani, UK
Ms. Maggie Bowden, UK	Mr. Chandru Malkani, UK	Mr. Ahmed Saleem, Punjab
Hon. Jermy Corbyn, UK	Mr. K. R. Malkani, India	Mr. S. Imdad M. Shah, Sindh
Mr. Raj Deswani, UK	Mr. Sohail Memon, Sindh	Mr. Syed Zain Shah, Sindh
Ms. Claire Galez, Geneva	Mr. A. Mengal, Baluchistan	Mr. Zulfiqar Shah, Sindh
Mr. Sobho Gianchandani, Sindh	Mr. Ashok Motwani, India	Mr. M. Tabassam, Islamabad
Mr. Ajaz Mahar, Sindh	Mr. Murli Mukhi, UK	Mr. Ishaq Tunio, USA

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Registration		
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Session I: Annual General Body Meeting Affairs (Members Only)		
	Secretary's Report 1999-2000, Dr. Haleem U. Bhatti		
	Financial Report of WSC, Dr. Lakho Luhano		
	WSC Constitution Revision, Dr. S. Shaikh and Dr. R. Shaikh		
10:30 AM - 11:00AM	Introduction of the WSC and its Activities, Dr. Haleem U. Bhatti		
	Welcome Address, Dr. Hidayat Bhutto		
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Session II: Local and Global Alliances and International Mediation for		
	Conflict Resolution in Sindh and Pakistan		
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM	Lunch		
2:00 PM – 2:30 PM	Books Launching Ceremonies (Mr. Keerat Babani and Mr. Raj Deswani)		
2:30 PM – 4:30 PM	Session III: New Challenges to Sindhi People's Struggle for Equality, Lib-		
	erty, Unity and Peace		
4:45 PM- 5:15PM	Resolutions Mr. Umed Laghari		
5:15 PM - 5:30 PM	Chairperson's Speech, Dr. Safdar Sarki		
5:30 PM - 6:00 PM	Discussions. Q & A, and Press Briefing		