

# WORLD SINDHI CONGRESS ANNUAL REPORT

2018-2019

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## ABOUT

World Sindhi Congress (“WSC”) is a human rights advocacy organization based in the UK, US, and Canada. It aims to create a better understanding among the international community about the disadvantaged status of Sindhis in Pakistan and about Sindhi people’s struggles for their human rights, including the right to self-determination. In addition, WSC strives to create an association of Sindhis around the world. WSC is a registered company in England and Wales, the UK, and Louisiana, US, organized only to carry out non-profit activities.

### **Mission:**

The World Sindhi Congress (WSC) promotes and undertakes the struggle for the right of self-determination for Sindhis. WSC continues to provide a voice to Sindhis and international communities around the world who want to see Sindh as a sovereign state. WSC believes this sovereignty is essential to achieving a just and lasting peace in the region.

### **Objectives:**

- To create a better understanding among the international community about the persecuted status of Sindhis in Pakistan and about Sindhi people’s struggles for their human rights, including the right to self-determination.
- To support all organizations in Sindh working on human rights, sustainable development, equal rights for women, and religious minorities, as well as to advocate conflict resolution and peaceful initiatives.
- To promote and encourage the solidarity of Sindhis living throughout the world.
- To create awareness of Sindhis worldwide by:
  - Organizing seminars
  - Publishing newsletters, reports, and research papers
  - Working with media, non-governmental organizations, academics, and other conscientious individuals

## **Executive Committee**

Chairperson: Dr. Rubina Shaikh;

Secretary-General, Dr Lakhu Luhano,

Senior Vice-Chairperson: Umed Laghari,

Vice-Chairman: Zubair Bhambhro,

Deputy Secretary-General: Hajan Kalhoro,

Finance Secretary: Hidayat Bhutto,

Information Secretary: Farhan Kaghzi,

Cultural Secretary: Gul Sanai

## **Organizers and Committees for WSC Chapters:**

### UK & Europe:

Hidayat Bhutto (Organizer)

Committee: Abdul Rauf Laghari, Rustam Mirjat, Moazam Mughul, Jabir Shar, Ahmed Nawaz Ansari, Haresh Kumar

### USA:

Saghir Shaikh (Organizer)

Committee: Malik Dino Shaikh, Rehman Kakepoto, Mansoor Samo, and Bashir Shahani

### Canada:

Hajan Kalhoro (Organizer)

Committee: Siraj Makhdoom & Asif Panwhar

## **The Current Situation in Sindh**

The people of Sindh continue to suffer numerous rights violations at the hands of the government. This includes disappearances and extrajudicial killings of Sindhi political activists, the state-sponsored rise in religious extremism, persecution of religious minorities, misappropriation of natural resources, and the continued threat of loss of land and livelihoods due to large-scale infrastructure projects without consultation, and the complete denial of rights and opportunities for social, economic, cultural and political development. The government's actions have led to systematic discrimination, hostility, and the persecution of indigenous Sindhi people. At present, the Sindhi people are facing the following rights violations:

### **Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances of Sindhi Activists**

The extrajudicial killing of political and human rights activists has become a norm in Pakistan, where security agencies are operating with impunity. Activists are sometimes killed after being detained for varying degrees of time or released with clear signs of physical and psychological trauma. The majority of eyewitnesses to these disappearances have indicated that the perpetrators seem to be official security personnel – rangers, police, and intelligence agencies. Due to domestic and international pressure, the government established a Commission on Enforced Disappearance however it is underfunded and lacks the power and jurisdiction to properly investigate the hundreds of cases being brought forth. To date, not a single perpetrator has been brought to justice.

### **Massive Infrastructure Projects without Consultation or Consideration**

Pakistan has taken on a number of large-scale national infrastructure projects through CPEC (the China Pakistan Economic Corridor) and is attempting to crowdfund two major dam projects after one was previously put on hold due to the outcry in Sindh. The government has sent rangers into a number of communities in Sindh to stage operations meant to create an atmosphere of fear for Sindhi people for them to more easily submit to the highly controversial projects. The government's undertaking of these initiatives has been done without the consultation of local Sindhi communities and will result in loss of traditional lands, the usurpation, and degradation of natural resources, and the loss of livelihoods. Historical mismanagement of such infrastructure projects and the lack of consideration given to how these projects will negatively impact local populations, putting the people of Sindh in a disadvantaged and dangerous position.

### **Forced Conversions and Kidnappings of Sindhi Hindus**

Sindhi Hindus are facing increasingly targeted discrimination and violence including kidnappings for extortion, abductions and forced conversions of Hindu girls, and forced servitude. The increasing violence has resulted in the exodus of the Hindu population out of Pakistan. Within the last year, numerous cases were reported of Hindu girls, the majority under the age of 16, being forcibly abducted and converted. In most instances,

the girls were also forcibly married off or kept in the custody of their kidnappers with little to no recourse for the girls or their families, even during legal proceedings.

### **Spread of Religious Extremism in Sindh**

There are an estimated 20,000 new madrassahs in Sindh, mostly funded by foreign money and under the patronage of the government. Islamic militarism is increasing, and Sindh has started seeing unprecedented violence against non-Muslim and non-Sunni sects of Muslims. The textbooks and school curriculum teach intolerance and bigotry, further aggravating tensions between these groups. Several incidents of destruction and burning of Christian, Hindu and Ahmedi places of worship have been reported.

### **Misappropriation of Sindh's Natural Resources**

Sindh remains one of the most resource-rich states of Pakistan with some of the largest oil and gas reserves in the world. These resources contribute to 69% of all of Pakistan's revenue, and Sindh has the only seaport in the country. Sindh has 71% of the gas fields in Pakistan, 62% of the oil of Pakistan, and one of the largest coal deposits in the world and 99% of Pakistan's total coal reserves (worth an estimated \$23 trillion). However, Sindh only receives 11% of federal funding and 60% of Sindhis live below the poverty line. Fifty percent of the population has diseases borne out of inadequate sanitation, and a lack of health facilities and proper infrastructure. More than 60% of Sindhis do not have access to drinkable water. The Federal government relies on Sindh's resources but then appropriates funding unequally and inequitably in favor of Punjab, perpetuating Sindh's status as one of the poorest provinces in the country despite its contributions.

## A Message from the Chair

The 2018-2019 year has been a concerted, focused and proactive year for advocacy and outreach. World Sindhi Congress (WSC) organized and participated in several meetings and protests around the world to raise awareness about the current human rights violations occurring in Sindh. These activities were enhanced by numerous statements, press releases, and condemnations released to the media and public. Further, WSC's online and social media presence continues to grow as we now utilize eight different platforms.



This current situation in Sindh is marked by continuous human rights violations and an environment of fear and oppression. Enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings continue unabated. The inconsiderate implementation of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) continues and the government of Pakistan is pushing for the construction of mega-dams on the Indus River. Sindhi people will be disproportionately and negatively impacted by these projects, including infringement on their lands, misappropriation of their resources, and loss of their livelihoods. The exodus of Sindhi Hindus continues as religious extremism rises. The cases of abduction and forced conversion of Hindu girls and women in Sindh has increased as well.

Considering the current situation in Sindh, World Sindhi Congress has been actively organizing and advocating around the world. This year the organization has staged multiple protests in the UK, US, Canada, and Geneva, Switzerland against enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, forced conversions, CPEC, dams, and other human rights violations occurring in Sindh. Additionally, undertaken meetings and advocacy work with Canadian members of Parliament, members of the US Congress, members of the European Parliament, and representatives of the UN Human Rights Council, the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, and the Unrepresented Nations Peoples Organization. WSC has participated in three UN Human Rights Council Sessions, where representatives of WSC delivered speeches, formally issued statements, and helped organize additional events and protests in Geneva. World Sindhi Congress has also worked to spread more information about Sindhi heritage by hosting a number of events in the US, UK, and Canada such as the GM Sayed Memorial events, Sindhi Cultural Day celebrations, and a Day of Remembrance for Sindhi martyrs. Finally, the organization has issued numerous public statements and condemnations of human rights violations in Sindh.

With your support, WSC looks forward to continuing its advocacy efforts and outreach this coming year with more protests, working closely with other non-governmental organizations, UN, US Congress and EU Parliament, other nations oppressed in Pakistan and with increased media presence.

# Activities and Accomplishments

## WSC Participation at the UNHRC 39th Session Geneva, September 19, 2018

WSC sent a delegation to Geneva for the 39<sup>th</sup> Session to bring awareness to the current human rights abuses being perpetrated in Sindh. Members of the delegation participated in a number of meetings, including co-sponsoring a seminar on the human rights situation in Pakistan and communities impacted by government policies. WSC Secretary-General, Lakhu Luhana, delivered a statement on the UN floor regarding the adverse impacts of meg dam construction on the Indus River. Additionally, Hidayat Bhutto represented WSC in a statement on enforced disappearances in Sindh.



## 30th Annual Conference on Sindh: State Terrorism in Sindh: Enforced Disappearance Causes and Consequences London, October 27, 2018

For the 30th year, the World Sindhi Congress brought together international activists, academics, analysts, and policy makers to highlight the difficult human rights situation in Sindh. Through this year's theme, "State Terrorism in Sindh: Enforced Disappearance Causes and Consequences", participants engaged in panel discussions, presentations, workshops, and networking events. The Annual Conference on Sindh provided an international forum to analyze and discuss the latest research and developments within the province and the human rights field regarding enforced disappearance in order to best address

the current issues facing Sindhis and how the international community could work together to end that and other rights violations in Pakistan.





## Protests Against Mega Dams on the Indus London & Manchester September 29, 2019 & November 22, 2018

WSC organized several protests to bring awareness to mega-dam construction along the Indus River and to discuss water rights and the negative environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of such large development projects. The protests also focused on the fundraising being pushed by Chief Justice Saquib Nisar.

## G.M. Syed Memorial Awards and 115<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration Toronto and Houston, January 19, 2019

Organized by WSC and the GM Syed Memorial Committee, Sindhi-Americans gathered in Houston, Texas and in Toronto, Canada to celebrate the 115<sup>th</sup> birthday of GM Syed, the revered Sindhi national leader and activist. The celebrations included music, dinner, cake cutting, and speeches by local Sindhi community members. Mr. Yaseen Junejo was honored at the event with an award for his personal contribution to the identity, language and culture, and to the movement for the rights of Sindhis. A similar event was organized in Bradford, UK.

Commemoration of 115<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Saen G. M. Syed

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Place:** **Indus River Indus**  
2019 and a World Congress  
10 (1981)

**Time:** **10:00 AM**  
Indus River Indus 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
10:00 AM - 10:00 PM

**Special Features:**

- ✓ Speeches by Saen G. M. Syed
- ✓ Cake Cutting
- ✓ Music & Dance

This event is free and is open to all ages

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**Organized by**  
G M Syed Memorial Committee  
and World Sindhi Congress

**Performance by**  
"Renowned Sindhi  
Singer from Sindhi"  
Ahmed Mughal"

**Sindhi Soul Music Session**



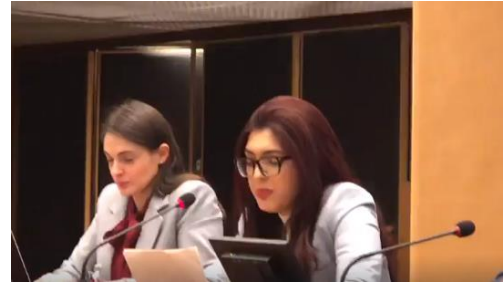
## Seminar on Freedom in Pakistan Toronto, February 24, 2019

Hajjan Kalhoro, Organizer for WSC Canada, spoke on the topic of Freedom of Expression in Sindh during a seminar titled, "The State of Freedom in Pakistan" held in Toronto by the Canadian branch of the Progressive Writers Association.

## WSC Delegation Attends 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Geneva, February 26 – March 23, 2018

A delegation of WSC representatives attended the 40th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to participate in rallies, discussions, activities, and special meetings. Members of the delegation delivered statements on forced conversions and religious extremism, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, and Sindhis' right to development. The delegation also staged a protest against rights violations in Pakistan including enforced disappearance and large-scale development projects such as mega-dams. Members of the delegation also participated in supplementary events during the Session such as a co-sponsored event on the human rights situation in Sindh.



## Remembrance of Arman Luni Toronto, March 16, 2019

Community members and the PTM joined in Toronto to remember and honor PTM leader, Arman Luni. WSC Canada members Hajjan Kalhoro and adi Rohi Kalhoro both spoke at the event.



## Inaugural DC Seminar on Sindh Washington, D.C. April 30, 2019



Implementing a new seminar series, WSC began with the inaugural seminar in Washington, D.C. entitled, "Human Rights, Security, and Development in Sindh: Realities for Pakistan's Southern Province." The speakers deliberated on issues of US-Pakistan relations, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, human rights in Sindh and Sindh's critical geopolitical role. Among the speakers and attendees were representatives from

USAID, Amnesty International, UNPO, the Wilson Centre, US Congresswoman Carol Maloney, WSC, Sindhi Bloch Forum, and Pashtun Council Canada.



## Sindh Remembrance Day Event Sheffield, June 8, 2019

WSC and Sindhi Sanghst UK (SSUK) joined together to host the annual Remembrance Day for Heroes of Sindh in Sheffield. The annual event was created to pay tribute to martyrs of

Sindh and remember the great contributions and sacrifices they made for Sindhi people and their homeland.

## UN 40<sup>th</sup> Session on Human Rights Geneva, July 3, 2019

WSC representatives had the opportunity to specifically address enforced disappearances at the 40<sup>th</sup> UNHCR Session, highlighting the culture of impunity surrounding enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings as well as the negative and long-lasting impacts the practice has on communities and families. They also focused on the need for accountability on the part of the government of Pakistan and the ineffectiveness of its actions.



## Meeting with the Congressional Sindh Caucus Co-Chair Los Angeles, July 29, 2019

WSC Organizer, Dr. Saghir Shaikh, had the opportunity to meet Hon. Adam Schiff in Southern California. Congressman Schiff is the chief of the congressional intelligence committee and a Co-Chair of Congressional Sindh Caucus. He and the other caucus members continue to work to bring the issues of Sindh into the minds of US policymakers and the international community. In early July they drafted a letter to Mr. Imran Khan regarding the enforced disappearances in Sindh and forced conversions and marriages of Sindhi Hindu girls as well as other human rights abuses. WSC is working to provide Congressman Schiff and the caucus with more reports and data relevant to the incidence of abuses in Sindh.

## Commemorating the International Day on Enforced Disappearance New York City, August 30, 2019

WSC organized an event in New York City to commemorate the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearance. Community members from around the tri-state area attended to discuss the cruel and inhumane practice across Pakistan but particularly in Sindh while Raja Dahar, the MC for the event, who welcomed the guests.



## Issuing Statements of Condemnation

Throughout the 2018-2019 year, WSC has released numerous statements condemning atrocities and rights violations in Sindh and Pakistan in general. The comments included standing against major dam and development projects, calling for the end of enforced disappearances, highlighting the widespread environmental degradation occurring across the province, and remembering those who are still missing on the International Day of the Victim of Enforced Disappearance.

## Human Rights Reports and Publications

WSC published a communiqué on the cases of the Enforced Disappearances and Forced Conversions in Sindh.

## World Sindhi Congress Media Presence

World Sindhi Congress connects Sindhis around the world with social media. WSC shares their events, news, and updates every day across eight platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, and Tumblr. World Sindhi Congress continues to expand its social media presence and strengthen the international Sindhi network.

This year, WSC has:

- 116,190 followers on Facebook (+4,997 followers than the last year)
- 8,644 followers on Twitter (+1,250 followers than the last year)
- 5,223 followers on Instagram (+9 followers than the last year)