

Press Release - Date: 11th December 2020

Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy

On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, 10th December 2020 an online seminar was organized on the issue of languishing Indian prisoners in Pakistan prisons and vice versa.

The Seminar 'Prisoners of Contention' was organized by various Indian and Pakistani organizations promoting peace in the sub-continent. Prominent activists from both the countries like Faisal Edhi, Syeda Hamid, Haya Zahid, Hamid Ansari, Mohammad Ali Shah, Jivan Jungi, Fauzia Ansari, Nirupama Subramanian, and IA Rehman were the key speakers.

The panel discussed the landmark case of Hamid Ansari who was the first prisoner in the history of more than 65 years to be released and repatriated on the day of completion of his sentence. Hamid Ansari was released on Dec 18, 2018, after being held for six years in a Pakistani prison on charges of espionage that were later proved false. However, there are at present 362 Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails and 324 Indian prisoners in Pakistan Jails, many of whom have completed their sentences and are awaiting repatriation.

Following the deliberations, a resolution was passed. It demanded that both countries should prioritize the release and repatriation of fishermen, women prisoners, and persons with non-serious charges. This is also necessary in the context of deadly COVID.

The seminar also appealed to both governments to allow medical check-ups of prisoners by teams of doctors from their respective countries. This will be a big step in reassuring both prisoners and their families of their well-being.

The resolution also demands an immediate revival of the Joint Judicial Committee on Prisoners to facilitate the peace process and secure the safety and security of prisoners. While India has already nominated its members in 2013, the Pakistan government must urgently nominate their members to the committee and facilitate a meeting of the committee.

The Agreement on Consular Access of 2008 must also be implemented in letter and spirit. It was demanded that the nationality of arrested persons must be confirmed within a definite time after Consular Access. Also, if someone dies then his/her body should be sent to their families within a week.

The seminar demanded that a 'no arrest policy' on sea be agreed upon by both countries and a long-term plan for a Maritime Economic Co-operation Agreement be initiated between both countries to prevent the arrest on the sea.

In the end, IA Rehman, Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid, Karamat Ali, Jatin Desai, Tapan Bose, and Narendra Patil were felicitated for their contributions to getting prisoners released and

repatriated.

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