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**THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO  
PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN DOMINATION OR FOREIGN  
OCCUPATION**

**Written statement\* submitted by Interfaith International,  
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 2005]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

In 1918, US President Woodrow Wilson enunciated the principle of self-determination. The Right of Self-Determination has since been enshrined in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right as a fundamental right of all peoples.

The Sindhis are a nation of about 30 million people, the majority of whom live in the Pakistani province of Sindh, which covers an area of about 150,000 square kilometers. Sindh is an ancient nation whose civilization stretches back to the time of the earliest human settlements. The ancient Sindhi people embraced a peaceful way of life; Moenjodaro, a city that flourished in 2600 B.C., had advanced city planning and well-developed arts, but it lacked even basic military fortifications and weapons. Sindh was an independent country for many millennia, although it suffered a series of assaults and occupations from time to time. Throughout history the Sindhi people have maintained their secular and peaceful way of life.

In 1843, the British colonized Sindh after an unprovoked attack on the sovereign country. This attack was widely criticized by many British leaders and intellectuals at the time. In 1936, the British held the first elections in Sindh, which produced a staunchly secular legislature. In a subsequent election, gerrymandering and separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims, along with local political factors, allowed the sectarian Muslim League to win a bare majority in the Sindh Assembly, although the League received only about 40% of the popular vote.

In 1946, forced to choose to join either India or Pakistan by the British colonizers, the Sindh Assembly voted to join Pakistan. The decision was based on the 1940 Lahore Resolution, which stipulated "protection for minorities" and "sovereignty and autonomy" for constituent units. Pakistan has broken this covenant—it has oppressed religious minorities and imposed a militaristic Islamist dictatorship on the Sindhi people.

The Sindhis satisfy the definition of a people by all conceivable criteria. They share a common culture and language. They have a long history. They share a distinctive outlook on life. And they have peacefully demanded their right to self-determination for the last 60 years. We will not go into detail about the human rights abuses carried out by Pakistan, as these will be reported under the appropriate Items. However, we wish to provide a brief assessment of the condition of the Sindhi people in order to demonstrate the urgent need for international intervention. The conditions in Sindh show that Pakistan has repeatedly violated several international covenants as well the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As a consequence of pogroms facilitated by the Pakistan government four months after Pakistan's formation, 3 million Sindhis were displaced and are now in Diaspora. In contravention of Article 13 part 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these Sindhis have been denied the Right of Return, or even visas to visit their holiest shrines, which are in Sindh.

The Sindhis' demands for their fundamental human rights have been met with harsh crackdowns by successive Pakistani dictatorships. In contravention of Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which protects the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, Pakistan arrested hundreds of students after the indiscriminate shooting of peaceful demonstrators in March 1968. Sedition charges are commonly used against protestors. In contravention of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which protects the right to freedom of

opinion and expression, the Sindhi national poet, Shaikh Ayaz (d. 1999) was charged with treason—a crime punishable by death—for advocating peace in South Asia.

In the 1980s, hundreds of Sindhis campaigning for their national rights were massacred by the military. Oppressive methods are still in use. Abdul Haq Mirani, a peaceful protestor, was among those killed by the Pakistani police in recent years. On February 20, 2004, approximately 1800 people were charged with sedition for singing the Sindhi national anthem during peaceful protests. Moreover, in contravention of Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights activists are often held without charge and prisoners are routinely tortured by the police and security forces.

The Sindhi people are denied the right to govern themselves. Contravening the right of a people to control their natural wealth and resources enshrined in Article 1 section 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right, the Sindhi people have been deprived of their water rights, their ports, oil and natural gas, and their mineral wealth. In particular, Pakistan undermines Sindh's right to control its own resources by damming and diverting rivers that otherwise naturally flow into Sindh. Violating even its own treaties on the distribution of the waters of the Indus River, Pakistan has deprived the Sindhi people of water for agriculture, forests, and mangrove forests.

In violation of Article 2 of the above international covenant, the Sindhi people suffer from ethnic, linguistic, and religious discrimination. The poverty levels in Sindh are more than twice the national average, and Sindhis continue to suffer discrimination in employment. The Sindhi language has been denied effective official status in Sindh, where government business continues to be carried out in foreign languages. Alien officials who cannot read, write or speak the local language are appointed by Pakistan to Sindh. The Sindhi people, who are predominantly Sufi, have been forced to learn an intolerant and hateful interpretation of religion in government mandated curricula.

The Sindhi people are suffering from the effects of the Pakistani military dictatorship. The Sindhi people are not participants in this military. The result of Pakistani rule in Sindh has been Pakistan's ability to use Sindh's resources, which provides two-thirds of Pakistan's revenue, to promote a militant agenda—for example, by developing nuclear weapons and exporting nuclear technology to other countries, and by facilitating the training of terrorists in madrassas. The repressive Pakistani regime and the fanatic Pakistani ideology have made it impossible for the Sindhi people to engage in a civic dialogue within the political structure of Pakistan. Frequent spells of martial laws and coup d'états, and the effective control of the Pakistani military over the state, have deprived the Sindhi people of their democratic rights as enshrined in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. .

The Sindhi people have an inalienable right to self-determination. By no possible construction of the current conditions are they able to exercise this right. The diabolical nature of the military force they face can be illustrated by Pakistan's history. The Pakistani military stands accused of massacring two million and raping hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis, crimes that were never punished by Pakistan. More recently, Pakistan was the prime supporter of the fanatic Taliban in Afghanistan.

The mentality of the Pakistan military has not been unreformed. Recently, a Sindhi physician serving a rural area of neighboring Balochistan was allegedly raped by a Pakistani military

officer assisted by soldiers. Despite massive protests in Sindh, and in contravention of international Covenants, the Pakistani military interfered with the police investigation and immunized the suspects. In response to protests in the Baloch town where this physician practices, the Pakistan military created a military garrison, and a Pakistani security official threatened genocide of the local Baloch.

Under such circumstances, it is imperative that the world speaks out for the right of the Sindhi people to self-determination as enshrined in international covenants. These peaceful people should not be forced to perish in the face of aggression by the strong. The international community has played a constructive role in helping a number of peoples, such as those of E. Timor, Eritrea, and most recently Southern Sudan. A referendum should be organized in Sindh under the supervision of the United Nations so that the Sindhi people can freely choose their future as well. I ask the UNHCR to recognize its responsibility to advocate for the right of the Sindhi people to self-determination.

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