



Introduction

Syed Sami Raza

In early 2015 I began to think of starting a research journal in the field of human rights in Pakistan. There were three impetuses to start this initiative: first, the fact of matter that there was no research journal in the field of human rights published from Pakistan by then; second, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan was financially supporting such initiatives; and third, my academic background in constitutional theory and politics that made me feel that I could start this initiative. However, it took more than three years to finally see the initiative taking off the ground (-this introduction is written at the end of 2018).

Here in this first introduction to the journal, I want to briefly document some of the crucial efforts and experiences, as well as to put on record names of the persons who helped to make this initiative possible. The first step of the initiative was to create and register a society. Although it was easy to prepare its details—academic scope, functions, and membership—getting it registered with the government of Pakistan became a daunting task. There were several steps involved in it, especially the lengthy process of security clearance of all members of the society. The second major step was opening a bank account, applying for an income tax number, and a tax exemption certificate. The last segment of this step is still going on. The last major step was getting the journal registered with the Press Registrar, which was also lengthy and cumbersome. All these steps involved long loops of bureaucratic process, making us feel that (even) taking a positive initiative in the society is so difficult.

One episode will give idea of the kind of difficulty I am talking about. When our file reached the Press Registrar in Islamabad, they objected to the very basic aspect of it—name of the journal. I thought to meet the Registrar and explain our case. The first difficulty was that there was no information on Internet about the physical location

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of the office of the Registrar. Nor was there any working phone number in directories. However, when I finally found the office and reached there, the Registrar refused to listen to what I wanted to say, and simply asked me to give at least five alternative names out of which she would choose one for us provide it did not match any already existing titles. I asked her to give me an official letter of her demand. She asked her assistant to give me a letter. On the basis of that letter then I wrote my detailed response, especially emphasizing upon the fact why she was not sharing the matching title with me. Few weeks later her deputy registrar called me to give up my insistence on the matching title and instead give them alternative titles. However, as we debated further she revealed the similar title, which was "Report of Human Rights." When I came to know this I wrote another detailed letter to the Registrar explaining her how our title "Review of Human Rights" was different from it. Toward the end of my letter I also warned her that I would go to court to finally resolve the difference of opinion between us. Fortunately, she yielded, and we hadn't had see the next level of the bureaucratic loop.

As I encountered these various logistical hurdles some friends, colleagues, and students came to my help. They included my wife, Ghazala Rafi, who not only encouraged me about the initiative, but also helped me on the academic side of it. Then my excellent students Shehzad Ali and Noor Amin helped me a lot. They often accompanied me to different offices, gave much-needed suggestions, and even used their connections. My colleagues Shahida Amaan, Noreen Naseer, Ayub Jan, Muhammad Zubair, and Aamer Raza supported me in various ways. I would like to highlight Zubair's assistance in introducing me to a printing press (of his brother). I would also like to mention my international colleagues especially Alvin C. Lim and Jan Peter Hartung who supported this initiative and provided their assistance on the academic side of the journal.

In this first issue of the journal we have five essays that in different ways talk about the dismal human rights condition in Pakistan, Cambodia and Europe. The first essay is mine. It focuses on an event of violence that involved killing of five alien men and women traveling across Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Not only this violence was shocking, but also the kind of non-response that the Pakistani governmental authorities gave to it. I engage the concept of "divine violence" to shed light on our criminal justice system. Apart from my essay, there are two more essays reflecting on the dismal condition of human rights in Pakistan. One is by Noreen Naseer who talks about the century-old Frontier Crimes Regulation, FCR (1901) in the tribal agencies of Pakistan. She argues that the FCR is against the letter and spirit of fundamental rights prescribes in the

Constitution of Pakistan as well as against the UN Human Rights Charter. She illustrates her argument by giving instances of half-dozen individual cases of violence, especially highlighting those of women cases. The other essay is by Fasihuddin and Zaidi who focus on the police administration in Khbyer-Pakhtunkhwa (a province in Pakistan), which is transforming after the introduction of e-governance reforms, to showcase its role in promoting and/or limiting human rights.

The article by Alvin C. Lim is based on the human rights condition in Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge regime. He briefly highlights various stages of the history of violence and throws light on the present condition of it. The last article is by Aamer Raza who takes up the case of European Muslim women migrating to the ISIS territories. He critically examines their motivations for joining the ISIS. He places his examination in the backdrop of the widespread debate on the mainstream Western media. Moreover, he takes a nuanced approach to tease out how Western media differentiates in its portrayal the motivations of women migrants from those of the male migrants.