

Thank you, Madame Chairperson,

I speak here today on behalf of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization. I would like to raise awareness of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, who has found themselves in a constitutional limbo for over seven decades now.

Gilgit-Baltistan, a UN-declared disputed territory, was in 1947 invaded by Pakistani military forces. UN Security Council Resolution 47 called upon Pakistan to withdraw all military from the disputed territory in order to hold a plebiscite to determine the people's will. However, Pakistan refused to comply, and as a result, Gilgit-Baltistan remains under Pakistani control till this day.

Not represented in Pakistan's National Assembly nor in the Senate, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are left in a constitutional limbo, which is continuously being covered up through bureaucratic reforms and emblematic dual government systems. Although the 1999 supreme court verdict directed the Pakistani government to ensure the fundamental rights of Gilgit-Baltistan, meaning their right to be governed through their chosen representatives and to have access to justice through an independent judiciary, this is yet to be fulfilled. This was reaffirmed by the Pakistani General election in July, where the people of Gilgit-Baltistan once again were not allowed to vote.

Dissenting voices are severely suppressed. Politicians, journalists and human rights defenders are persecuted, incarcerated and there are even cases of alleged torture and killings. They are being tried in front of military courts organised outside the scope of the constitution, because, once again, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are not included in the Pakistani constitution. The people, therefore, lack an unbiased instrument to take legal action against human rights violations. The international community must act to end the suffering of this forgotten people.

I thank you Madame Chairperson