From the desk of the WSI (World Sindhi Institute).
On the plight of minorities living in the province of Sindh, Pakistan.

Honourable Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished Delegates, Good Afternoon.

On behalf of the World Sindhi Institute, its President Mr. Suhail Ansari and General Secretary Ms. Humaira Rahman, I extend the sincere appreciation for organising this event on minorities issues. Indeed the SWI feels privileged and encouraged to be part of this global voice in support of minorities anywhere everywhere around the globe.

I avail myself here an opportunity to briefly introduce the WSI. The World Sindhi Institute is a diaspora organisation based in Washington, DC and Toronto, Canada. The WSI is committed to achieving human rights for the Sindhis of Sindh in south-eastern Pakistan through nonviolent advocacy, activism and academic campaigns. The WSI brings together Sindhis of all religious and geographical backgrounds and their supporters in a proactive, progressive movement whose purpose is to inform others of the human rights atrocities occurring in Sindh.

Madam Chairperson,

The Province of Sindh is increasingly becoming a hostile place to minorities living in Sindh. Given the fact that more than half of the minorities’ population is settled in the province of Sindh, the plight of minorities living over there merits immediate attention by this Forum. To illustrate the atrocities and hate-related practices being faced by minorities, I would like to quote here a tragic event of defiling of the corpse of Bhooro Bheel. Bheel is local lingua for the low caste Hindu minority living in Sindh. His death occurred due to road accident, which happened two days before his death. He was buried in the local graveyard where traditionally low caste Bheels and Muslims bury their dead members. However the very next day a group of armed individuals allegedly led by the local cleric of a seminary exhumed his grave and threw the corpse out of the graveyard, claiming it was against Sharia to bury members of any minority near Muslims’ graves. Bhooro Bheel’s body remained unprotected near the road for almost eight hours as his family and relatives were scared of the mob. Law enforcement agencies failed to intervene and prevent the occurrence of the incident.

It is important to mention here that Hindus are the largest religious minority in Pakistan, and a majority of them dwell in Sindh who consider it their motherland.

For the past decade Minorities have been facing persecution like kidnappings for ransom, forced conversions of young girls. Such events have prompted the exodus of minorities from Sindh.
According to the reports by various human rights organisations the legal structure of Pakistan is considerably fragile when it comes to completely protecting the rights of minorities. In many cases it has miserably failed to prevent the abuse of blasphemy law. These laws were introduced by past dictatorial and non-democratic regime led by General Zia Ul Haq during the 80’s and still continue to be part of legal/penal codes.

It is being used against religious minorities, but the Muslim population are paying the price as well. Almost two years back prominent politicians in Pakistan were shot dead over their opposition to Pakistan's controversial blasphemy law. It included the then sitting governor of Punjab province Salman Taseer and a minister for minorities Shahbaz Bhatti. Their only crime was to point out to the need for the public debate of law on media. Such high profile killings speak of the intensity of issues on one hand and intolerance and extremism on the other hand. Abuse and violence under the guise of law by non-state actors is continuously creating a climate of fear among Pakistan's religious minorities and progressive Muslim population as well.

There is critical and urgent need to de-religioicise the Pakistan's legal system. It should be emphasised to Pakistan's federal and provincial government, through this Forum, to review its laws in order to make it more democratic and compatible to the United Nation's Universal declaration of Human Rights.

Madam Chairperson,

I demand your attention here, I will conclude my brief speech with the lines that until and unless in countries like Pakistan the democratic and progressive forces are not preferred and supported against anti-democratic forces there is no solution possible to issues related to basic human, social and political rights. Only progressive and democratic forces can have the potential and the will to impart basic freedom and rights to populace. Let us agree that absence of democratic values opens doors to all forms of atrocities against Human self.

Thank you for your attention.