

Your Ref:

Our Ref: International Law / Relations Committee: 21000325/104

6 July 2012

His Excellency, Mr Asif Zardari  
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan  
Via High Commission for Pakistan  
4 Timbarra Crescent  
O'MALLEY ACT 2606

By Post and Email to: [parepcanberra@internode.on.net](mailto:parepcanberra@internode.on.net)

Dear Excellency

**CONCERN OVER THREATS TO THE LIFE OF MS ASMA JAHANGIR**

We write on the advice of our International Law and Relations Committee to reiterate concerns regarding recent reports of threats to the life of Ms Asma Jahangir, as stated by LAWASIA in its letter to you dated 18 June 2012.

Ms Jahangir is a leading human rights lawyer, whose work during her time as former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief is well regarded throughout the world. We consider that the protection and security of lawyers, who are essential in protecting fundamental legal rights and securing justice for our communities, is of utmost importance. It is our view that these reported threats to Ms Jahangir represent an overall attack on the legal profession in Pakistan and its independence and functions, with the effect of undermining the rule of law in Pakistan.

We refer to the internationally agreed United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers. This treaty was formulated to assist States in their task of promoting and preserving the proper role of lawyers. It holds that lawyers should be respected and taken into account by Governments within the framework of their national legislation and practice. It also holds that where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

Perhaps this document could be brought to the attention of lawyers, including judges and prosecutors; and members of the executive and the legislature and the public in general, to assist them in understanding the role of lawyers. We note in particular several relevant sections which hold that:

- Governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference and shall not suffer, or be threatened

with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics;

- Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions;
- Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of these rights.

We urge your government to take measures to properly investigate the nature of these serious allegations, and to ensure the protection of Ms Jahangir and all lawyers in Pakistan.

Yours faithfully

Dr John de Groot  
**President**