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Political and business leaders attending the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum, 23-27 January 2008, must ask President Musharraf to address the human rights situation in Pakistan

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I am writing to you concerning the attendance by President Musharraf at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum this week to ask you to raise Amnesty International's serious concerns regarding the human rights situation in Pakistan during your meetings with President Musharraf.

Over the past month, Amnesty International has conducted research *in situ* to assess the human rights situation in Pakistan, following the lifting of the state of emergency on 16 December 2007. We collected a wealth of evidence on human rights violations and the breakdown of rule of law, which are sowing the seeds of a political catastrophe, with devastating consequences for ordinary people.

The widespread political violence, continued arbitrary arrests and detentions, ill-treatment and enforced disappearances and a worsening of the human rights crisis, with an impending humanitarian crisis owing to a wheat shortage that could have been prevented by swift government action, are undermining the prospect of free and fair elections re-scheduled for 18 February.

We urge you as members of the international community present at Davos, to use your utmost influence on the Pakistan government to immediately agree to uphold human rights and maintain rule of law in Pakistan, through the return to service of judges removed during emergency rule and the guarantee of an independent judiciary, as enshrined in its constitution and international law. In addition we urge you to appeal to President Musharraf to take constitutional and other steps to ensure that no one may suspend the constitution and basic human rights in the future. These measures can help build confidence and hope among the people to establish stability and prosperity in the country.

We ask you, in particular, to ensure that the following concerns are raised in your meetings that Pakistan:

end arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, and ill-treatment, politically-motivated criminal prosecutions, civil proceedings against or harassment of politicians, human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, and other members of civil society;

stop the use of "blind First Information Reports" – police complaints in which the suspect is unidentified – a practice which allows the government to harass and detain political opponents;

restore the independence of the judiciary by returning to service all judges removed during emergency rule;

respect the right to freedom of expression and information, and the right to peaceful assembly. At rallies or other mass gatherings law enforcement officials must comply with international standards, and in particular should not use force unless strictly necessary and only to the minimum extent required ;

conduct full and independent investigations into political assassinations, including that of Benazir Bhutto, and other unlawful killings and suicide attacks, and make public the findings.

While we understand that a human rights agenda alone will not answer all the myriad concerns in Pakistan, respect for and protection of human rights must be a central part in the country's development to ensure peace and stability in a the country that is facing a growing insurgency and political uncertainty.

I urge you to make human rights and rule of law in Pakistan a central theme in your discussions with President Musharraf and look forward to the outcome of your deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Irene Khan
Secretary General