



FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN SECRETARIAT

FOR PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT (FOSPAH)

FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL OMBUDSPERSONS STAND TOGETHER AGAINST HARASSMENT IN UNIVERSITIES

“HARASSMENT INCIDENTS AT UNIVERSITIES AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS/
INAUGURATION OF FOSPAH HELPLINE”

Location: 1st Floor, Local Government & Rural Development Complex, Sector, G-5/2,
Islamabad.

In a landmark meeting, Ms. Fauzia Viqar, the Federal Ombudsperson, convened a meeting with Provincial Ombudspersons, including Ms. Rakhshanda Naz, Ms. Nabila Khan, Muhammad Abdullah, and Ms. Noor Amna, MD of Higher Education Commission. The pivotal agenda was to address the pressing concern of harassment within universities and educational institutions.

Participants expressed alarm over the escalating number of harassment cases within educational institutions and discussed the recent appalling incident at Islamia University Bahawalpur that highlights the issue's gravity. The objective of the meeting was to develop strategies for preventing and combating harassment in academic institutions.

The Federal Ombudsperson provided an overview of the mandate and number of cases resolved at FOSPAH. She stressed the need for concrete suggestions to increase confidence of students and measures to increase reporting in universities. The KPK Provincial Ombudsperson shared proactive measures taken in KPK to raise awareness in universities and stringent actions taken such as imposing fines on CUST University's inquiry committee members, and notably, a substantial fine on the Vice Chancellor for negligence.

Representatives from Balochistan Ombudsman shared about disseminating letters to universities and conducting training sessions in schools and universities. The goal is to ensure effective implementation of measures that curtail harassment within educational institutions.

Ms. Amna Noor, MD of HEC, highlighted HEC's commitment and efforts to enforce compliance, unequivocally condemning any form of influence in these matters. She also suggested active linkage with FOSPAH to raise awareness and increase reporting.

The meeting generated concrete suggestions to avert the recurrence of incidents akin to the Islamia University Bahawalpur case. The committee members decided measures for launching of awareness campaigns in universities including appointment of campus ambassadors in universities, display of code of conduct at prominent places throughout universities and orientation of students on laws and mechanisms dealing with harassment. Strengthening inquiry committees with independent and senior committee members, strict punitive actions, integrating harassment concerns into syllabus and induction training were some of the strategies planned for immediate action.

The session culminated with the launch of the FOSPAH (Helpline: 03444367367), a pivotal step in enabling complaint registration and addressing inquiries related to the pressing issue of harassment.