

**OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL OMBUDSPERSON
FOR PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN
AT THE WORKPLACE, REGIONAL OFFICE, SINDH
FORM OF ORDER SHEET**

Complaint No. 463/2024

Date of Institution: 14.10.2024

Serial No. of Order of Proceedings	Date of order of Proceedings	Order of other proceedings with Signature of Federal Ombudsperson			
		TITLE	MS. SAMREEN SHAHID	VS	MR. JAMAL BAIG
		DEPARTMENT: PAKISTAN POST OFFICE			
1	2	3			
00	29.05.2025	<p>Subject: Order on Merits of the Complaint</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Complainant, Samreen Shahid, is currently serving as a Packer (BPS-4) at the Nazimabad Office of the Pakistan Post Office, where she has been posted for the past three years. She was appointed under the deceased quota following the death of her husband and has since carried out duties involving scanning, updating postman records, and other clerical functions. The Accused, Jamal Baig, is a Senior Postmaster holding a position of significant authority within the same office. The Complainant has alleged a sustained pattern of inappropriate and sexually harassing behavior by the Accused, extending over a considerable period and culminating in September 2024. According to the Complainant, the harassment began with repeated physical proximity and unwanted touch under the guise of routine office interactions. She reports that the Accused deliberately positioned his chair in close contact with hers and 			

made physical contact by touching her hand when she used the computer mouse or the office telephone. She further alleges that the Accused made vulgar and suggestive remarks, engaged in sexually inappropriate conversations, and on several occasions, touched her under false pretexts.

4. Upon objecting to this behavior, the Complainant asserts that the Accused responded with threats of retaliation. He allegedly warned her that he would initiate false complaints of poor performance and seek her transfer if she refused to comply. Given that the Complainant's current posting is near her residence, an essential consideration for a widowed mother, this threat carried considerable weight and was clearly intended to coerce her into silence.
5. The pattern of harassment escalated disturbingly. The Complainant alleges that whenever she applied for leave due to health or urgent personal matters, the Accused imposed degrading and coercive conditions. Specifically, he demanded that she either engage in late-night phone calls with him or offer him a kiss as a "penalty" for leave. She recalls his words: *"If you want a leave, you'll have to give me a kiss."*
6. In another demeaning incident, the Complainant states that when she requested correction fluid ("whito") from the Accused, he responded with a sexually charged innuendo: *"Acha, ab tum whito bhi mere se lo gi"* ("Oh, so now you will even take the whito from me"). The Complainant interpreted this remark as a reference to his male genitalia, insinuating that she was soliciting something sexual from him under the guise of an office supply request. This deeply inappropriate comment, coupled with the pattern of previous misconduct, left her feeling harassed, demeaned, and

objectified within her professional environment. She asserts that these repeated and deliberate violations not only disrupted her emotional well-being but also significantly impaired her ability to function effectively at work.

7. The alleged harassment extended beyond the workplace. The Complainant further states that the Accused made unsolicited personal phone calls to her during the evening hours (approximately between 8:00 and 9:00 PM.), which heightened her sense of vulnerability and discomfort.

8. When she reported the harassment, the Accused initially ceased direct misconduct but attempted to influence her indirectly. She claims that he used a Clerk, Naved Haseeb, to pressurize her into withdrawing the complaint, a conversation allegedly witnessed by another employee, Rehan Ahmed Khan.

9. She further recounts that following a spinal injury sustained in an accident, the Accused made a sexually suggestive comment: *"Tum mujhe dikhao, main sahi kar deta hoon"* ("Show me your back, I'll fix it"). On another occasion, he brought a chair near her desk, sat beside her, and touched her knee. Despite her clear disapproval and warnings, he continued. When she screamed in protest, the Accused placed his hand on her thigh before abruptly returning to his seat and resuming work, as though nothing had happened. It was following this alarming incident that the Complainant formally approached the Postmaster General with a written complaint.

10. The Complainant initially lodged a complaint before the Postmaster General (PMG) Office in August 2024, alleging repeated acts of harassment by the Accused. A key incident involved the Accused allegedly touching the Complainant's thigh

while she was using the shared office computer placed in his room, the only computer available to staff at the time. The Complainant states that she confronted the Accused and filed a written complaint immediately thereafter.

11. A departmental inquiry was initiated by the PMG Office. The Accused submitted a general denial of the allegations but failed to provide any supporting evidence or produce witnesses in his defence. During the inquiry, statements were recorded from Rehan Ahmed Khan, Syed Asim Imam, Athar Hussain, and Naveed Haseeb. Rehan Ahmed Khan and Syed Asim Imam confirmed that the Complainant had narrated the incidents to them. They further stated that, when confronted, the Accused assured them that such conduct would not be repeated, implicitly acknowledging his misconduct. In contrast, Athar Hussain and Naveed Haseeb stated that they had no knowledge of what occurred inside the room where the incident allegedly took place. The Complainant also highlighted the absence of CCTV cameras, limiting the availability of visual corroboration.

12. Meanwhile, the Complainant filed the present complaint before this Forum on 14.10.2024, citing a lack of confidence in the impartiality and effectiveness of the departmental inquiry. During the hearing held on 03.12.2024, it was brought to the Forum's attention that a concurrent inquiry was ongoing at the departmental level. In view of the Complainant's apprehensions regarding institutional bias, and to prevent parallel proceedings on the same subject matter, this Forum vide letter dated 10.12.2024, directed the suspension of the departmental inquiry. The said directive was addressed to Mr. Munsif Aziz (Controller IMO, Pakistan Post Office), and compliance was confirmed by the PMG

Office on 06.03.2025. Thereafter, this Forum continued to exercise jurisdiction over the matter exclusively.

13. The Complainant filed a detailed and comprehensive complaint before this Forum. In response, the Accused submitted a written statement containing a general denial, without making any reference to the Complainant's alleged remarriage or non-marriage issue, an assertion that only emerged subsequently at the stage of affidavit-in-evidence before this Forum.

14. The Counsel for the Accused, during the final arguments, argued that the instant complaint is a retaliatory action stemming from the Complainant's efforts to obtain a signature on a "non-marriage certificate" despite her remarriage, an act which would render her ineligible for continued pension benefits.

15. The Counsel contended that upon refusal by the Accused to sign the certificate, the Complainant threatened to file a harassment complaint against him. This account was initially presented in the complaint filed before the Postmaster General (PMG) Office, where the Accused had clearly stated that the Complainant attempted to secure the said signature, including through a third person named Naveed Haseeb. Although the Complainant initially denied this, she subsequently admitted during cross-examination before this Forum that Naveed Haseeb was indeed sent to the Accused for the said purpose.

16. The Counsel highlighted several inconsistencies in the Complainant's account. For instance, while she claimed not to have informed anyone about the incident on the day it occurred, CW-1 (Rehan Ahmed Khan) stated that the Complainant came to him crying on the same day and was advised to formally complain.

17. Furthermore, while the Complainant denied any prior altercation involving her calling her son to confront another colleague (Athar Hussain), both Court Witnesses confirmed the occurrence of such an incident. This contradiction raised concerns regarding the consistency and credibility of her testimony.

18. CW-2 (Syed Asim Imam) stated that the Accused would arrive around 12:00 PM and the Complainant would leave around the same time, suggesting a very limited window of interaction. CW-2 also mentioned observing an incident involving the Accused tapping the Complainant with a pen. However, this was not corroborated by CW-1 (Rehan Ahmed Khan) or by the Complainant herself, who instead demonstrated the action during proceedings, raising questions about its spontaneity and credibility.

19. The Counsel argued that no independent eyewitness to the alleged harassment has been produced. Additionally, there is no documentary evidence, call recording, CCTV footage, or complaint made contemporaneously to establish the veracity of the claims. It was emphasized that both CWs are colleagues of the Complainant and union members, who are known for exerting pressure on superior officers within the office environment. The Counsel emphasized that union members, including the Complainant and her supporting witnesses, hold lower BPS grades and often exert undue pressure on officers, citing an environment of intimidation and forced compliance prevalent in the office. It was contended that the Complainant frequently approached union members such as Rehan Ahmed Khan due to their affiliations and that their testimonies should be viewed with caution due to bias and lack of independence.

20. It was contended that the Accused is a senior employee with over 23 years of unblemished service and has never been involved in any disciplinary matter of this nature. Prior to this, he worked at the DS Office, where several female employees were present, yet no similar allegations were ever levelled against him. On the contrary, the Complainant has only been employed since 2021, and the surrounding circumstances point to a deliberate attempt to malign the Accused due to personal grievances.

21. The Counsel explained that the Accused could not produce witnesses from his previous office due to official restrictions following his transfer and due to his limited interaction with subordinates in a formal setting. It was also argued that the witnesses presented by the Complainant did not have firsthand knowledge of the alleged incident.

22. The Counsel stated that despite raising serious allegations, the Complainant continues to work on the same computer in the same room, indicating that no actual fear or discomfort exists, thereby casting further doubt on her claim.

23. In conclusion, the learned Counsel for the Accused contended that the complaint is false, motivated by ulterior objectives linked to the pension dispute, and devoid of credible evidence. It has been prayed that the complaint be dismissed with costs imposed for abuse of process and unnecessary litigation.

24. The Complainant's Counsel argued that, during her cross-examination, the Complainant confirmed she had been appointed as a packer and was working in an open-layout office, where the Accused was one of three supervisors. She stated that she routinely reported the incidents of harassment to Rehan

Ahmed Khan and Syed Asim Imam. Importantly, despite the Accused's assertion that the Complainant's work performance was unsatisfactory and that he intended to report her conduct, the record reflects that no show-cause notice, explanation, or formal disciplinary proceedings were ever initiated against her, which undermines the Accused's claim that her work performance was unsatisfactory.

25. The Counsel highlighted several inconsistencies in the Accused's testimony, including discrepancies regarding the year of his appointment and transfer. While he admitted to having the authority to change seating arrangements, he failed to take any steps to address the Complainant's concern about being required to work alone in his office. He also denied presenting any witnesses, despite having been afforded the opportunity to do so. Notably, the issue of the Complainant's marital status was never raised in any of his earlier statements or submissions before this Forum and was brought up for the first time in his affidavit-in-evidence. Furthermore, the Accused did not produce any documentary evidence or submit formal complaints to higher authorities regarding the Complainant's alleged misconduct or his objection to the placement of the computer in his office.

26. It was further submitted that the testimonies of both Court Witnesses demonstrated a consistent pattern of the Complainant's reporting of the harassment. The fact that the Accused apologised, as deposed by CW-1, amounts to a tacit admission of guilt.

27. After having heard the arguments of the parties and carefully examining the record, the sole question before this Forum is:

Whether the conduct of the Accused, as alleged by the Complainant, amounts to workplace harassment within the meaning of Section 2(h) of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010.

26. As part of evaluating whether the alleged conduct constitutes harassment, it is necessary to consider the Accused's primary defence that the complaint was not motivated by a genuine grievance, but was retaliatory, allegedly triggered by a dispute over the issuance of a non-marriage certificate. According to the Accused, the Complainant, having remarried, approached him for a signature on the certificate to continue receiving pension benefits, and upon refusal, threatened to file a harassment complaint.

27. In support of this assertion, the Accused relies on a prior complaint by the Complainant to the Postmaster General (PMG), claiming to have disclosed this version therein. He further states that Naveed Haseeb, an associate of the Complainant, approached him for the signature, implying a connection between the pension issue and the subsequent complaint. However, this Forum is required to evaluate such claims in the broader evidentiary context rather than in isolation.

28. Significantly, while the Complainant initially denied the involvement of Naveed Haseeb, she later acknowledged in cross-examination that Naveed Haseeb did approach the Accused regarding the signature. This may support the assertion that such a request occurred. Nevertheless, the Accused's failure to mention the non-marriage certificate issue in any of his written responses before the PMG or this Forum weakens the credibility of this defence. The matter was raised for the first time in his

affidavit-in-evidence, a fact that undermines the weight of his allegation. If the threat were genuine and serious, it is unlikely that the Accused would have omitted reference to such a material fact in his earlier accounts.

29. Furthermore, the timing of the harassment complaint filed in August 2024 immediately following an alleged incident of inappropriate physical contact does not suggest a manufactured motive. The complaint outlines specific, repeated conduct, corroborated to a degree by two colleagues, Rehan Ahmed Khan and Syed Asim Imam, who testified that the Complainant had shared her concerns on multiple occasions. Rehan Ahmed Khan even testified to confronting the Accused, who reportedly apologised and asked for the matter to be dropped. These accounts cast doubt on the assertion that the complaint was entirely retaliatory or ill-intentioned.

30. The Accused also did not formally report the Complainant's alleged threats or misrepresentation regarding her marital status to any higher authority. As a senior officer, he was in a position, and arguably under a duty to raise such concerns through official channels, yet he did not do so. This lack of formal protest or record at the relevant time raises questions about the truthfulness of his narrative.

31. Even if the dispute over remarriage and pension forms part of the background, it cannot be determinative. An individual's motive for filing a complaint does not absolve the conduct under scrutiny, nor does it negate the potential existence of workplace harassment. This Forum must focus on the nature of the conduct itself, as alleged, and whether it meets the legal definition of harassment. It is well-settled that even if a complainant harbours a grievance or

ulterior motive, it does not render the complaint false or unworthy of legal scrutiny. [Ref: People v. Medina, People v. Oliano]

32. Moreover, the requirement for widows to submit a non-marriage certificate in order to retain employment or related benefits has itself been declared unconstitutional and discriminatory. The Lahore High Court (LHC) echoed FOSPAH's stance in a recent ruling, Javeria Yasir Vs. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and reaffirmed the same in **Zoya Islam Vs. Government of Pakistan** [2024 LHC 3944], holding that such requirements violate constitutional protections and amount to gender-based discrimination. Thus, even if the pension certificate request occurred, it cannot be used to discredit the Complainant's credibility or intent.

33. Accordingly, this Forum is not persuaded that the complaint is tainted by malafide intention. The burden of establishing such malafide intent rested with the Accused, and that burden has not been discharged based on the evidence and the inconsistencies in the Accused's account.

34. Having found that the Complainant's complaint was not motivated by malafide intent, the Forum turns to assess whether the alleged conduct meets the threshold of workplace harassment under Section 2(h) of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010.

35. The specific allegations brought forward by the Complainant include, inter alia:

- i. Unwelcome physical contact such as touching her thigh and hand while she was engaged in routine office tasks;

- ii. Sexually suggestive comments about her physical condition and appearance;
- iii. Inappropriate remarks implying sexual innuendo in professional settings;
- iv. Repeated unsolicited evening phone calls; and
- v. Use of intermediaries to pressure her into withdrawing the complaint.

35. These incidents, as described by the Complainant, reflect unwelcome conduct of a sexual and demeaning nature that interfered with her work and created an intimidating and offensive work environment. This Forum needs to consider whether these facts, taken individually and collectively, fall within the ambit of Section 2(h)(i) of the Act, which defines harassment to include:

“any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, stalking or cyberstalking or other verbal, visual or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, including any gestures or expression conveying derogatory connotation causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment...”

36. Assessed in light of this definition, the nature of the alleged conduct, both in terms of its verbal content and physical dimension, squarely falls within the scope of “harassment” as envisaged under Section 2(h)(i) of the Act. Whether or not these allegations have been substantiated will be addressed in the following issue. For present purposes, this Forum is satisfied that, if the allegations are accepted as

true, the conduct of the Accused would amount to workplace harassment under the Act.

37. In proceedings under the 2010 Act, the burden of proof rests on the Complainant to establish her case. However, this burden is not taken to the strict criminal standard of “beyond reasonable doubt.” Rather, the inquiry under this Forum proceeds on a standard rooted in reasonableness and plausibility, grounded in the available record and the credibility and consistency of the statements of the witnesses.

38. In the instant case, the Complainant has given a consistent account of the events leading up to the filing of her complaint, both in her examination-in-chief and during cross-examination. Her version of events is supported by two material court witnesses, Rehan Ahmed Khan and Syed Asim Imam, both of whom have served in the same office and testified to the circumstances surrounding the alleged incidents.

39. Rehan Ahmed Khan (CW-1) recorded his statement:

“Ms. Samreen told me about her complaint three times. I explained to the accused not to behave like that. Then, when she complained for the fourth time, I told her to go ahead and report it to higher authorities... When the Complainant would tell me about these incidents, she would cry... The accused said, ‘Sorry, it won’t happen again. Let’s close the matter.’ So he did not deny the incident.”

40. This statement by the witness, if taken at face value and unchallenged, could reasonably be construed as an implied acknowledgment of the conduct alleged. It is notable that the Accused did not confront this part of the testimony during cross-examination. As per legal precedent, the absence of cross-examination on a material point may be taken as a tacit acceptance, though it does not conclusively prove admission [ref: **Muhammad Rafiq Vs. Abdul Aziz** (2021 SCMR 1805) at para 9].

41. Moreover, Rehan Ahmed Khan's testimony remained internally consistent and aligned with his earlier departmental statement, with minor discrepancies regarding how many times the Complainant confided in him. These minor variations do not shake the overall credibility of his statement, especially given his categorical admission during cross-examination:

“It is correct to state that I have just deposed that the Complainant complained to me thrice and also came to me the fourth time... It is incorrect to state that I have never confronted the Accused about his interaction with the Complainant.”

42. It is also notable that the Accused, though afforded ample opportunity during the proceedings, chose not to produce any rebuttal witnesses from his workplace or prior postings to support his professional conduct or contest the accounts provided by the Complainant and her witnesses.

43. While the Accused attempted to suggest that the complaint was motivated by the pension-related dispute concerning the non-marriage certificate, this claim, apart from being addressed in Issue No. 1, was not substantiated through any credible evidence

indicating coercion or falsehood on the Complainant's part. On the contrary, the Complainant candidly admitted that she had remarried, and the record reflects that the issue of the non-marriage certificate was not raised until much later by the Accused.

44. Syed Asim Imam (CW-2) deposed that the Complainant had approached him on multiple occasions (3 to 4 times) to report the Accused's inappropriate conduct, including an incident in which the Accused allegedly told the Complainant, "If you want a leave, you will have to give me a kiss." He further stated:

"...the accused would stand very close to the complainant. He placed her seat close to his own...The complainant told me about this incident dated 05.08.2024 involving touching her legs on the next day after it happened... The complainant said the accused would tap her with a pen. The accused had placed the complainant's seat inside his room, next to the computer... We also found this a bit odd — if she usually sits at the counter, why was her seat moved there? we objected, saying it was inappropriate for a woman to be made to sit alone with the accused."

45. This independent account contributes to a pattern of boundary-crossing and sexually inappropriate behavior, as alleged by the Complainant. During cross-examination, the defense sought to downplay the credibility of Syed Asim Imam's testimony by suggesting that the accused and complainant had very limited interaction i.e., about 30 minutes daily, since the Accused would arrive at noon and the Complainant would leave shortly thereafter.

However, the Accused side has chosen to not read his statement further or address the relevant part, Syed Asim Imam volunteered that:

“This is not a daily routine...Sometimes the Complainant’s children’s school ended at around 2:00 PM, and her father would pick them up, so she would leave by 2 PM or later as well.”

46. This clarification casts doubt on the Accused’s claim of limited interaction due to office timings preventing the alleged harassment from taking place.

47. Syed Asim Imam further corroborated that both he and CW-1 Rehan Ahmed Khan had spoken directly to the Accused in an attempt to counsel him about his behavior. Notably, he added:

“Rehan Ahmed Khan also told the Accused that if he had apologized, the matter would have ended. But the Accused responded, ‘She is just a packer, a servant — why should I apologize?’”

48. If accepted as true, this statement reflects a dismissive attitude towards the Complainant and, when viewed alongside other testimony, contributes to the perception of a prejudiced and hostile work environment, indicative of the mindset that the Act aims to correct. While Syed Asim Imam conceded that he was not a direct eyewitness to the leg-touching incident, he observed enough of the Accused’s demeanor and behavior including physical proximity, unnecessary tapping with a pen, exclusion of others from the room, and the strategic placement of the Complainant’s

chair to form a coherent and credible narrative when read alongside CW-1's account and the Complainant's own testimony.

49. The Forum finds that both Court Witnesses were consistent, corroborated the Complainant's multiple verbal complaints to them, and were not shaken in cross-examination on material aspects. There was no serious contradiction or fabrication established by the Accused side. Merely pointing to their union affiliations, without showing any actual bias or motive to depose falsely, is insufficient to discredit their statements.

50. In contrast, the Accused's testimony was replete with contradictions and evasions, which seriously undermine his credibility. A few critical examples include:

- a. The Accused has given inconsistent statements regarding his appointment and role at the Nazimabad Post Office, first stating that he was the Senior Postmaster in 2024, a role indicating supervisory authority over the Complainant, and later clarifying that he was serving as Deputy Postmaster with additional charge. Despite the discrepancy, it remains evident that he held a position of authority over the Complainant
- b. He initially denied making phone calls to the Complainant, but when confronted with his own previous statement before the PMG Office, he admitted to possibly calling her once or twice, thereby confirming that calls were made.
- c. The timeline and content of the non-marriage certificate episode were also contradicted in his own affidavit and testimony. In his affidavit, he claimed that the Complainant attempted to have him sign the certificate after the complaint was filed. However, in his cross-examination, he

stated that she had approached him prior to the complaint being filed.

d. Despite repeated claims of misconduct by the Complainant (e.g., incomplete work, improper conduct), the Accused admitted that he had never filed a single written complaint or issued any show cause notice.

e. The Accused also alleged that the Complainant was attempting to misuse her connections with this Forum, stating in paragraph 11 of his affidavit that she was related to an officer associated with the Forum, an extremely serious and speculative claim. When questioned, the Accused retracted this assertion, clarifying that he had meant the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat (Maladministration), not this Forum. He was then directed to submit a formal complaint along with any supporting evidence so that the allegation could be properly investigated. However, no such complaint or material was ever provided. The baseless nature of the allegation, coupled with the failure to furnish evidence despite being invited to do so, undermines the credibility of the Accused's claim and reflects a troubling disregard for the integrity of this Forum's proceedings.

51. Further, the Accused has not produced a single witness in his defence, including Naveed Haseeb, who, according to the Accused, was the intermediary through whom the Complainant sought to coerce a signature on the non-marriage certificate. Failure to produce this key witness, or to submit any documentary record of his own defense, severely weakens his position.

52. Lastly, the Accused failed to rebut the main factual assertions of the complaint. He did not produce any independent witnesses, did not place any documentation on record to challenge the placement of the Complainant's workstation or to refute the testimonies, and his own version remained riddled with inconsistencies, as discussed earlier. On the whole, the Complainant's version has been corroborated by independent testimony and contemporaneous complaint. The Accused's defense was largely based on general denials, belated introduction of irrelevant motives, and contradictory positions during his own testimony.

53. For the facts and circumstances referred supra, this Forum is of the considered view that the Accused has committed sexual harassment to the Complainant, Samreen Shahid, as envisaged under Section 2(h) of the Act. Consequently, the Accused, Jamal Baig, is penalized under Section 4(4)(ii)(c) of the Act, and is removed from his service instantly. The office is directed to transmit the copy of this order to the Accountant General Pakistan Revenue (AGPR) for information and strict compliance with this order in letter and spirit. The compliance report shall be submitted within 30 days without fail through the Registrar of this office.

54. Beyond the formal consequences, this case lays bare the deeper cost of workplace harassment. It is not just about a violation of personal space, it is about the quiet pressure women face to endure, adapt, and absorb discomfort for the sake of keeping peace and keeping jobs. When the Complainant said, "Despite these incidents, I did not report the harassment earlier because I feared becoming the subject of gossip in the office," she wasn't being passive, she was surviving.

55. This kind of silence is not unusual. In environments where power is uneven, and social hierarchies run deep, women often calculate silence as the safer option. Not because there are no complaint mechanisms but because the emotional, social, and professional toll of speaking up still outweighs the hope of redress. Especially for women who are mothers, who are primary earners, and who cannot afford to gamble with their livelihood.

56. Yet, even in such challenging environments, there are glimmers of progress. What is heartening in this case is that some colleagues, stood by her version, validated her experience, and offered the kind of moral support that often makes the difference between isolation and empowerment. This is a small but powerful example of how bystander intervention can shift workplace culture, even when institutions are still finding their footing.

57. We encourage the organization to build on this momentum, to provide targeted training on bystander response, to create internal safe spaces for informal disclosures, and to actively reward conduct that promotes respect and accountability. Harassment does not thrive in darkness alone it; thrives in indifference. But when people act, even in small ways, they begin to shift the climate of fear into one of safety.

58. To sustain this shift, the department is advised to adopt the following proactive measures:

- a. Proactive Training: All officers, especially those in supervisory or managerial roles, must undergo annual sensitization training on workplace harassment, gender equality, and professional boundaries.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">b. Internal Reporting Culture: The department must cultivate a culture where employees, particularly women, feel empowered and protected when reporting workplace misconduct. Early complaints should be acknowledged and escalated as per protocol.c. Seating and Supervision Policies: Physical office arrangements must be reviewed to ensure gender-sensitive spatial allocations. No employee, particularly women in subordinate roles, should be placed alone in private settings with their direct supervisors without a functional need.d. Administrative Accountability: The Department should ensure all decisions related to employee transfers, seating, leave, and performance evaluations are properly documented and periodically reviewed to detect any misuse of authority.e. Support for Working Mothers: Where possible, the Department should allow flexibility in work schedules or leave options to support women managing both job and caregiving duties. These practical measures can ease the burden on working mothers and reduce the risk of their exploitation or marginalization. |
|--|--|---|

FEDERAL OMBUDSPERSON