

**OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL OMBUDSPERSON**  
**FOR PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN**  
**AT THE WORKPLACE, ISLAMABAD**

FORM OF ORDER SHEET

Complaint No. **FOH-HQR-H/00420/2025**

**CORRIGENDUM**

**Date of Institution: 09-09-2025**

Serial No. of Order of Proceedings	Date of order of Proceedings	Order of other proceedings with Signature of Federal Ombudsperson			
		TITLE:	<b>Ms. Sana Humayun</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>Mr. Bilal Khan.</b>
		<b>Department: Capital Residencia, E-11/4, Islamabad</b>			
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<b>15</b>	<b>04-02-2026</b>	<p><b>Subject: Final Order</b></p> <p>1. The present complaint has been filed by Ms. Sana Humayun Khan (hereinafter referred to as the <b>Complainant</b>) under the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, alleging harassment in the form of gender-based discrimination, coercive conduct, and creation of a hostile environment by Mr. Bilal Khan (hereinafter referred to as the <b>Accused</b>), who is admittedly associated with the management of Capital Residencia through Solution Services, Islamabad (hereinafter referred to as the <b>Management</b>). The Complainant avers that she approached this Forum after exhausting available internal mechanisms and lawful remedies, including approaching the police, yet continuing to face discriminatory pressure and coercive conduct in relation to her tenancy.</p> <p>2. In her complaint, the Complainant categorically stated that she is a working woman employed as a Producer in a national media organization in Islamabad. She averred that she had moved to the subject premises approximately six</p>			

months prior, in search of a safe, secure, and stable living environment conducive to the discharge of her professional obligations. She asserted that she resides in the premises with her elder sister, maintains a peaceful household, and has remained compliant with the terms of the tenancy agreement and building regulations. It was pleaded that despite this, the Management, acting through the Accused, repeatedly alleged that “**bachelors cannot live here,**” notwithstanding the admitted fact that the Complainant was not residing alone. According to the Complainant, this allegation was used as a pretext to intimidate and pressure her into vacating the premises.

3. The Complainant further pleaded that as a coercive measure, the Management disconnected her electricity and water supply, thereby depriving her of basic necessities of life. She averred that despite presenting proof of her family residing with her, and despite repeated interventions by her elder brother, the Accused refused to cooperate. The Complainant stated that, having no effective remedy available, she lodged a complaint and FIR at Police Station Shalimar, where temporary relief was granted; however, the alleged discriminatory conduct persisted. It was further alleged that the landlord, who initially supported the Complainant and confirmed the absence of any violation of tenancy terms, was subsequently pressured by the Management, resulting in the issuance of a notice to vacate.

4. The Complainant also alleged collusion between the Management and estate agents, maligning character, and creation of a hostile, unsafe, and discriminatory environment for women residents of that building. She prayed for restoration of basic utilities, protection from coercive eviction, recognition of her status as a working woman residing with her sister, and an inquiry into discriminatory practices. The complaint was supported by an affidavit in evidence, along

with annexed documents, including the rent agreement, FIR, and proceedings initiated before the Civil Court for protection of possession.

5. In response, the Accused filed a written reply raising preliminary objections. It was contended that the complaint was an afterthought, filed with ulterior motives after initiation of civil proceedings by the Complainant. Allegations of suppression of material facts were raised, and it was asserted that the complaint was intended to harass and malign the Accused. It was further pleaded that the Complainant misused her professional position to exert pressure on the Management. All allegations of harassment were categorically denied.
6. The Accused further objected that the allegations did not fall within the definition of “**harassment**” under **Section 2(h) of the Act of 2010** and that **this Forum therefore lacked jurisdiction. Reliance was placed on Clause 16 of the tenancy agreement restricting residence of single male or female occupants, and the issuance of the vacation notice was justified on the alleged breach thereof.**
7. During proceedings, the Director of the Management, Mr. Hassam-ul-Haq made a categorical statement before this Forum that neither the company nor its employees would harass any tenant, issue coercive notices, disconnect utilities, or otherwise tease, threaten, or pressurize residents. In view of this assurance, the individual grievance of the Complainant stands resolved at this stage, and no coercive relief is presently required.
8. Before parting with this order, it is necessary to observe that in the contemporary economic and professional landscape, mobility is not a privilege but a necessity. For many women, particularly in urban centers, relocating to another city is often indispensable for securing employment, advancing their careers, or ensuring basic economic survival. Employment

		<p>opportunities in specialized fields such as media, healthcare, education, technology, and public service are frequently concentrated in metropolitan areas, compelling women to move away from their family homes in pursuit of lawful and dignified work. Denial of access to safe and secure accommodation in such circumstances does not merely inconvenience a woman; it directly undermines her ability to participate in the workforce.</p> <p><b>9.</b> However, women who relocate for work face structural and gender-specific barriers that do not confront men to the same degree. Access to housing is often conditioned upon marital status, family accompaniment, or conformity to social expectations unrelated to conduct or legality. Working women living independently are frequently subjected to heightened scrutiny, suspicion, and moral judgment, and are required to repeatedly justify their presence, character, and lifestyle. These barriers operate not through overt prohibition alone, but through informal practices, discretionary enforcement, and coercive measures that collectively render independent living precarious.</p> <p><b>10.</b> The difficulty is compounded by the absence of institutional support systems. Unlike employer-provided housing or formally regulated hostels, private residential arrangements are often governed by opaque policies enforced by management entities exercising substantial control over utilities, access, and continued possession. For women who have relocated for employment, the threat of arbitrary eviction, disconnection of essential services, or reputational harm creates a persistent state of insecurity. Such insecurity has a chilling effect on professional performance, mental well-being, and economic independence, and may ultimately force women to abandon employment opportunities altogether.</p>
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	<p>11. In this context, discriminatory practices in access to or retention of residential accommodation cannot be viewed in isolation from women's working lives. Where denial of housing or coercive residential practices are rooted in gender-based assumptions and directly impede a woman's ability to sustain employment, such conduct assumes a dimension beyond a private inconvenience. It becomes a barrier to equal participation in professional life and, where accompanied by intimidation or misuse of authority, may contribute to a hostile environment within the meaning and object of the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010.</p> <p>12. This Forum is mindful that it does not adjudicate general housing policy or tenancy disputes. Nonetheless, it cannot ignore the lived reality that women's access to work is inextricably linked to their ability to live independently and safely in the cities where work is available. The law must therefore be interpreted in a manner that acknowledges these structural realities, while remaining within the bounds of statutory jurisdiction and judicial restraint.</p> <p>13. At the outset, it is clarified that this Forum is not adjudicating upon tenancy rights, contractual validity, or civil disputes between the landlord and tenant. <b>The jurisdiction of this Forum is confined to examining whether the conduct complained of, <i>insofar as it is alleged to have been carried out by persons forming part of the management of an organization</i>, falls within the scope of harassment or discriminatory conduct as defined under the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010.</b></p> <p>14. While this Forum does not convert every housing dispute into a workplace issue, <i>where conduct by persons exercising organizational authority is alleged to have interfered with a woman's professional life through</i></p>
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***discriminatory and coercive means, such conduct may attract scrutiny under the Act.***

**15.** The restrictions complained of were allegedly imposed and enforced by the Management. For the present complaint, the premises constitute a site where organizational authority of the Management was exercised, and where the alleged conduct is claimed to have impacted the Complainant's ability to carry out her professional obligations.

**16.** A question may be asked as to how this residential area can be considered a workplace. Section 2(n) of the Act of 2010 defines "workplace" in deliberately broad terms, extending beyond conventional offices to include:

**"any building, factory, open area, or a larger geographical area where the activities of the organization or of the employer are carried out, and includes any situation that is linked to work or activity outside the office."**

The management of the building performs organized functions involving control over access, utilities, and enforcement of rules. For the limited purpose of examining the conduct complained of, this exercise of organizational authority brings the matter within the scope of scrutiny under the Act, where such conduct is alleged to have impacted the complainant's ability to carry out her professional obligations.

**17.** The policy invoked by the Management prohibiting renting out the premises to single male or female occupants, including Clause 16 of the tenancy agreement, was relied upon to justify the impugned conduct. The justification often advanced that such restrictions are necessary for security or social order cannot, by itself, legitimize collective suspicion or differential treatment based solely on gender or marital

status. Any genuine security concerns must be addressed through lawful, proportionate, and non-discriminatory measures applicable to all residents equally.

**18. In view of the categorical assurance tendered by the Management and the resolution of the immediate grievance, the complaint is disposed of as settled.**

However, it is clarified that the condition relied upon by the Management restricting rental of the premises to “singles”, *to the extent it is applied or enforced in a manner that results in gender-based discrimination or coercive treatment of working women*, cannot be invoked as a lawful justification under the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010. While the Management is entitled to take reasonable measures to ensure safety and peaceful enjoyment of the residential premises for all occupants, it shall refrain from imposing or enforcing conditions that are discriminatory in effect and that undermine the ability of working women to access secure, dignified, and peaceful accommodation necessary for the pursuit of lawful employment. Such practices, where they interfere with women’s participation in professional life through intimidation, exclusion, or misuse of authority, are inconsistent with the object and spirit of the Act of 2010. Let it be very clear that no tenancy agreement, housing regulation, or governing statute recognizes marital status or gender-based bachelorhood/Singlehood as a lawful ground to deny residence. Even otherwise, any alleged “policy”, if claimed to exist in informal practice, lacks legal sanctity and is void ab initio, being manifestly arbitrary, discriminatory, and contrary to the fundamental principles of equality before law, dignity of person, and freedom of movement and residence. Such an exclusionary condition, imposed without lawful authority, offends settled principles of contract law,

		<p>public policy, and constitutional jurisprudence, and therefore cannot be enforced either directly or indirectly.</p> <p><b>19.</b> Accordingly, the Forum declares that any policy, condition, or practice (written or unwritten) that denies residential accommodation to bachelor/Single males or females, in absence of express statutory backing, is illegal, void ab initio, and of no legal effect, and shall not be acted upon to the detriment of any citizen. This observation is directed to all concerned Federal and Provincial Authorities/Rent Controllers, Housing Regulators, Local Governments, Statutory Bodies, and stakeholders engaged in provision or regulation of residential accommodation, for necessary compliance and policy alignment.</p> <p><b>20.</b> With this direction, the complaint is disposed of.</p> <p>File be consigned.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>FEDERAL OMBUDSPERSON</b></p>
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