

Statement of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan

H.E. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

UN Congress on Victims of Terrorism

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I am honored to speak today at the first UN Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism. This subject is one that personally affects me. I too am a victim of terrorism having lost my mother to its scourge. Pakistan also lost its first female Prime Minister and 80,000 lives in our fight against extremism and terrorism.

2. On behalf of the Government and the people of Pakistan, I pay solemn tribute to all those who have suffered at the hands of terrorists. I express my profound support in solidarity with the victims and families of all those who have lost and whose lives have been upended by terrorism.

Mr. President,

3. The international community has an abiding responsibility to protect and support victims of terrorism. This has to be the basic tenet of our effort to promote peace and security in the world.

4. While waging kinetic efforts to eradicate terrorist groups is imperative, we cannot fully win the fight against terrorism without preserving the rights of millions of innocents, defenseless and vulnerable people who have suffered immensely because of terrorism. There should be more focus on addressing the root causes of terrorism, rehabilitation, and justice. Equally important is the need to work together to prevent future attacks holding terrorists to account and adopting a uniform victim centric approach while addressing the challenges faced in conflict zones.

5. It is also unfortunate that political expediency in real politics have been allowed to dictate international responses towards terrorism. A tolerance for terrorism must not be a function of our foreign and domestic policies. This selective approach towards terrorism is the biggest in justice to the victims of terrorism.

6. For the last two decades, Pakistan has been one of the worst victims of terrorism with over 80,000 casualties and economic losses exceeding \$150 billion. We pay tribute to the families of martyrs of law enforcement agencies and armed forces who have rendered invaluable sacrifices while defending our country.

Mr. President,

7. If we are to chart a way forward for victims, we must look beyond narrow political interests and geopolitical agendas. We must examine why despite global strategies that terrorist threats continue to proliferate and give rise to numbers of victims.

8. To further debate on this issue, I would like to make a few points. **First**, we must address the root causes of terrorism and conditions conducive to terrorism. **Second**, we must be mindful of how we define terrorism and ensure that politics invested interests don't distract us from distinguishing terrorism from legitimate causes and struggles for self-determination. **Third**, we must address state sponsored terrorism specially in cases of foreign occupation and reject occupying powers propensity to use brute force against occupied peoples in the name of counterterrorism operations. **Fourth**, we must have a consensus definition of terrorism and take into account new and emerging threats. **Fifth**, we must address challenges emanating from the use of new technologies by terrorists especially on social media and the dark web. And **finally**, we must counter disinformation campaigns.

Mr. President,

9. Pakistan condemns terrorism in all forms and manifestations including Islamophobic, racially, ethnically motivated and state sponsored terrorism. Terrorism can only be completely eradicated by fighting extremism and the mindset that breeds violent extremism. I would like to urge this global problem requires continuing international cooperation without any prejudices or preconceived notions against any particular religion, race, civilization, or country.

10. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay a special homage to the oppressed people of illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine who deserve our special attention for their continuing suffering as victims of the worst form of state terrorism. The international community must live up to its obligations and ensure all citizens of the world are guaranteed a life of security and dignity.

Mr. President,

11. Our inability to address these issues will continue to increase victims and add to their suffering. It will also add to the physical and psychological trauma that may outlive many conflicts. The international community owes it to the victims of terrorism to take

effective steps to address terrorism, wherever it may be, in whatever form it exists, without political considerations. This is our moral as well as legal obligation.

Thank you.
