

**Dr. Ariv-ur-Rehman Alvi, President
of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Aiwan-e-Sadr,
Islamabad, Red Zone**



Dear President Alvi,

I am writing this letter with extreme concern for prisoners in Pakistan's Lahore Camp Jail, who are at extreme risk of contracting Covid-19 under their current conditions and must be protected from the outbreak. On 24 March, a prisoner at the Lahore Camp Jail tested positive for Covid-19. Of the 490 inmates imprisoned in nearby barracks, 58 have tested positive for the virus. Lahore Camp Jail is authorized to accommodate [1050 prisoners but is currently confining more than 2800 prisoners](#). The prison is therefore 166% over capacity, creating a dramatically increased risk of spreading the virus and harming the health of prisoners.

While the Islamabad High Court (IHC) did order the release of 24 suspects under trial, the order was soon over-ruled by the Supreme Court on 30 March — a potentially costly decision since jails in Punjab are alarmingly overcrowded at present. This would make it harder to enforce social distancing measures, provide adequate sanitary conditions and medical support to prisoners.

The right to health is guaranteed under several human rights treaties. Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) includes the “prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases” as a part of the right to health. In the context of a spreading pandemic, this includes the obligation on states to ensure that preventive care, goods, services, and information are available and accessible to all persons.

I ask you to seriously consider reducing the prison population. Should the government fail to act now, Pakistani prisons and detention centers could quickly become hotspots for the transmission of COVID-19.

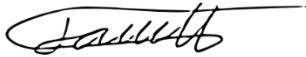
Specifically, I urge you to:

- **Release immediately and unconditionally, all those detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.**
- **Consider if the outbreak qualifies certain prisoners for parole or early release, especially older detainees who no longer pose a threat to the public. There should also be a presumption of release for people charged with a criminal offense who are awaiting trial.**
- **Ensure that all prisoners enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community, including when it comes to testing, prevention and treatment of COVID-19.**

Thank you for your kind attention. As a peace advocate, I trust that you will take this issue seriously and seek to protect the rights of the prisoners in Punjab. Without your immediate help, the prisoners' basic human rights will be violated and they will potentially lose their lives.

Sincerely,

Qianchun Xu
Advocate, the Organization for World Peace

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathon Arrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jonathon Arrell
Vice President, The Organization for World Peace