

WAFAQI MOHTASIB (OMBUDSMAN)'S SECRETARIAT

PRESS RELEASE

Federal Ombudsman Reaches another Benchmark, Clears Backlog of 100000 Public Complaints

In an unprecedented endeavor, the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat has cleared the entire pendency of one hundred thousand public complaints up to 2013, providing relief to that many families in a span of only ten months since Mr. M. Salman Faruqi, the Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan returned after receiving treatment abroad for cancer. The bulk of the complaints were more than two years old while a significant number was nine to ten years old. On an average, the Office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib cleared 10, 000 complaints every month. This Secretariat is also making efforts to finalize all complaints received during 2014 by December 31, 2014.

The daunting task has been accomplished in line with the directions given by the Prime Minister, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, to expedite the process of providing relief and redress to the citizens against maladministration of the government agencies in order to improve governance.

It may be pertinent to mention that out of this huge number of complaints decided, there has been less than one percent reviews or representations filed against the decisions, either by the agencies or the complainants. The 99 percent acceptance of the Federal Ombudsman findings/recommendations is indeed a huge achievement and speak volumes of confidence and trust the citizenry and the State has in this quasi- judicial institution that provides a speedy and free of cost alternate system of justice to the common man. A few reviews filed are personally attended to by the Federal Ombudsman or are heard by a high level committee of senior advisors drawn from civil, military and judiciary. These advisors at the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman)'s Secretariat and its eight regional offices worked meticulously beyond regular office hours even during Ramadan to clear out record number of complaints, thereby making history in providing relief to the citizens aggrieved of maladministration of public functionaries. For the future, the Office has strategized improvements in its complaint redress mechanism and process of investigation in such a manner that by 2015 all complaints filed would be disposed of within 60 days which would be unique accomplishment for an Ombudsman anywhere in the world.

After assuming responsibility as the Federal Ombudsman, Mr. Salman Faruqui has been striving to revamp the institution as well as introduce citizen-friendly reforms to ensure speedy and expeditious redress to public complaints. Therefore, in view of the fact that majority of complainants come from the poor and uneducated sections of population, the focus of complaint registration communication has been to not only make it simpler but also available in both languages, i.e., English and Urdu.

Similarly, recognizing that awareness indeed is the first step towards empowerment, the emphasis is now being placed on the importance of creating awareness among the public on the mandate and functions of the institution as well as how can it serve them so that more and more people recourse to the Wafaqi Mohtasib for redress of their grievance. Prior to that, Mr. Faruqui also provided much needed impetus for steering through the long overdue reforms crucial for making institution strong and enhancing its effectiveness in order to achieve the objective for which the Office was created in 1983.

Likewise, a renewed momentum is being built on implementation of the Ombudsman's findings by putting in place a dedicated wing to ensure compliance with the recommendations of the Wafaqi Mohtasib by the federal Government agencies. Consequently, out of 100000 complaints settled by the Office, currently only 246 are pending implementation and are being followed and would soon be executed.

It may also be noted that the institution of the Federal Ombudsman has completed 30 years of its existence in Pakistan and is now recognized as the most easily accessible effective and free of cost forum for the redress of citizen's grievance against official apathy, incompetence, the misuse of administrative discretion and infringement of public rights by the state apparatus. Undeniably, it is a matter of pride and satisfaction that today the institution of Federal Ombudsman stands tall, robust and vibrant and to date provided relief to nearly one million families against maladministration of the public functionaries caused by the lack of sufficient accountability mechanisms in major public sector agencies.
