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EICC-2019

12 September 2019

Ms. Cecilia Malmström
EU Commissioner for Trade
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

Dear Commissioner Ms. Malmström,

Re: **Call to suspend Generalised System Preferences (GSP) - Pakistan**

I am writing to call on you to immediately withdraw GSP plus status to Pakistan and prevent systematic genocide against religious minorities – Christians, Sikhs and Hindus and worsening human rights situation in the country.

We take pride to rewrite that the European Union's fundamental values are respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. And, bound by the Treaty of the European Union, the EU and its Member States have vowed to respect and promote human rights as an overarching objective in its dealings with other countries.

The issue of GSP to Pakistan was also raised by Members of the European Parliament during the Meeting of the European Parliament Sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI) early this week on the 9 September in Brussels. One MEP even asked the logic of continuing the GSP plus status to Pakistan and questioned the moral obligation of this privilege when the European Parliament in the recent past has had Three (3) resolutions passed on the human right situation in Pakistan. Another MEP raised the case of a Sikh girl Jagjit Kaur who was abducted, forced to convert to Islam, married off and then was said that she could not return to the family as she was now married.

In the past, the EU has suspended trade privileges with countries involved in human rights violations, such as Sri Lanka (now restored). In addition, the EU has restricted imports of products whose production is related to human rights in the case of conflict.

Madam Commissioner, we are deeply concerned that Pakistani state is indulging in systematic genocide against Christians, Sikhs and Hindus. The minority have experienced historical and current religious persecution and systematic violence in Pakistan. These have been occurring in the form of forced conversions, documented massacres, demolition and desecrations of churches and temples, as well as the destruction of educational centres. Sex crimes of Jihad against Christians and Hindus, especially minors, is one of the most heinous crimes imaginable. The year 2019 (till 10 May 2019) alone has 148 reported cases of sex crimes against Hindus.

Most of the crimes in Pakistan are those of abduction, often of minor girls, forced conversion, and child marriage, amounting to rape of minor. Pakistani Christians, Hindus and Sikhs are powerless in front of Courts, as the perpetrators get false age & marriage certificates from madrasas, and the Courts do not verify the documents. Christians and other minorities are not only "soft targets" for the militancy, but also victims of socioeconomic and political exclusion

in the country. You shall be shocked to see the two attachments we are able to provide to you giving you the list of abducted and forcibly converted girls in the last 75 days in Pakistan and harassment of minority girls in the country.

Madam Commissioner, Trade Policy being one of the key mandates of the European Commission, you will agree that a country which is engaged in perpetual violence against religious minorities and the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities, has no right to receive any special trade privilege from the EU. This also goes against the very ethos of European values, life and respect for minorities. The GSP was an instrument afforded to Pakistan with the hope, (and promises made by the country), that it shall improve its human rights record, but sadly it has failed again and again in its promises, and therefore the country must be denied this special trade status. It is time that the EU takes a tough stand to prevent deterioration of the human rights situation in the country and we call on the EU to immediately suspend GSP plus to Pakistan.

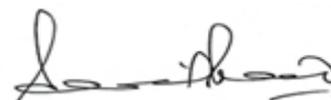
This letter also has the reference to the exchange of communications between your Office and the Europe India Chamber of Commerce (EICC) over last three years on the issue of granting GSP plus status to Pakistan.

As the Outgoing Commissioner for Trade you have an opportunity to set one more example of your bold legacy (which has made us all proud) for the Incoming new Trade Commissioner so that EU's values and principles are intact and unblemished. We wish to thank you once again for upholding EU's values and principles in the trade policies.

As an apex chamber to promote trade and economic relations between Europe and India, we believe it is our responsibility to bring to your kind attention the issues that affect trade and strategic relations between EU and India.

Best regards,

Yours sincerely,



Secretary General

Attachments: 2