

"Champions keep playing until they get it right."

Billie Jean King, American tennis player



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Guardian of the Common Man: The Wafaqi Mohtasib's Journey Towards Administrative Justice and service delivery in Pakistan

MUHAMMAD ASHFAQ AHMED

In today's world, the government is like a giant, complicated machine that can make an ordinary person feel small and powerless. When a government office makes a mistake or treats someone unfairly, most people are afraid to complain because they think it will cost too much money for lawyers, take years to resolve, or that officials simply won't care. However, for over 40 years, the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman) has acted as a vital connection between the state and its citizens. It serves as a helpful bridge, making it easy and free for regular people to get justice and hold powerful government departments accountable.

Wafaqi Mohtasib is vast, covering over 639 federal agencies. Of these, 213 agencies are now fully integrated with the Complaints Management Information System (CMIS), allowing for real-time tracking and resolution of grievances.

The "Federal Ombudsman Institutional Reforms Act, 2013" significantly strengthened the institution, providing it with the

level of trust from the Pakistani people.

The year 2025 stands out as a "defining moment," showcasing a massive jump in institutional efficiency. To put this growth in perspective, the Wafaqi Mohtasib used to receive an average of only 20,000 complaints per year up until 2012. Under Mr. Qureshi's modern management and digital initiatives, that num-

ber has exploded, with the institution now handling hundreds of thousands of cases annually. This transformation proves that the public now views the WMS as a reliable and effective force for holding the government accountable.

The Numbers Speak

In 2025, the WMS received 256,688 complaints, marking a 13% increase from the previous year. Even more impressive is the disposal rate. The Secretariat disposed of 261,101 cases (including backlog), representing a 17% increase in efficiency compared to 2024. These figures underscore a vital truth: the Wafaqi Mohtasib is perhaps the most efficient grievance redressal mechanism in the country. With 90% of cases resolved within 60 days, it offers a pace of justice that the traditional court system, burdened by millions of pending cases, struggles to match.

Financial and Implementation Success

The impact of these disposals is not merely procedural; it is economic. The disputed amount involved in complaints disposed of this year reached Rs. 10.21 billion, a significant jump from last year's Rs. 8.22 billion. Furthermore, the Implementation Rate of the Mohtasib's findings a key indicator of the institution's authority rose from 93% in 2024 to a record 96.8% in 2025.

Digital Transformation and Accessibility

The Wafaqi Mohtasib has embraced the digital age with vigor. In 2025, nearly 49% of all complaints were filed via online portals and the newly launched mobile application. This digital shift has democratized access to justice, allowing a citizen in a remote village to file a federal department in Islamabad accountable with a few taps on a smartphone.

Specialized Redressal Streams

Recognizing that different segments of society face unique challenges, the WMS has developed specialized complaint streams:

1. **Overseas Pakistanis:** In 2025, 137,152 complaints were handled for our diaspora, ensuring they remain connected to justice at home.
2. **Children's Grievances:** A dedicated helpline (1056) and a specialized cell handled 683 complaints in 2025, a 19% increase from the previous year, highlighting the growing awareness of children's rights.
3. **Business Sector:** A specialized Grievance Redressal Coordination Mechanism was integrated with the CMIS to address business-related concerns in collaboration with Chambers of Commerce, fostering a more transparent environment for trade and industry.

From Individual Relief to Systemic Reform

One of the most profound roles of the Wafaqi Mohtasib is its "Advisory" capacity. The institution does not

just treat the symptoms of maladministration; it seeks to cure the disease.

Systemic Studies

To date, the WMS has conducted 84 research reports on the root causes of administrative failure. These are not mere academic exercises; they are blueprints for reform. Recent studies have focused on:

- **Jail Reforms:** Addressing the plight of prisoners and the state of the penal system.
- **Pension Reforms:** Ensuring that those who served the country are not left to languish in their old age.

- **Health and Population:** Addressing the Primary Healthcare System in ICT and the challenges of rapid population growth.

- **Judicial Cooperation:** Eight studies were conducted specifically on the direction of the Hon'ble Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

- **The Plight of Street Children in Islamabad:** Under the proactive leadership of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, a comprehensive systemic study was conducted to address the growing crisis of street children in Islamabad. Recognizing that these children are among the most vulnerable segments of society, the study moved beyond mere observation to provide a strategic roadmap for their protection and rehabilitation. The research highlighted the urgent need for "quick-win" reforms to tackle the root causes of the issue, such as poverty, lack of access to education, and exploitation.

The Advisory Committee

To maintain this momentum, a high-level Advisory Committee comprising retired senior civil servants, media professionals, and experienced WMS officers continuously identifies "quick-win" reforms. This

committee ensures that the institution remains adaptive to the evolving needs of the Pakistani public.

Justice at the Doorstep

The Wafaqi Mohtasib has moved out of its ivory towers in the capital and into the heartlands of Pakistan. The philosophy of "Justice at the Doorstep" is realized through:

- **Regional Expansion:** New offices have been operationalized in Kharan, Khuzdar, Mirpur Khas, Sadda, Wana, Sibbi, and Gilgit Baltistan. Additionally, offices in AJK, D.G. Khan, Sahiwal, and Larkana are now fully functional, with a new collection center being established in Upper Kurram.

- **KhuliKatcheries (Open Courts):** In 2025, 166 KhuliKatcheries were held across the country, providing a direct forum for citizens to voice their grievances.

- **Outreach Complaint Resolution (OCR):** Under the OCR program, officers visited remote areas 232 times in 2025, disposing of 6,131 cases on the spot.

Spreading the Word

An uninformed citizen cannot seek justice. The WMS awareness program reached new heights in 2025, generating over 12,045 awareness touchpoints, including 11,128 press clippings and over 2,200 social media and TV engagements. An in-house evaluation revealed that 81% of the general public is now aware of the Mohtasib's services, and 96% of complainants expressed satisfaction with the ease of the process.

A Global Leader in Ombudsman-ship

The Wafaqi Mohtasib of Pakistan is not just a domestic success story; it is an international benchmark. The institution has aligned its strategies with UN Sustain-

able Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Pakistan has long held the Presidency of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) since its inception in 1996.

On September 11, 2023, the Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan was re-elected unopposed as President of the AOA, a testament to the country's leadership in the field of administrative justice. By sharing expertise and incorporating global best practices, the WMS ensures that Pakistan remains at the forefront of the global accountability movement.

Pathway to Good Governance

As we look toward the future, the Wafaqi Mohtasib stands as a "bellwether for the rule of law." In a year marked by digital transformation and record-breaking disposal rates, the institution has proven that it is possible to provide swift, cost-free, and effective justice even in a massive federal structure. The success of the Wafaqi Mohtasib is a reminder that when institutions prioritize the citizen, public trust is restored.

Whether it is a retired teacher seeking their pension, a villager seeking the justice against utility companies, an overseas Pakistani protecting their property, or a child seeking their rights, the Federal Ombudsman remains the ultimate guardian against the excesses of bureaucracy and rule of law.

For those still facing hurdles with federal agencies, the doors of the Mohtasib are open. With a 99.4% historical disposal rate, the message is clear: Justice is not just a promise; it is a delivered reality.

Contact Information:

- **Website:** www.mohtasib.gov.pk
- **General Helpline:** 1055
- **Children's Help-**

Metric	Result (Up to Dec 31, 2025)
Total Complaints (Since 1983)	2,289,804
Total Disposal (Since 1983)	2,554,833
Overall Historical Disposal Rate	99.4%
Timely Disposal (Within 60 Days)	90% (in 2025)
Review Periods	Less than 1%

Established on January 24, 1983, under President's Order No. 1, the institution was born out of a constitutional necessity. Article 37(d) of the Constitution of Pakistan mandates the state to ensure "inexpensive and speedy justice." Today, as we look at the performance metrics of 2025, it is clear that the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat (WMS) has not only fulfilled this mandate but has evolved into a high-tech, people-centric powerhouse of accountability.

A Shield Against Maladministration

The primary philosophy of the Wafaqi Mohtasib is rooted in the concept of "Ombudsman" - a Swedish term for a "representative" or "agent" of the people. In Pakistan, this role is defined by the quest to rectify any injustice done through maladministration. This includes delays, inattention, neglect, inefficiency, and ineptitude in the administration or discharge of duties by federal agencies.

Expanding the Reach of Justice

The jurisdiction of the

teeth necessary to enforce its findings. Today, the Mohtasib does more than just resolve individual disputes; it acts as a systemic reformer. It is empowered to:

- Ensure good governance and protect the fundamental rights of citizens.
- Provide recommendations to the government on systemic failures.
- Investigate the root causes of corruption and inefficiency within public sector service delivery.

2025: A Year of Unprecedented Performance

Under the leadership of the current Federal Ombudsman, Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, the institution has reached a historic peak in its 40-years history. His tenure has been marked by a revolutionary increase in public engagement; remarkably, nearly 50% of all complaints received since the institution was founded in 1983 have been filed during just the last four years.

This surge is considered a global milestone in the field of ombudsmanhip, signaling an unprecedented

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