

Wafaqi Mohtasib – A Legacy of Excellence

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Indeed few institutions have made their mark on the national scene as profoundly as do the office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, which has recently completed 43 years of its existence. Established on 24th January 1983 through a Presidential order, it has witnessed four momentous decades of growth and progress. It was established with the explicit objective to diagnose, investigate, redress and rectify any injustice done to a person through mal-administration of a federal government agency.

Its mandate flows from Article 37(d) of the Principles of Policy as enshrined in the Constitution, which entrusts the state with the responsibility to ensure dispensation of inexpensive and expeditious justice to the people. The establishment of this office, therefore, marks an important milestone in the fulfillment of the Constitutional obligation to the people of Pakistan. The institution's growth during the last four decades is reflective of its landmark contribution in addressing issues of mal-administration in the public sector and establishing a fair and efficient public administration responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. It acts in support of the judiciary and reduces the burden on the normal court system. What makes this wonderful institution all the more special is the fact that dispensation of justice here is absolutely free.

The Ombudsman institution in Pakistan possesses some unique qualities and almost all essential characteristics as outlined in the internationally acclaimed instruments like the Paris Principles, the Venice Principles and the relevant UN General Assembly Resolutions. It also enjoys the necessary constitutional cover. The conformity with the global benchmarks as stipulated in these principles and resolutions lends greater credibility to the functioning of the Mohtasib's Institution.

Over the years, Ombudsmanship has taken firm roots in Pakistan. Following the success of the Wafaqi Mohtasib's institution, being the first one in the country, in providing free and expeditious administrative justice to the general public, the concept has been replicated in other essential areas including Banking, Taxation, Insurance and Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace. During the course of its long journey, this institution has perfected its complaint handling mechanism comprising registration, investigation, appraisal, review and implementation of its decision/findings.

The outgoing year 2025 witnessed momentous developments as the institution has not only set new benchmarks in public service but has also won international acclaim, reinforcing the country's stature within the global Ombuds community. The Office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib processed a record number of **256,688** complaints in 2025, reflecting a **13%** increase from the previous year. The number of complaints disposed of during this period were **261,101** (including carried forward from the previous year), which marked a **17%** increase over the figures of 2024, recording a disposal rate of **101%**.

The institution has also been able to achieve an impressive implementation rate of **96.8%** during 2025 as against **93.21** in 2024. This achievement is a direct result of this Office's active monitoring and follow up mechanism. In a nutshell, 2025 has been a year of record breaking performance, technological advancement and unprecedented expansion in outreach and accessibility. The number of Regional Offices/Complaint Collection Centres has almost doubled, rising from **14 in 2021 to 28 by 2025** with new centres established mostly in remote

regions like Kharan, Khuzdar, Mirpur Khas, Sadda, Wana, Sibi, GB and Muzaffarabad in addition to DG Khan, Sahiwal and Larkana. These play a critical role in dispensation of administrative justice to the people of far-flung areas virtually at their doorsteps.

It is heartening to note that the institution has been able to provide relief to more than 2.5 million household since its inception in 1983. During the last year, it has been able to resolve nearly 88% complaints within the statutory time limit of 60 days. The ever increasing number of receipts and disposal of complaints manifest the trust and confidence of the general public in the ability of this office to provide free, and expeditious relief against complaints of mal-administration. In sum, it has been a year of record breaking performance, technological advancement and strategic outreach. The expansion of the institution's physical and digital footprint has been a defining feature of this era. The digital transformation agenda has been particularly impactful. Now more or less 48% complaints are being received through the digital means.

The Complaint Management Information System (CMIS) launched in 2007 and continuously upgraded, now incorporates advance feature such as Mobile app integration and real-time SMS notifications. The systems interoperability with other federal ombudsman offices and the President's Secretariat has streamlined the redressal process and enhanced transparency. Nearly 166 Khuli Katcheries and 232 Outreach Complaint Resolution (OCR) visits were undertaken by the Officers and Staff during the last year to resolve public complaints in far-flung areas. Apart from addressing complaints of usual nature this office has also compiled 84 studies/reports to fix the systemic issues and problems being faced by the various federal government agencies. Some of the most recent ones include those on jail reforms, pension reforms, primary health care and problems relating to rapid population growth.

The institution's continued focus on vulnerable groups has been unwavering. The establishment of dedicated offices for Overseas Pakistanis and children has ensured that the challenges faced by them are addressed with sensitivity and expertise. The Grievance Commissioner for Overseas Pakistanis has facilitated the resolution of tens of thousands of cases annually, while the Grievance Commissioner for Children has spearheaded initiatives in cybercrimes prevention, legal advocacy, and educational reforms. Mr. Naveed Kamran Baloch, who took over as the 9th regular Mohtasib in March this year, expressed his determination to take the Institution to new heights and launched several initiatives to further improve its performance.

Generally known as the poor man's court, the eventful journey of the office of Wafaqi Mohtasib has been exceptionally fulfilling with regard to delivering to the people as per its mandate. With continuous refinement and evolution, it has been able to attain a great degree of perfection in its operations. The institution has, thus positioned itself uniquely for a bigger and broader role – something more than mere redressal of complaints, thereby evolving into an architect of good governance in the country. Its unwavering commitment to the cause of justice and fair play will continue to provide impetus and inspiration for achieving further professional excellence in the days ahead. It is a glimmer of hope for the common man.

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