

Hina Jilani

Pioneering lawyer and pro-democracy campaigner; a leading activist in Pakistan's women's movement and international champion of human rights.

- Founded Pakistan's first all-women law firm; first legal aid centre; and national Human Rights Commission
- Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan since 1992
- UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, 2000-2008
- Awarded the Millennium Peace Prize for Women, 2001

"I always had this feeling that if you see injustice, you have to speak out against it; otherwise you are not in a position to complain."

Work with The Elders

In December 2014, Hina Jilani joined The Elders delegation to [Myanmar](#) where they met with representatives from the government, the military and civil society including ethnic women's groups. The Elders called on the warring parties to end their fighting and discussed opportunities for building a new and inclusive federal state, including the 2015 election.

Hina Jilani travelled to New York in September 2015 with an Elders delegation of Gro Harlem Brundtland, Graça Machel and Ernesto Zedillo to celebrate the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals. Hina Jilani participated in a panel event co-hosted with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect on the use of the UN Security Council veto as part of The Elders [A UN Fit for purpose](#) initiative.

Pioneering lawyer and activist

A renowned lawyer and civil society activist, Hina Jilani has dedicated her life to fighting for human rights and democracy in Pakistan and around the world.

Her father, a politician, was an outspoken critic of Pakistan's military dictatorship and spent long spells in prison. "We were growing up in an environment in which we saw injustices happen and our home taught us never to turn away when we saw it," she says. This early exposure to injustice sparked a lifelong commitment to agitating for social change, whether out on the streets or inside the courtroom.

After qualifying as a lawyer, Hina Jilani established Pakistan's first all-women law firm in 1980, followed by Pakistan's first legal aid centre in 1986. She has conducted many landmark cases setting new standards for human rights in Pakistan, with a particular focus on the rights of the most vulnerable sections of society, such as women, minorities, children, and prisoners – including political prisoners. She was appointed Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 1992.

At the heart of Pakistan's women's movement

In 1980 Hina Jilani founded the Women's Action Forum, a pressure group set up to campaign for women's rights and challenge Pakistan's discriminatory laws. Although the group's members have suffered harassment, beatings and arrests as a result of their activism, they have been at the heart of the democracy movement in Pakistan.

Ms Jilani was also among the founders of Dastak, a shelter providing free legal counsel and support to victims of gender-based violence. A vital refuge for women fleeing abusive marriages, child marriages and 'honour killings', the organisation has worked to raise awareness on human rights and the protection of women since its establishment in 1990.

Hina Jilani's work in Pakistan has made her a target of hostile propaganda, arrests and abuse. Yet despite repeated threats and intimidation, she continues to live in Lahore, working tirelessly to mobilise civil society and promote human rights.

International human rights defender

Hina Jilani was one of the founders of the [Human Rights Commission of Pakistan](#). Established in 1986, the Commission has branches throughout the country and is now the most important national body for the monitoring of rights violations.

In 2000 she became the first Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, and for the next eight years worked to empower and protect rights defenders worldwide. During her tenure she identified common themes in the treatment of human rights defenders, including the culture of impunity; intimidation and lack of security; restrictions on freedom of assembly, expression, and association; and death threats against defenders who seek justice for past crimes.

Ms Jilani also served as:

- Member of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, appointed by the United Nations Security Council, 2004
- Member of the Eminent Jurists Panel on Human Rights and Counter Terrorism appointed by the International Commission of Jurists, 2006-2008
- Member of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on Gaza, April 2009

In July 2013 she was elected to join the International Commission of Jurists. She has received a number of honours and awards, including the 2001 Millennium Peace Prize for Women, in recognition of her life-long contribution to peace-building and human rights.