

Ombudsperson for Protection of Women against Harassment at Workplace



Hon'ble Justice (Retd) Yasmin Abbassey acquired expertise in all branches of legal profession i.e. from a successful lawyer to judge and a high ranking Law Officer. She has 38 years judicial experience having worked as Civil Judge and 1st Class Magistrate. She has worked as Senior Civil Judge, additional District and Sessions Judge till she got promoted as District & Session Judge in 1994. She also remained posted as the Presiding Officer in Labour Court, Presiding Officer of Small Cause Court, Karachi and in Custom & Sales Tax Appellate Tribunal for about four years. She became a Judge of the Hon'ble High Court of Sindh, Karachi in October, 2005. In April, 2012 she served as Federal Law Secretary, Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights. She has taken charge on 14th March, 2013 as Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment of women at the Workplace, Islamabad. Justice (Retd) Yasmin Abbassey possesses a very rich experience in almost all major areas of law.

Justice Abbassey upon entering the office of the Federal Ombudsman on 14th March, 2013 focused on the texture of the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection against Harassment of women at the Workplace and the flesh intended to be put on the all too bare bones of this institutional structure. She initiated the programme to create an awareness of the masses in general and the victims of harassment in particular, of the legislation enacted in March 2010, through electronic and print media, and holding of seminars for the purpose. She entered into an agreement with the ILO and under the same a Website of Federal Ombudsman Secretariat has been launched and the victims of harassment at workplace can now lodge their complaints on line; and shortly SMS Based Complaint Tracking System to facilitate the complainants in all part of the country.

Within a short span of six months time, the Protection against Harassment of women at the Workplace (Filing & Disposal of Complaints) Rules, 2013 were framed by this Secretariat,

approved by the Federal Government and notified in October, 2013. She is in the process of engaging International Donor Agencies for the institutional strengthening of this secretariat, and intending establishing the Regional Offices, to provide justice to the complainants at their door step, equipped with adequate manpower and logistics. The Federal Ombudsman Secretariat have suggested amendments in the legislation stating “that the Constitution of Pakistan recognizes the fundamental rights of citizens to dignity of persons by Article 14. The existing law empowers a woman to lodge a complaint to the Ombudsman. The proposed amendments seek to ensure equality to both sexes to seek redressal of their grievances.

Last but not the least the building mechanism for implementation of the Protection against Harassment of women at the Workplace, 2010 is in hand, and to confer certain essential powers to raise the level of effectiveness. She recognizes that the Ombudsman is required to create a big space for itself to assert and provide relief to the citizens as public service providers.