

Asma Jahangir, a Human Rights Lawyer, a Social and pro-democracy Activist from Pakistan passed away, due to a stroke she suffered, leading to brain haemorrhage, in Lahore on 11th February, 2018. She was a Council Member of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association between the years 1996 to 2003.

Asma was born into a politically active family with a history of Activism and Human Rights work. Her father was a Civil Servant, who entered politics after retirement and spent years in jail and house arrest for opposing military dictatorship due to his outspoken views. As early as in 1972 she filed a case in Supreme Court of Pakistan against her father's detention and against the martial Law regime. The judgment paved way for removal of Martial Law and framing of 1972 Constitution for Pakistan and towards a Civilian Administration.

She was born in Lahore and had her early education leading to a Degree in Law from Punjab University. She has a Honorary Doctorate from University of St. Gallen in Switzerland, Queens University and Simon Fraser University from Canada and Cornell University, United States. She joined the Bar in 1980. She became a pro-democracy activist and was imprisoned in 1983 for participating in a movement for restoration of democracy against the military regime. In 1986 she moved to Geneva and became the Vice Chair of the Defence for Children International. Subsequently she co-founded the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and in 1993 became its Chairperson. Besides Human Rights, her career was spent fighting for Women Rights, Rights of Religious Minorities and Children in Pakistan. She was also an active opponent of Child Labour and capital punishment. She championed the cause of battered wives, rescued teenagers from death row, defended people accused of blasphemy and also fought for justice for the victims of honour killings.

Asma Jahangir along with her sister Hina Jilani, and some of the activist lawyers, established in 1980 the first Law Firm of Women Lawyers in Pakistan. Alongside they also helped the formation of Women's Action Forum (WAF), a pressure group against Pakistan's discriminatory Legislation and most notably the law of evidence, where the value of woman's testimony was reduced to half that of man's testimony and the Hadood Ordinance, where victims of rape have to prove their innocence or else face punishment.

She was in the forefront of the Lawyers' movement for restoration of deposed judges and was therefore put under house arrest by the military regime in 2007. This resistance led to, not only restoration of deposed Judges, but also the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary.

She became the first woman to be elected as President of Pakistan's Supreme Court Bar Association. She was the co-chair of the South Asia Forum for Human Rights and Vice President of International Federation for Human Rights. She served as United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion from August, 2004 to July, 2010 and also served on the UN Panel for enquiry into Sri Lankan Human Rights violations and also on a Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements. In 2016 she was named United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights situation in Iran and remained as such till her death.

Asma was recipient of several Awards including the 2014 Right to Livelihood Award along with Edward Snowden, 2010 Freedom Award Hilal-i-Imtiyaz, 2010 Sitara-i-Imtiyaz and also Ramon Magsaysay Award 1995, Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders and the UNESCO/Bilbao

Prize for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights. She was awarded an Officier de la Legion d'honneur by France. She was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 as part of the 1000 Women for Peace project.

Her funeral was on 13th February where thousands of her supporters were present to pay their tributes to her. She is survived by two daughters and a son. Her daughter Muneezay Jahangir is a Journalist & a TV Anchor.

She was a fierce opponent of military dictatorship and fought for democracy and Rule of Law for over a period of four decades and thereby became Pakistan's symbol of Human Rights and resistance.