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The Council on Pakistan Relations' (CPR) continued its outreach efforts and introduced CPR to various organization including key think tanks, the US-Pakistan Business Council and senior reporters from the Wall Street Journal and Associated Press. CPR met with the program lead for Asian Studies at Freedom House. CPR also met with two leading journalists from the Associated Press and the Wall Street Journal. Lastly CPR met with a Pakistani think tank expert at the Atlantic Council and an expert scholar on Pakistan at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. CPR concluded the visit by meeting with the executive director of the US-Pakistan Business Council.

Meeting with Freedom House

CPR met with the program lead for Asian Studies at the Freedom House, Amy Gillian. Freedom House, a non-partisan organization backed by the U.S. government, which seeks to instill democratic principles to societies worldwide and provide support to fragile democracies. Ms. Gillian said that so far Freedom house doesn't have any programs in place for Pakistan but she views Pakistan one of her top priorities, as it is clearly a country where democratic institutions have come under extreme duress in recent years.

CPR briefed Ms. Gillian on the background of CPR and shared with her our views on the recent initiatives taken by CPR and as well as what CPR needs to accomplish in order to establish a more pluralistic, democratic and prosperous Pakistan. CPR expressed that it shared similar guiding principles of freedom of expression, speech, and freedom of the press as essential human rights that are critical components to the success of a modern democratic state. CPR expressed the need for collaborative efforts to help identify prominent activists and NGO's in Pakistan.

Think Tank Meetings

The meetings with think tank experts were both productive and insightful. CPR met with a prominent Pakistani political and strategic analyst expert, Shuja Nawaz and his assistant Shikha Bhatnagar at Atlantic Council. CPR also met the scholar from Pakistan at Woodrow Wilson Institute for Center for International Studies, Dr. Sabiha Mansoor. CPR briefed both the scholars on the background and goals of CPR and our efforts to positively influence the debate in Washington concerning Pakistan.

Both acknowledged the need for Pakistani Americans to be more involved in the policy debate in Washington and expressed an interest in collaborating with CPR in the future. The meeting with Dr. Mansoor focused on the need for collaboration on higher education reforms in Pakistan. CPR identified other educational experts who will play a pivotal role in developing recommendation to guide USAID and State Department efforts.

Meeting with the Journalists:

CPR met with journalists from The Wall Street Journal and the Associated Press. The discussion revolved around the goals and background of CPR, particularly in reference to political and democratic reform in Pakistan. Both meetings captured Secretary of Defense's recent visit to Pakistan and his remarks there. CPR's observations about the need for a regional solution to address the problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan were discussed among other issues pertaining to Pakistan-US relations.

Meeting with US Business Council:

CPR concluded the visit by meeting with Esperanza Gomez Jelalian, the Executive Director of the US-Pakistan Business Council. Ms. Jelalian informed CPR that US-Pakistan Business Council is dedicated to the broad advancement of US commercial engagement with Pakistan and is a forum for dialogue on key economic and political issues of interest to American companies operating in Pakistan. CPR and Ms. Jelalian agreed to work closely and regularly on trade related legislations.

Next Steps

As part of its outreach efforts, CPR will continue with its active schedule of meetings focusing on the Obama Administration and the Washington foreign policy community. We will continue to introduce CPR to key players in D.C. and work to establish the organization as a leading voice for Pakistani Americans. Additionally, CPR is actively pursuing number of grassroots advocacy initiatives.