

HIGH COURT OF SINDH KARACHI

No. 1087/Circular/Video Link

Dated: 08.09.2025

C I R C U L A R

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) FOR VIDEO LINK FACILITY – PRODUCTION OF UNDERTRIAL PRISONERS (UTPs) IN DISTRICT & SESSIONS COURTS AND OTHER SUBORDINATE COURTS

1. Objective

Looking to the concerns as to the infrastructure, lack of proper security, logistic challenges, and the incidents of murder which have taken place in the Court premises, a mechanism is devised to ensure appearance of Under-Trial Prisoners (UTPs) before the Courts through Video Link to avoid any further untoward incidents.

2. Scope & Applicability

This SOP applies to:

- All District & Sessions Courts and other Sub-Ordinate Courts in Sindh.
- Jail authorities within Sindh.
- Relevant Police, Prosecution, lawyers, and IT/Technical Support staff of Courts and Jail Authorities.

3. Eligibility for Video Link Production

3.1. Video link production may be permitted for UTPs in:

- a) Security-sensitive cases: where prisoner movement poses a public safety risk.
- b) Medical grounds: where the UTP is unfit for travel, supported by a medical report.
- c) Long-distance hearings: where transportation is impractical or UTP is confined in distant Prison or District.
- d) High-profile or sensitive matters: requiring restricted movement.
- e) Circumstances beyond human control (natural calamities, strikes, emergencies, non-availability of police escort/van).
- f) And for any other reason due to which the UTP can not be produced before the Courts physically.

3.2. The facility shall be subject to the Court's order as provided under rule 670 of Sindh Prisons & Correctional Service Rules 2019 (Sindh Prisons and Corrections Manual); and shall not be claimed as a matter of right but subject to discretion of the trial courts who may decide keeping in view the circumstances of a particular case while the District & Sessions Judge may decide generally keeping in view the case load of his district and other factors as enumerated hereinabove and may direct the courts subordinate to him to ensure production of the UTPs via video link.

3.3 The concerned Court, after passing orders under rule 670 supra shall ensure production of UTPs through the Video Link Production facility. In case of non-availability of the facilities inside the Prison, the Court police is required to ensure physical production of the UTP.

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4. Request & Approval Process

4.1. A request for video link production shall be made through a written application for the consideration of Court submitted by:

- Prosecution, Defense Counsel, Jail Authorities, or Police.

4.2. The Court shall assess the request after notice to parties based on eligibility criteria and, if approved:

- Issue directions to the concerned Jail Superintendent for production of UTP through Video Link Facility.
- Notify the Court's IT Cell to arrange the session.

5. Responsibilities of Jail Authorities

a) Ensure the UTP is present in the **designated video link room** at least 30 minutes before the hearing.

b) Verify identity using:

- Prison records; and
- Biometric verification;

c) Provide the Court with a signed verification of the prisoner's identity through a digital signature pad.

d) Maintain a secure environment; restrict access to unauthorized persons.

6. Responsibilities of Court IT Cell

a) Coordinate with Jail IT staff to confirm connectivity and perform a trial test 15 minutes before hearing.

b) Ensure dedicated, secure bandwidth for the session.

c) Maintain backup internet (e.g., 4G) and alternate power source (UPS/generator).

d) Record session details in a Video Link Hearing Logbook, noting: date, time, case, duration, and issues (if any).

7. Conduct of Proceedings

a) All protocols applicable to physical courts apply to video link proceedings.

b) The Presiding Officer shall confirm UTP identity from Jail Authorities before proceedings begin.

c) All participants (lawyers, police, court staff) shall be in proper dress/uniform.

d) The Video Link Facility shall be used through "Zoom and WhatsApp" Applications or any other mode as approved by the court.

d) No unauthorized recording devices (including mobile phones) shall be allowed inside the video link room/Courtroom.

e) No adjournments will be entertained except in grave emergency/exceptional circumstances.

8. Submission & Presentation of Documents

a) The UTP shall make an electronic signature at the time of framing the charge and recording his statement u/s 342 Cr.P.C. The arrangement for an electronic signature, where required, shall be arranged by the Jail authorities.

b) If necessary, the copies of documents to be produced during evidence shall be supplied to the accused through email in advance only if the same were not supplied earlier. If the accused desires that any document which is produced in evidence is

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to be shown to him the same shall be transmitted to him electronically and the Jail staff shall ensure its delivery to him.

9. Privileged Communication (Lawyer–Client Communication)

- a) The jail authorities shall make an arrangement to facilitate consultation between the Under-Trial Prisoners (UTPs) and their defence counsels in consultation rooms before or after proceedings.
- b) If the UTP or his counsel desires to have a communication during evidence the arrangement shall be made by offering the Counsel and UTP through WhatsApp audio call or similar application to ensure privileged communication between lawyer and the UTP.

10. Technical & Contingency Provisions

- a) IT staff at both ends (Jail and Court) shall be present during the session.
- b) In case of connection failure:
 1. Attempt reconnection within 5 minutes.
 2. Switch to backup connection within 10 minutes.
 3. If unsuccessful, adjourn or order physical production.

11. Monitoring & Reporting

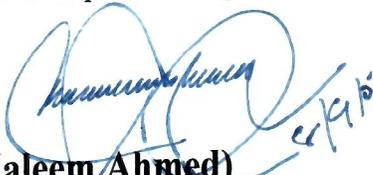
- a) The Court shall maintain a record of all video link hearings in a Separate Register; so also mention in Case Diary.
- b) The District & Sessions Judge shall submit monthly statistics to the MIT-II, High Court of Sindh, including:
 - Number of hearings,
 - Technical issues, and
 - Recommendations for improvements.

12. General Instructions

- Video link hearings shall ordinarily take place during court hours unless otherwise directed by the Presiding Officer of the Court.
- Participants must attend the user-end facility at least 15 minutes before the scheduled time.
- All participants must carry official identification.

13. Relaxation & Amendments

The Hon'ble Chief Justice, if satisfied that any part of these SOPs causes undue hardship, may relax, amend, or add provisions to streamline video link proceedings.


(Haleem Ahmed)

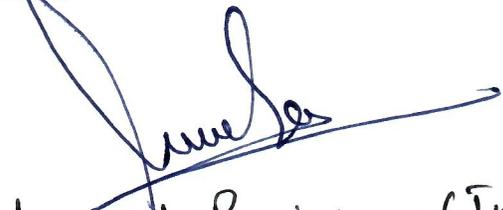
I/c Member Inspection Team-II

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2. The Learned District & Sessions Judges (All in Sindh)
3. The Prosecutor General, Sindh
4. The Advocate General, Sindh
5. The Learned Presiding Officers, Anti-Terrorism Courts (All in Sindh)
6. The Learned Presiding Officers, Accountability Courts (All in Sindh)
7. The Learned Special Judges (Central-I & II), Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur
8. The Learned Special Judge (Custom, Taxation & Anti-Smuggling-I & II), Karachi)
9. The Learned Special Judges, Anti-Corruption (Provincial), Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur & Larkana
10. The Learned Presiding Officers, Special Court (CNS-I, II and III), Karachi
11. The Learned Presiding Officer, Special Court (Offences in Banks), Karachi
12. The Learned Presiding Officer, Intellectual Property Tribunal, Karachi
13. The Learned Judge, Gas Utility Court, Karachi – Division
14. The Senior Faculty Member, Sindh Judicial Academy, Karachi
15. The Inspector General, Prisons, Sindh
16. The Inspector General of Police Sindh
17. The Director I.T. of this Court
18. The Additional Registrar, Bench at Sukkur, Circuit Court, Hyderabad, Sukkur & Larkana
19. The Deputy Registrar (Gazette) of this Court


for Assistant Registrar (Inspection)