

Pakistan: Army accused of nepotism in Kalam evacuation operation

Retired official says Army always helped people in distress

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ISLAMABAD: Victims of the worst ever flood of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) history stranded in Kalam alleged Pakistan Army rescue teams of nepotism and malpractices in evacuation operation.

A 65-member group of the Labour Education Foundation (LEF) comprising more than fifty women which was visiting Kalam to attend a training workshop was stranded there on July 28 after enormous flood played havoc with Kalam hotels. Director LEF Khalid Malik told *The News* from Kalam that during first two days of flood though there were casualties in the suburbs of Kalam but there were no deaths in the main city.

He said that a relief camp by Pak Army officials was set up in Green Hotel of Kalam and victims of flood were issued token number under which affected person were to be evacuated from the deadly place. "However, on the first day of evacuation only families of army people were evacuated without considering any number issued," Khalid said adding, "Next day, when the evacuation operation was started, instead of following the numbers issued the army rescue people started taking selected people who were having some reference, without considering that female members among the victims should have been given priority."

Khalid said that the families of the women stranded at Kalam are extremely anguished and dismayed after seeing the visuals of collapse of Kalam hotels on television screens. He said that since August 1, though Army rescue team had two helicopters but they were not caring for those people who remained standing in very long queues the whole day and cared for only those who were coming with slips or chits of army officials relatives or friends. He said that a few selected people were being kept in rooms of hotels by the army officials, and only those people were being evacuated on army helicopters obviously owned by the people of Pakistan and not by some selected institution.

Farooq Tariq, secretary information of Pakistan Labour Party while speaking to *The News* from Lahore said that beside the families of the female members of the group stranded in Kalam are being mistreated. He further said that Labour Party office bearers and workers are also very much depressed on the situation and attitude of the Pakistan Army official serving in the rescue team and bringing bad name to the institution. He demanded of the prime minister to immediately take notice of the situation and order relevant military authorities to mend their ways and rescue at least the female members among the victims and let them stay in the rooms where near and dear ones of army official are accommodated.

Director General Inter Services Public Relations (DG-ISPR) Major General Ather Abbas was repeatedly approached on his numbers and messages in this regard were also sent but he neither replied nor called back to give response to this extremely unfortunate situation. No other official of ISPR was available.

However, a retired army official told *The News* that the army has a clean record of rendering

tremendous services whenever the nation was hit by any tragedy. He said floods have affected vast areas in the country and the army has limited resources. He said because of the limited number of helicopters whoever would face delay in evacuation would naturally nurture grievances. He said the army despite having limited resources was trying its best to mitigate the sufferings of the people.

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P.S.

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http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=254453