

Press release

Pakistan/Gilgit Baltistan: HRCP urges fair deal for Attabad displaced, detainees

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Lahore, September 22: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed alarm at the arrest of over two dozen political activists in Gilgit Baltistan and reports of maltreatment of some of them in detention.

At least 33 people have been arrested in Gilgit Baltistan following protests against the August 11 killing of two people in police firing. The police had opened fire when nearly 200 people were protesting during the Chief Minister's visit to Aliabad in order to highlight delays in payment of compensation to families displaced by the Attabad landslides.

HRCP said in a statement on Thursday: "The Commission takes serious exception to the manner in which the authorities have chosen to deal with public resentment following the August 11 killings. The policemen accused of the killings have yet to be arrested but many political and civil society activists have been held in a crackdown against the protesters. HRCP has noted with concern reports of mistreatment of some of the activists. Strong-arm tactics must not be used to suppress legitimate protest against the August 11 killings and due process rights of all citizens must be respected without exception. Now that a judicial probe into the incident is underway, the authorities should wait for its findings instead of ordering a crackdown on the people. Furthermore, it is a matter of grave concern that rehabilitation of those displaced by the January 2010 Attabad landslides is yet to be completed and the people feel that their concerns are not being addressed. This obviously is the root cause of public unrest.

HRCP calls upon the government to ensure that violence against political activists is stopped forthwith, due process rights are respected, findings of the judicial inquiry are made public and urgent measures are taken to rehabilitate the displaced and remove their grievances."

Zohra Yusuf, Chairperson
