

Pakistan: Scores of lawyers attack renowned lawyer Asma Jahangir's associates inside a courtroom in the Lahore High Court !

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Press release

HRCP condemns attack on Asma Jahangir's associates in courtroom

Lahore, June 22: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has strongly condemned an attack by scores of lawyers on renowned lawyer Asma Jahangir's associates inside a courtroom in the Lahore High Court.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the Commission said: "HRCP denounces in the strongest possible terms the assault on Asma Jahangir's associates. The most disturbing fact is that the 70-strong group of attackers comprised exclusively of lawyers, a fraternity expected to facilitate the judicial process, not obstruct it in the manner demonstrated in the Lahore High Court on Tuesday. HRCP is particularly alarmed that the violent assault took place inside a courtroom.

"It is obvious that the attack occurred only because Asma Jahangir had agreed to represent petitioners against an influential lawyer, who also happens to be a member of Pakistan Bar Council (PBC). The PBC, of course, is the highest body regulating the conduct of lawyers in the country.

"Resort to hooliganism at this scale inside the LHC courtroom aimed at impeding the judicial process is a worrying new development, which, if not challenged immediately, will lead to those uncertain about the strength of their cases to try and overcome or eliminate their opponents physically and violently.

"HRCP commends the courage of Asma Jahangir's associates, particularly Shabbir Hussain advocate, Usama Malik advocate and Noor Ejaz advocate who refused to abandon their professional responsibility in the face of a physical assault, profanities hurled at them and the vile and menacing attitude of more than 70 lawyers.

"We know that the assault stands no chance of deterring or dissuading Asma or her team from pursuing justice for the petitioners, however, it is vital that legal representation must not be allowed to become such a hazardous endeavor for them.

"HRCP hopes and expects that the PBC and leaders of the legal fraternity will challenge such vile behavior by this group of lawyers and take meaningful steps to ensure that such an episode never occurs again. While the high court might also be expected to take note of the violence and intimidation on its premises, it is primarily for the authorities to take action under the law against the perpetrators. Should such action be absent, muted or delayed because the attackers happen to be lawyers, then we are surely headed for more serious trouble."

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)
Dr Mehdi Hassan

Chairperson
