

STATE OF EMERGENCY AND CRACKDOWN

SAFMA, SAMC Condemn Clampdown On Press

Say media unable to function due to amendments to ordinances

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LAHORE: The South Asia Media Commission (SAMC) and the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) have condemned the massive crackdown on media and rejected the two 'draconian' ordinances to 'muzzle' both print and electronic media in Pakistan.

In a joint statement, SAMC Secretary General Najam Sethi, SAFMA Secretary General Imtiaz Alam, and SAMC Regional Coordinator Hussain Naqi have expressed grave concern over recent developments that have alienated the institution of judiciary and targeted media freedom while closing down all private television news networks.

The Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) and proclamation of a state of emergency have eroded the legitimacy of authority, system of justice, rule of law, supremacy of the constitution and fundamental rights, said the SAMC office holders. They said both the print and electronic media cannot function because of the amendments brought into the PEMRA and PNNABRO ordinances, which lay down three years imprisonment and Rs 10 million fines for alleged violations. They said this is a terrible moment for the media and called upon all media bodies not to succumb to the pressures of an 'increasingly repressive regime'.

The statement further said that by demolishing the moral authority of the state and its justice system, the powers that be have compromised the capacity of the state to fight terrorism and extremism. They condemned the police attack on the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and arrest of the representatives of civil

society in Lahore. The SAMC and SAFMA leaders called upon the international and regional media community to express solidarity with the struggling media in Pakistan and demanded the revival of all private television networks and withdrawal of the two 'black laws'. Imtiaz Alam said he would soon convene a media conference and an all parties conference to evolve a joint platform to fight for the restoration of press freedom and fundamental rights. staff repor

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