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Press Statement

“We shall not bow down to the attacks by the religious right against women and minorities”

Saturday 1 January 2011, by [IHI](#) (Date first published: 30 December 2010).

Representatives of civil society, minorities and concerned citizens of Islamabad gathered today under the auspices of the Insani Haqooq Ittehaad - IHI (Human Rights Alliance) to denounce Federal Shariat Court's the recent decision on Women's Protection Act, demand the abolishing of Federal Shariat Court and parallel judicial systems i.e. Council of Islamic Ideology, Federal Shariat Court, jirgas, panchayets, and repeal of all laws which are discriminatory to women and minorities included Blasphemy laws and Hudood laws. They also called for the immediate dismissal of Maulana Shirani as the Chair of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII).

The participants of the rally were a diverse mix of civil society organizations, women's rights groups, human rights activists, political workers, students' organizations and minority communities from Islamabad. They raised slogans for a secular and democratic Pakistan. They insisted that the government must work towards the realization of the democratic, secular, and peaceful vision of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Pakistan, a vision he clearly articulated in his speech on 11th August 1947 when he stated that religion would have no role to play in the business of the state.

The protesters chanted slogans and demanded repeal of laws that discriminate against women such as Hudood Laws and Qisas and Diyat Law. They also reminded the government that the State has a due diligence duty to ensure protection for women, minorities and other vulnerable sections of the society and should not bow down to political pressures and blackmailing by religious parties. The demonstration was part of countrywide campaign of the human rights organizations and activist against the Federal Shariat Court decision, in support of its abolishing and repeal of Blasphemy laws. The protesters also demanded that the government should stand up to the retrogressive religious forces in the country and not capitulate to their blackmail. They called upon the government to ensure the rights of religious minorities by immediately releasing Aasiya Bibi and repealing the Blasphemy laws.

This protest was the beginning of a national campaign that civil society organizations are starting in all parts of Pakistan from today. Similar protests are planned in all provinces. A national conference and other follow-ups are also planned to demonstrate that the progressive elements of Pakistani society will not bow down to the attacks by the religious right against women and minorities.

December 30, 2010

Pakistani Christians and Muslims criticised Islamic court ruling on women's rights

During a press conference in Pakistan on Dec. 29 in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province, Christian and Muslim members of Joint Action Committee for People's Rights and Women Action Forum have criticized the Federal Shariat Court's (FSC) verdict that declared four clauses of the Women Protection Act 2006 un-Islamic and unconstitutional.

The court's 158-page decision declared on Dec. 22, 2010 that these clauses take away the overriding effects of the Hudood Ordinance 1979, Islamic law introduced by General Zia ul Haq which was part of the process to Islamize the country by his un-democratic rule.

The Hudood Ordinance had widely been used against women. Therefore, the civil society organizations urged to repeal the ordinance. In 2006, the parliament brought some changes in the ordinance to protect the rights of women.

The members of the civil society said the Shariat Court had tried to encroach upon the jurisdiction of the higher judiciary as well as the powers of parliament through its decision.

Three-member FSC bench comprising Chief Justice Agha Rafiq Ahmed Khan, Justice Afzaal Haider and Justice Shahzad Sheikh announced its verdict on same petitions challenging the act. The FSC hence gave parliament time till June 22, 2011 to make amendments to the Women's Protection Act to restore these clauses, otherwise the court's verdict would stand and these clauses would be considered restored.

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) said that in effect the Hudood Ordinance which had tormented and caused hundreds of innocent women to languish in jails and destroyed their social and family lives was being resurrected by the judgment.

The Court was established by General Zia ul Haq, a dictator, in 1980 and has the power to examine and determine whether the laws of the country comply with Islamic law. However, the court is noticeably discriminatory in its formation because no non-Muslim can become judge also cannot appear before the court as a council.

Aftab Alexander Mughal

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Minorities Concern of Pakistan

Islamabad: Demonstration against parallel judicial system and anti women judgement

Dear Friends,

Awami Party Pakistan supports the IHI's decision to protest against anti-women and anti-human rights decision of Federal Shariat Court. Awami Party is of the view that the parallel judicial system was planted by dictator General Ziaul Haq to disturb the social and political development as well as to oppress more marginalized and excluded segments of the society.

Awami Party Pakistan activists from Islamabad and Rawalpindi will join the demonstration and fully support the struggle for legislation to protect basic rights in the country and for demand to repeal the laws against basic human rights in the name of religion or so called traditions.

Awami party emphasizes to stand jointly for the cause till success and unitedly mobilize common masses.

Solidarity

Hassan Nasir
President
