

Press Release

Pakistan: All political detainees must be freed

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Thousands of activists belonging to various opposition parties are currently reported to be in jails across the country, most of them in the Punjab.

Claims by members of the provincial government that only a handful of people have been detained over the past few weeks, since the popular agitation triggered by the removal of the Chief Justice of Pakistan intensified, hardly seem credible. Especially so in light of complaints by the PPP, the PML-N and the MMA that hundreds of their activists have been arrested in towns across the Punjab. HRCP has also received complaints from political parties regarding the arrest of prominent figures. The leader of the Labour Party of Pakistan, Farooq Tariq, is among those being held. Some of the activists have been detained for three months.

HRCP demands that the political workers held with the obvious purpose of preventing rallies against the current regime be freed immediately. The misuse of laws on the maintenance of order to incarcerate these persons is appalling. So too are the reports of elderly workers being dragged out of their homes late at night or of activists moved to prisons located in towns at a great distance from their homes as a means to harass their families.

HRCP warns that such a blatant display of contempt for people's rights to assembly and to the free expression of their grievances will only aggravate the current situation. The indiscriminate jailing of people, in an attempt to intimidate them, can only spur further feelings of anger and add fuel to the deeply felt

passions that are currently pushing ahead the movement against autocracy and injustice in the country.

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Secretary General

P.S.

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