

LPP leader reveals ordeal — Over 300 political activists released

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LAHORE, June 19: More than 300 activists belonging to different opposition parties were released from various prisons on Monday night and Tuesday.

The Punjab home department issued their release orders which were communicated to different prisons on Monday.

The PML-N says the government released about 100 workers from prisons across the province and about 20 from the Kot Lakhpat Jail.

Similarly, the People's Party said about 90 of its workers had been set at liberty.

The Jamaat-i-Islami said most of its 83 workers had been released, including two from the Camp Jail in Lahore.

The political workers were arrested on June 4 and 5 in the first drive. The second campaign began on June 11 and continued for a day. In between, the Punjab government sent about 750 workers to different prisons in the province.

Some of them were released on the orders of the Lahore High Court, Multan Bench, which declared their detention as illegal.

Encouraged by the court decision, all the opposition parties moved the LHC against detention of their workers.

The LHC issued notices to the Punjab government and directed the advocate-general's office to submit reasons for detention along with the police record. The court had adjourned hearings for the third and fourth weeks of June. However, the government chose to release the workers.

PROBE DEMANDED: Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) Secretary-General Farooq Tariq has demanded a judicial inquiry into what he said unlawful detention of scores of political activists before they were sent to prisons.

Speaking at a news conference after his release from the jail on Tuesday, Mr Tariq said most of the PPP workers in particular were kept in personal custody of police for two to three days and subjected to torture before the police made entries to the official register about their arrest.

He said he was himself detained outside the police station for three days before the order of his detention was released. Mr Tariq said he was arrested by the Harbanspura police on June 4 and kept in a small store inside a factory and later shifted to a private place in Harbanspura till June 7 when he was sent to Bahawalpur jail on a three-month detention.

Farooq Tariq said the judicial body should look into the reasons for the confinement of hundreds of political activists from Punjab alone and charges contained in their detention order. He said the charges were general in nature and only said that the detainee's activities were prejudicial to public peace. He said the reasons could stand no legal ground and they were released only when the superior courts started declaring their detention as illegal.

The LPP secretary-general said 37 activists were detained in four small rooms in the Bahawalpur jail where even adequate water was not made available. The detainees, he said, were not taken out of the rooms even for a single day in severe hot weather.

As for his four-day stay in the Kot Lakhpat Jail, where he was shifted from Bahawalpur and released on Tuesday, he said the death of PPP activist Sarmad Mansoor was shocking. He said the police arrested Sarmad from a hospital in Gujrat where he was under treatment for heart ailment. He was brought to the Kot Lakhpat jail and got admitted to its dispensary where there was no arrangement for the treatment of heart patients. He said all the political prisoners gave the jail authorities in writing that Sarmad should be released and Punjab PPP Secretary-General Ghulam Abbas also visited the prison for the purpose, but the government did not yield to the request. "This is simply a murder," Mr Tariq said and added that all those responsible should be proceeded against

Notice issued in Tariq's detention case

Dawn

By Our Reporter

LAHORE, June 18: The Lahore High Court on Monday issued a notice to the Punjab home secretary for June 20 (tomorrow) on a petition challenging the detention of Labour Party Pakistan Secretary-General Farooq Tariq for three months.

Petitioner's counsel Abid Hassan Manto contended that Farooq Tariq had been detained for raising voice against the dictatorial policies of the government.

He had protested when Gen Pervez Musharraf seized power, organised conferences for expressing solidarity with the movement of lawyers and media and had been arrested a day before the Lahore visit of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry but was released later on.

P.S.

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