

Press Release

Observe Dec 10 as 'black day' : HRCP urges civil society

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Lahore 05 December 2007: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan calls upon all members of civil society to observe the Universal Human Rights Day as a "black day". The worst human rights abuses, in the history of the country, were recorded in 2007. The rights of ordinary people have been violated by the government with impunity. More than 400 people have been picked up by security forces and many remain missing. The Musharraf regime obstructed the Supreme Court in providing justice to those who remain disappeared, as well as those who recorded their statements of having suffered extreme forms of torture at the hands of the security forces. Reports of torture, threats, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests run into thousands. Incidents of extrajudicial killings continue to be reported but never investigated.

The situation has now reached alarming proportions. The coercive apparatus of the State are being blatantly used against all sections of civil society. The media is chained and free expression censored. Thousands of lawyers, journalists, students, teachers and human rights activists were arrested. A number of them remain incarcerated under deplorable conditions. Lawyers and others have been accused of offences falling under the Anti-Terrorism Act. Thirty-five judges of superior courts have been put under house arrest. The family of the Chief Justice of Pakistan is also confined to their residence. This is unprecedented.

The rights of the people are being usurped on the pretext of curbing terrorism. It is the people who are suffering terrorism; both at the hands of non-state militants and state agents. The government has failed to bring militants to justice or to disarm them. On the contrary, at several occasions, the government and its agents have patronized or in the least, ignored criminal acts carried out by militants acting in the name of Islam.

HRCP warns that the claim made by Musharraf of moving towards a transition to democracy is a total farce. The assertion is yet another smack on the face of the people of Pakistan. Amendments to the Legal Practitioners and Bar Council Act as well as the Army Act are only a few examples of the government's grand plan to subjugate the spirit of peaceful members of civil society. Much more is to follow.

HRCP, along with other civil society groups, will organize a black day on the 10th of December. Black flags and bands should be displayed on this unworthy occasion. In order to record the laudable struggle of the legal fraternity of Pakistan HRCP will award the best documentary film made on this movement. All entries are to be submitted by 30 June 2008.