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ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



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**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
JUSTICE AND PEACE PAKISTAN**



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FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE



Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Public Statement

Call upon the government of Pakistan to withdraw all cases against lawyers and activists

The Pakistan NGO Support Group¹ urges the new government of Pakistan to immediately withdraw all the cases against lawyers, human rights defenders and political workers, because they were targeted for peaceful protest. Especially after March 9, 2007 and again after November 3, 2007, large numbers of lawyers, judges, human rights activists, journalists and politicians of the opposition parties were illegally detained, put under house arrest, were banned or disappeared, because they took part in the movement for the restoration of democracy and against the emergency.

Although most of the individuals who were detained have been released on bail, the cases against them are still pending. We express our concern as many of them are falsely accused of very serious crimes (e.g. unlawful assembly, hindering the dispensation work of the officials, sedition, and violating law and order situation). Because of these false and unfounded accusations against them, these persons are restricted in their freedoms, such as their right to work.

While the longstanding issues of discriminatory and anti-human rights laws to be repealed by the parliament must not be forgotten, we call upon the government of Pakistan to immediately restore and improve the independent judiciary and to guarantee the safety of judges and lawyers as a first step.

On November 3, 2007 President Musharraf declared a state of emergency for Pakistan and suspended the constitution. On December 15, 2007 the emergency rule was abolished, but several laws and regulations that violate human rights that were installed during the state of emergency are still in place. Some of the laws that were installed normally require a two-third majority in parliament. We urge the government of Pakistan to withdraw the amendments made after November 3, 2007.

The new government of Pakistan has a responsibility to respect and support human rights and has to bring stability for the people of Pakistan.

¹ The Pakistan NGO Support Group (PSG) is a platform of NGOs from Europe and North America, that work together with and in support of human rights organisations in Pakistan. The PSG meets once a year, during the spring session of the Human Rights Council. In the past, PSG participants have worked together in submitting an NGO report to CEDAW. They have also supported human rights defenders from Pakistan in participating in a variety of United Nations processes.