

Society of American Law Teachers Statement Regarding the State of Emergency in Pakistan

November 6, 2007

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The Society of American Law Teachers, the largest membership organization of law professors in the United States, deplores and condemns the abrogation of the Rule of Law in Pakistan. General Musharraf, in a brazen attempt to perpetuate his own rule, has used his state apparatus to disband the highest courts of the country. Thousands of lawyers, journalists, judges, and human rights activists have been jailed. In many cases families have no idea of the whereabouts of the detainees.

Among those detained is Asma Jahangir, chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, recipient of the 1999 Human Rights Award from Human Rights First, and United Nations Special Rapporteur. She has been placed under house arrest based on "credible information that [she] will deliver inflammatory speeches for instigating the general public." A detention order has also been issued for Hina Jilani, Jahangir's sister who serves as the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Human Rights Defenders.

Also arrested is Muneer Malik, a graduate of Santa Clara University School of Law and the Immediate Past President of the Pakistani Supreme Court Bar Association, known to be a conscientious, industrious lawyer dedicated to the welfare of his country, and not in the least a threat to law and order.

Aitzaz Ahsan, the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, was among hundreds of lawyers associated with the movement supporting judicial independence to be arrested on November 4th. Some of these lawyers are in police custody; others have reportedly been turned over to the military's Inter Services Intelligence agency, which has a long history of employing torture on political opponents.

The Supreme and High Court judges have been locked in their own homes. Police have stormed into bar association gatherings and have manhandled lawyers, some of them septuagenarian. TV stations have been blacked out and police vans are carting off telecommunication equipment from private TV stations.

The US must use all its influence and in no uncertain terms demand the restoration of the Supreme Court status quo ante November 2, 2007. It must demand the immediate release of and accounting for all persons who have been jailed after the promulgation of the so-called emergency. It should be recalled that President Musharraf removed the Chief Justice once

before and was forced to rescind his order because of the pressure from lawyers within Pakistan as well as from world opinion.

The Society of American Law Teachers joins with other human rights organizations to call for President Musharraf to:

- immediately revoke Provisional Constitution Order # 1 of 2007;
- immediately release from detention and house arrest all those detained after the declaration of a “state of emergency”;
- immediately reinstate the Supreme Court and Provincial High Courts;
- hold fair and free general elections monitored by international observers.

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