

PRESS RELEASE

Date: 5th April 2006

National Assembly Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights should take into account the concerns of all the stakeholders on establishment of NCHR in Pakistan

Islamabad. Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) is deeply concerned over the improper and haphazard passage of bill on establishment of National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) in Pakistan. The bill has been passed haphazardly and without taking into account the recommendations of various stakeholders. This was stated by the Executive Director PCHR Ms. Kashmala Tariq MNA who is also the proponent of the ideas of national human rights commission in Pakistan. In a statement she said that following the announcement of the President of Pakistan Honorable General Pervaiz Musharaf on 15th May 2004 for establishment of NCHR in Pakistan, we collaborated with various civil society organizations and prevailed upon the Law Ministry to arrange national consultations on this important issue for ensuring establishment of NCHR in lines with international best practices. But it is unfortunate to say that this process never happened and Law Ministry could not implement the proposed consultations and instead initiated a bill which had serious lacunas. However, the Cabinet forwarded it to the parliament for detailed discussion and enactment. After its introduction in the parliament, the bill underwent the Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights for consideration and recommendations who passed it without due process.

She said that PCHR organized countrywide consultations in collaboration with Asia Pacific Forum (APF) and various civil society organizations to review the government draft bill in the light of international best practices, and members of the Law Committee were also present in the consultations who also vowed for incorporating suggestions and recommendations of different stakeholder on establishment of NCHR. Ms. Kashmala Tariq MNA further added that establishment of NCHR in Pakistan would prove to be a milestone and from the very beginning we have been lobbying for establishment of an independent as well as neutral human right institution in the country. She remarked that we had already submitted our concerns on government draft of bill and were expecting that we will be able to get away with the controversial clauses of this bill in standing committee review. But we were shocked to hear that against all parliamentary ethics and practices, standing committee passed this bill in her absence. Only four out of nineteen members were present in that meeting. She rejected this passage and demanded the reconsideration of this bill in the committee.

She added that we are convening a meeting of civil society representatives, academicians, and parliamentarians to discuss this situation and to formulate joint strategy for pressurizing and convincing the government to resend the bill on NCHR to Standing Committee in Law, Justice and Human Rights for reconsideration. She also announced to hold a press conference on 6th April 2006 at 1:00 pm at PCHR Secretariat inviting human rights activists, representatives of civil society organizations, parliamentarians and members of National Assembly Standing Committee on Law and Justice so as to openly discuss the current situation on NCHR.

Following numbers will be reachable round the clock for any information or help:
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