

PRESS RELEASE

Dated: 4th May 2005

Police Baton-charge on Journalists

Islamabad. The Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) has condemned the crackdown of police on journalists protesting in front of the Parliament House on 3rd May 2005, the Press Freedom Day in the world. In a statement Chairman PCHR Mr. Riaz Fatyana MNA said that May 3 is the international press freedom day. On this occasion, the governments and societies make analysis of the situation and overview that whether the freedom of the press has been curtailed or enhanced during the year, and on this day, government reiterate to the commitment to enhancing the freedom of the press in the country. He said that press is one of the fourth pillars of the state and it serves the role of watchdog on the policies of the government providing guidance and direction to the government. Mr. Fatyana also said that in democratic society, the role of press stands supreme as it formulates public opinion making the citizens conscious as well as vigilant.

Mr. Riaz Fatyana MNA while commenting upon the crackdown of police personnel called it an anti-democratic act because the journalists were robbed of their mobile phones; cameras and their cloths were torn to pieces by the police constables. He added that police baton-charge did not make any sense as the demonstration was being carried out in a peaceful and serene manner without disturbing the law and order situation in the capital; and that the purpose of journalistic demonstration was to change the course of government policy on Wage Board Award, and to abolish the contract system as well.

Commenting upon the incident of police torture on journalists, Executive Director PCHR Ms. Kashmala Tariq MNA, said that government should have to resolved the issues and differences with the journalists in an amicable and democratic way instead of resorting to torture and crackdown especially the day marked by the freedom of press in the world. She said that putting seventy journalists behind the bar in Sihala Police Station shows that the incident has been preplanned and on the instructions of some high authority. Ms. Kashmala Tariq MNA termed the incident to be a step further to distort the image of Pakistan in international community because government has committed the same type of crackdown on journalists in Lahore.

Both Mr. Riaz Fatyana MNA and Ms. Kashmala Tariq MNA demanded for the independent and impartial inquiry of the incident. They said that Interior Ministry should form an investigation team to probe the matter to unveil the architects of this crackdown on journalists. They also demanded for the suspension of the police personnel involved in carrying out such an undemocratic, and brutal torture on media men.

Following numbers will be reachable round the clock for any information or help:
0300-8555570

Media Cell PCHR

