

Statement on State of Emergency in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA) is a pan-Commonwealth professional association of lawyers. It exists to maintain and promote the rule of law throughout the Commonwealth.

The CLA is alarmed by the Proclamation of Emergency, the suspension of the Constitution and the imposition of emergency restrictions in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The CLA is particularly concerned about the dismissal and purported replacement of the Chief Justice and other judges on grounds that they have increasingly interfered with the functions of the executive and the legislature.

By virtue of its membership of the Commonwealth, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is committed to the fundamental values and principles of the Commonwealth, at the core of which is a shared belief in, and adherence to, human rights and democratic principles including an independent and impartial judiciary.

The CLA notes with concern, the arrest and detention of Mr Aitzaz Ahsan, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association, and officers of other Bar associations, together with a number of other prominent lawyers, who gathered in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi to demonstrate against the state of emergency.

The CLA calls on the authorities to respect the independence of the legal profession and the right of lawyers to exercise freedom of opinion and conscience and urges General Pervez Musharraf to reinstate the Constitution and return the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to constitutional government as soon as possible.

The CLA expresses its support of members of the legal profession in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in their efforts to maintain the independence of the judiciary and to promote democracy and the rule of law.

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