

Friday, April 22, 2011

## Mukhtaran Mai case

# Women rights activists feel disappointed at SC verdict

Staff Report

**ISLAMABAD:** The National Commission on the Status of Women (NSCW) and members of various NGO's on Thursday expressed disappointment over the Supreme Court (SC) decision to uphold LHC's verdict into Mukhtaran Mai case acquitting all the accused except one Abdul Khaliq.

They said the decision has not only disappointed Mukhtaran Mai, the human rights activists but also the women of this country.

In an emergency meeting after the SC verdict on Thursday, Insani Huqooq Ittehad (IHI) including PODA, Mehergargh, Aurat Foundation (AF), Rozan, Sungi, Bedari, Ethno Media, Pattan and SPO members expressed disappointment at the verdict, said a press release.

The rights activists

said that although the judgment did prove that Mukhtaran was raped because one accused did get life imprisonment, while others were acquitted.

"We are surprised to see why only one accused was punished and others were acquitted on a charge of 'gang rape'. The Commission and members of civil society felt that this was the reflection of a biased and inefficient criminal justice system.

IHI also expressed concern at the long delays to dispense justice. The victim was raped in 2002 on the instructions of the local Panchayat while in 2005 the chief justice of the superior court took suo moto notice of the case. Despite the intervention it took more than nine years to come up with this decision, which is a source of concern for the women of Pakistan," the said.

The members of IHI

feared that this decision might further strengthen the anti women parallel legal and judicial systems and mechanisms in the country.

IHI members were also of opinion that "In cases of complaints women victims are burdened to provide series of evidences which is not possible for them. It is the responsibility of the police to do the investigation and come up with the requisite evidence.

Mukhtar Mai was allegedly gang-raped in Meerwala, Muzaffargarh in 2002 at the behest of a local Panchayat. An anti-terrorism court in Dera Ghazi Khan sentenced five out of the six accused to death and fined them, but the LHC's Multan Bench acquitted five of the accused.

Talking to Daily Times, Shabana Arif of Rozan said Mukhtaran Mai case should have been an example for the

rights of women had SC awarded death penalty to all six gang-rape culprits. She said Diyyat was also being used against women in honor killing as normally it is committed by a man inside the family of a woman that is why we are protesting and demanding State to be a party against the culprit. She said they were committed to raise voice against the laws implemented against the women of Pakistan.

Naeem Mirza of Aurat Foundation said the SC verdict in this case has disappointed him. "She (Mukhtaran Mai) didn't get justice at all as it seems that courts in Pakistan are still not independent," Mirza said.

Others human rights organisations said there was a need to look at the women's representation in all those systems and mechanism dealing with matters of crimes and justice.