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# Civil society organisations demand promised NCHR

Still no progress, two years after the passage of bill to make commission

By A Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Leading civil society organisations have urged the government to immediately complete the formation of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), an independent body to protect and promote human rights in the country.

The previous parliament passed a bill for the setting up of this commis-

sion in May 2012. However, despite passing of more than two years, the NCHR is yet to be constituted.

The demand for the NCHR was made by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO), Potohar Organisation for Development Advocacy (PODA), Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), Aurat Foundation (AF) and other organisations in a statement released on the International Human Rights Day 2014.

The formation of an independent state body mandated to investigate human rights abuses, monitor the situation of human rights in the country and ensure compli-

ance with Pakistan's international rights obligations is an important milestone.

"We believe that the commission is an important legal instrument and its formation must be given high priority by the government and opposition alike," the statement added.

It pointed out that a parliamentary committee made to appoint chairpersons and members of the commission was yet to complete its task.

Civil society organisations demanded that the appointments must be made in a transparent and consultative manner and the timeframe for completion of appointments must also be made public.

"Considering the current situa-

tion of human rights violations, it is urgent to have a functional NCHR in the country," said Sameena Nazir, director, PODA.

Once operational, the NCHR, comprising a chairperson and a panel of eight members, will have suo motu powers to inquire into any case of violation of human rights.

The commission is authorised to seek reports from the government, summon any government official and undertake visits to prisons and detention centres to monitor rights standards.

One of the key roles of the commission will be to make recommendations for effective implementation of Pakistan's international commitments on human rights.