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Review appeal

# Mukhtaran Mai: Activists cry for justice

IHI members demand review of the Mukhtaran Mai case

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**  
 ISLAMABAD

The civil society and rights activists have urged the government to file a review petition in the Supreme Court regarding the Mukhtaran Mai case. They also called for formation of a larger or full bench of the apex court to hear the case. The activists' demanded removal of flaws in the justice system and abolition of black laws including amendments to the law of evidence.

"If the apex court failed to do justice to the rape victim, it will be a major setback not only to the independent judiciary but also to civil rights campaigners", they said.

Addressing a press conference at a local hotel on Wednesday, members of Insani Haqooq Itehad (IHI), a conglomerate of over a dozen

civil society and women rights organizations, said the split judgment of two vs one shows that the Supreme Court ruling is not merely a matter of technicalities of evidence and witnesses. The dissenting judge of the bench, Justice Nasirul Mulk recommended 10 years imprisonment to each of the five accused in the case.

"The judgement in this infamous case clearly shows that our criminal justice system is incapable of dispensing justice to victims of rape and sexual violence."

They said the "[SC] judgment includes spurious arguments which raise questions on the objectivity of reading an interpretation of the evidence by judges. It highlights the serious flaws in legislation, as well as in our criminal justice system which is obviously not geared to dispense justice to women victims of sexual violence." Derogatory language and unnecessary interrogation of rape victims by the opposite council is allowed, most of the

members of the judiciary lack gender sensitivity and display their deeply ingrained patriarchal mindset"

Speaking on the occasion, Farzana Bari said before giving the judgment the judges should have consulted human rights activists and gender experts. Sarwar Bari of Pattan NGO said there are some media outlets that are running a campaign against Mukhtaran Mai and do not want her to get well deserving justice. Rehana Hashmi stated that gender bias has actually made the victim into a culprit, and neither has the government given Mai the protection promised by Interior Minister Rehman Malik.

They demanded of the government to file a review petition with the SC on behalf of women of the country. Review must ensure a full and larger bench to hear review petition, immediate initiation of judicial reforms and introduce amendment to the Evidence

Act. Besides, the government should establish modern DNA and swab test laboratories along with strengthening the prosecution and investigation system. They demanded removing corruption, forgery and use of political influence in the police and judiciary. Also the two organisations should be purged of patriarchal biases by making it mandatory for judges and police officials to attend trainings on gender issues. Their gender performance should be linked to their assessments for promotion. They also demanded appointment of women judges who are known for their understanding and work on human rights issues.

TV channel anchors should avoid using wrong language for Mai in their shows along with defaming human/women right activists." I have filed a defamation suite against Dunya TV on defaming me in one of its programmes hosted by Mubashir Luqman", said Farzana Bari.