

Wednesday, January 16, 2013

# Civil society gravely concerned at turn of events

**ISLAMABAD:** Members of the civil society, including human rights activists in Islamabad and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said they were watching with the gravest concern the fast-unfolding events in Islamabad.

"It is the first time that a democratic dispensation was nearing its natural completion. We condemn the exploitation and the use of women and children as human shields in the expensive drama being staged by the Canadian parachute Tahirul Qadri. It turned into farcical melodrama when the Supreme Court's order to arrest the prime minister of Pakistan and 16 others re: the rental power case was announced in the middle of his speech being relayed live on Tuesday afternoon."

In a statement, they said the well-trained emissary lost not a moment in making the linkage between his unconstitutional demands, incitement to treason, challenging the writ of the state and emotional blackmail with the SC's order, terming it 50 percent success of his "million man (sic) long march" within 12 hours of the Islamabad sit-in. "We condemn this in the

strongest terms."

"Likewise, without going into its merits at all, we express, with due respect, our gravest concern at the curiously bad timing of the Supreme Court judgment/short order in the rental power case, which has been ongoing for months and months now. We were hoping for and fully expecting the SC to take suo motu notice against Qadri's unconstitutional stand and actions, instead of the opposite, which has wittingly or unwittingly made an unworthy hero out of Qadri. It is inexplicably strange that Islamabad, the besieged capital, and Pakistan, a country in extreme crisis, had to witness this double whammy today. But perhaps it is not so strange and not a coincidence either."

The statement read, "We firstly wish to request the Supreme Court, with the utmost respect, to take all possible measures not to derail the democratic dispensation at this extremely critical juncture, no matter how flawed, corrupt and non-performing its governance has been - which we decry and have been pointing out continuously over the last 5 years."

"We demand that Qadri come out of the closet and inform Pakistanis of his mentors, whether stationed in Ottawa, MIS/London, Langley/Virginia, or indeed not too far away in Rawalpindi, or closer still, in Aabpara/Islamabad. We warn him in the sternest language not to exploit the masses in the name of religion or poverty or basic needs. We urgently demand that the federal government, all the provincial governments and all political parties immediately make a consensus statement regarding the election schedule, and their utmost resolve to uphold democracy and democratic norms."

They warned the armed forces of Pakistan not to stage either a direct or indirect coup by either marching boots down Constitution Avenue, or by installing their proxy, whether in the form of Qadri or Khan or any retired general - or anyone. "The new Pakistan may not yet be at Tahrir Square, but we are not too far behind. We are very closely monitoring the unfolding situation and we will not allow Jinnah's Pakistan to be hijacked or derailed. We are alive and we are alert." PR