



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

The Honourable Mélanie Joly
Minister of Foreign Affairs

June 5, 2023

RE: Threats to Democracy and Human Rights in Pakistan

Dear Minister Joly,

We are writing to share grave concerns expressed by members of the Pakistani Canadian Association—Waterloo Region, as well as on behalf of Pakistani Canadians across the county, regarding the situation unfolding in Pakistan. We share their concerns about serious threats to democracy, the rule of law and freedom of expression in Pakistan, and echo the concerns communicated to you and the Prime Minister in a May 19, 2023, letter from the 16 Members of Parliament of the Canada-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Recent events occurring in Pakistan are cause for alarm and threaten citizens' fundamental rights and the endurance of its democratic system. For example:

- The Supreme Court of Pakistan recently ruled that former Prime Minister Imran Khan's arrest on terrorism and corruption charges was illegal and unjust, and emphasized the importance of prompt and transparent court proceedings. The veil of secrecy maintained by the Pakistani state with respect to these charges has made it difficult for Pakistanis and independent observers to establish their veracity and validity.
- The world has witnessed unacceptable acts of violence towards political protestors by the Pakistani state, along with unjustified arrest of citizens, journalists and activists, including women and children. This has allegedly included the unlawful detainment of both the leadership and more than 7,500 workers of the former Prime Minister's political party.

It is imperative that the rights of fair and impartial adjudication, peaceful protest, and democratic participation be respected in Pakistan.

Consistent with principles of fundamental justice widely recognized across the democratic world, any charges brought against an individual should be detailed publicly and fully, and any charged individual should have their case heard within an independent legal forum. Any protests must remain peaceful and free of disproportionate intervention by the Pakistani state. Lastly, the Pakistani people alone should determine the destiny of their nation through free and fair elections.

These can only be accomplished if there is strong adherence to Pakistan's constitution and respect for the rule of law and fundamental human rights within Pakistan. Canada should advocate strongly to ensure that this is the case.

As Parliamentarians, we have the collective responsibility to act as the voice of our constituents and to speak out when these critical and inalienable rights are threatened, whether at home or abroad. Canada has long supported the people of Pakistan and was an early recognizer of its independence.

We would urge you to make explicitly clear Canada's commitment to ensuring the values of democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law are upheld and protected – both in Pakistan and around the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Morrice".

Mike Morrice
MP for Kitchener Centre

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth May".

Elizabeth May, MP for Saanich—Gulf Islands
Leader of the Green Party of Canada