

Civil society to continue struggle for judiciary

*** HRCP chairwoman says civil society existed before lawyers' movement, will continue in future**

*** WAF convener says civil society wants independence of judiciary as an institution**

By Ali Usman

LAHORE: The civil society's goals have not been achieved completely with the reinstatement of the sacked judges, and it will keep struggling for the establishment of an independent judiciary, civil society representatives and experts said on Saturday.

Talking to Daily Times, the civil society representatives and experts said the sacked judges had been reinstated, but the civil society's job was not over yet as it had an important role to play in the days to come. They said the reinstatement of the judges would give confidence to the civil society and the general public, as their voice had been heard and now they would work to achieve their social goals with more responsibility. They said the civil society would not cease its activities in the future.

HRCP: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Chairwoman Asma Jahangir said the civil society had existed before the lawyers' movement came into being and it would continue to exist in the future as well. Jahangir said the role and function of civil society would not end with the lawyers' movement and various civil society organisations would keep working as per their mandate.

Institution: Nighat Saeed Khan, Women Action Forum (WAF) Convener and ASR Resource Center Executive Director said the civil society was not talking about just the reinstatement of some judges; rather it spoke about the independence of the judiciary as an institution. Khan said the reinstatement of the sacked judges was just a step towards the independence of the judiciary. She said the judiciary should look into the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation in the Malakand Division and it

should ensure that nothing against the law was implemented in any area of the country. The WAF convener said, "Everybody wants free and immediate access to justice but different parts of the same country should not be treated differently". She added that the struggle of the civil society would continue and it would not end.

South Asian Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK) Executive Director Muhammad Tahseen said there were enormous challenges ahead for the civil society. Tahseen said there was a great need for improving the image of and the relationship between the various bars and the judges. He said the civil society should think about improving and sustaining respect for lawyers in the public. The SAP-PK executive director said it was very encouraging that people came on the roads and changed things. "I suggest that if hundreds of thousands of people go and sit in Swat, it would be impossible that the terrorists do not vacate the area," Tahseen added.

Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO) Regional Manger Salman Abid said the reinstatement of the sacked judges was not the final goal of the civil society and it would keep struggling for the complete independence of the judiciary. Abid said the civil society's role was important because it made sure that the political parties, in their attempt for reconciliation, did not compromise on the cause for which the civil society activists had been struggling. Working Women Organisation (WVO) President Robina Jameel said the civil society activists should sit together and continue the struggle to achieve its goals. Jameel said the reinstatement of the sacked judges was a positive thing and it had increased the responsibility of the civil society activists and they should continue their struggle in collaboration with the lawyers in the future.

Political analyst Dr Rasool Bakhsh Rais said the civil society's struggle would continue in the future. Rais said the change that had taken place in Pakistan could not have occurred if the civil society was not active. He said it was the role of the civil society to make the government function in accordance with the law and hold political parties and their leaders accountable as per their manifestoes. The

political analyst termed the media the civil society's partner and added that the media could bring the corruption in society to people's knowledge.