

Press Release

Transparency and Fairness Demanded in the Use of Funds Meant for Victims of Human Rights Violations

Islamabad, June 23, 2006: Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, Pakistan (CPDI-Pakistan) expresses its deep concern on the reports that the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights has been misusing the funds meant for the victims of human rights violations. Reports about the doling out of human rights funds mostly in the constituency of the Law Minister are extremely disturbing, and must be thoroughly investigated to hold the top officials and the Minister accountable. It is very unfortunate that the top officials, who are mandated to uphold the cause of justice and human rights, are themselves found involved, allegedly, in unlawful and unfair practices.

CPDI-Pakistan demands the Prime Minister to immediately clarify the situation and order an independent inquiry into the allegations. Relative silence of the Ministry as well as of the Prime Minister so far vis-à-vis the allegations has not been helpful, and has rather raised further questions whether the government has any sensitivity for its image, credibility and responsiveness to the public. Government owes an immediate explanation to the people of Pakistan. It is particularly because, against the background of such allegations, the claims of government for increased allocations for development appear hollow. Many have argued that the real problem is not the lack of funds, but the way available funds are used.

Unfortunately, abuse of public funds has become normal, as even the senior ministers are blamed for abusing their powers with impunity. No wonder that, despite tall claims about accountability, Pakistan continues to rank very high on the corruption perception index of the Transparency International. It is further demanded that the Ministry must develop and implement transparent procedures for the use of funds that are allocated for the victims of human rights violations. The Ministry must proactively disseminate information about the procedure for submitting, reviewing and deciding on applications by victims. All the relevant information must be regularly posted on the website of the Ministry.

Furthermore, CPDI-Pakistan urges the relevant standing committees of the Senate and the National Assembly to play their role in promoting transparency and fairness in the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights.

It would be appropriate for the standing committees to take up the matter and hold public hearings on the allegations to fix responsibility. Following this, the committees must make appropriate recommendations in order to ensure that no such complaints emerge in future. It is important that the committees demonstrate their usefulness to the public as, otherwise, these would continue to be seen as a burden on public exchequer, while having no utility whatsoever.

Yours sincerely,
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