

Women protesters face police batons

Wednesday, 14 November 2007

Mass arrests and detention of political activists from opposition parties have taken place over the past three days across the country. Police have used batons and tear gas to disperse peaceful protests before arresting them.

In Lahore today (Wednesday), 37 women political activists belonging to opposition Pakistan People's Party have been remanded in jail custody for six days by an anti-terrorism court. Police have filed charges under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The women include Mehreen Raja, a member of National Assembly, and two members of the Punjab Assembly, Farzana Raja and Uzma Bokhari. There have been reports that women protesters were severely beaten by the police.

Former cricket star and opposition party leader Imran Khan, who went into hiding after the declaration of emergency, was arrested this morning in Punjab University, Lahore, where he was participating in a student demonstration. He remains in police custody having been served a 90-day detention order.

According to media reports, the Lahore police chief is reported to have stated that Imran Khan will be charged under Anti-Terrorism Act for allegedly inflammatory speeches including "inciting people to take up arms...calling for civil disobedience... [and] spreading hatred".

Affidavits on release

Lawyers arrested previously under the Maintenance of Public Order law have been asked to file affidavits containing conditions for their release. The conditions include guarantees that they will not engage in anti-state activities; not make speeches against General Musharraf and have no involvement in anti-government demonstrations within court premises. Any lawyer found breaching these rules will be prohibited from part in any elections to the Bar.