

PRESS STATEMENT

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Benazir Bhutto
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On the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

"On December 10th leaders are gathering at the Palais de Chaillot in France to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a momentous document establishing for all of humanity fundamental rights regardless of nationality, political convictions, religious belief or economic class.

Each day since Eleanor Roosevelt presented these watershed words, countless lives have been saved from the dictator's gallows, dark jails and bloody back alleys of execution. Today, many worldwide now take for granted the notion that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".

In Pakistan, however, our people can not join the world in celebration, as our fundamental human rights, rather than being strengthen over the last half century, are being taken away -- even as I issue this statement -- by a reactionary and dictatorial regime.

The Nawaz regime is pushing our people toward a dark past through forced passage of its 15th constitutional amendment, establishing military tribunals in Sindh province, and calling for 'Taliban Justice' in Pakistan.

To the people of Pakistan, I promise, on the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that the Pakistan Peoples Party has in the past and will continue to struggle for your fundamental political and religious freedoms, your safety and that of your family, and equal opportunities for advancement, economic prosperity and success.

As the world celebrates, I call upon the Nawaz regime, for the good of our people and our country, to:

- Cease, effective immediately, its illegal reign of terror on Karachi by disbanding the military courts and reconstituting the elected government of Sindh;
- Proclaim a one year moratorium on the use of the death penalty, no matter the offense, as a gesture of honor and respect to the international standards embodied in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights;
- Free immediately all political prisoners held throughout the country. As our religious and moral teachings instruct, forgiveness heals more so than the sword, for no democracy can function when those in Opposition are in fear for their lives; and
- Withdraw your 15th Amendment that will disband, in one fell stroke, all constitutionally given rights and protections afforded our citizens.

In 1948, Nelson Mandela stated that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was 'a sudden ray of hope at one of our darkest hours'. In Pakistan today, I, too, echo President Mandela's words, for Pakistan can and must not join the rank of nations moving toward a dark and violent past when the world community is moving towards a bright and vibrant new millenium."

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