



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE - COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

30 July 2003

IMMEDIATE

P
R
E
S
S
E
R
E
L
E
A
S
E

Pakistan: ICJ Deplores the Deaths of Three Judges

The Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL) of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today expressed its shock at the killing of three judges in Pakistan after a jail siege on Friday 25 July. Judges Cheema, Anwar and Ranjha had been taken hostage by prisoners and died as a result of gunfire when police officers stormed the jail to end the siege.

Judges Asif Mumtaz Cheema, Saghir Anwar and Khalid Munir Ranjha were part of a group of judicial officials who were conducting a routine inspection at the Sialkot jail in Punjab province on 25 July. The group was taken hostage by a number of inmates who demanded safe passage out of the jail. Efforts to negotiate failed, and when the inmates threatened to kill the judges the Pakistani authorities decided to take the building by force using special commandos. As a result of the fire exchange between the hostage-takers and the special forces, three judges and five prisoners were killed.

"We lament the deaths of the three Pakistani judges", said Linda Besharaty-Movaed, Legal Advisor of the ICJ/CIJL. "Even though it is not known who fired at them, the Government should have taken every precaution to guarantee the security of the judges, more so when possession of arms is rather common in Pakistani prisons and the risk of serious injury or death is high."

Attacks against judges severely undermine the rule of law and the administration of justice. The ICJ/CIJL implores the Government of Pakistan to fully investigate the circumstances of the judges' deaths and to bring those responsible to justice. The ICJ/CIJL further urges the Government to guarantee the security and protection of all judges, particularly those who are at risk when performing their professional duties.

For further information, please contact Linda Besharaty-Movaed, Legal Advisor, at +41 22 979 3809.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

81A, avenue de Châtelaine, P.O. Box 216, 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41(0) 22 979 3800 Fax: +41(0) 22 979 3801 Website: <http://www.icj.org> E-mail: info@icj.org