

Council of Elders

Pioneers in Social and National Development

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RESOLUTION

(This resolution was passed at a meeting of the Council of Elders at Hamdard Center, Lahore on 1st July 2007)

Whereas, the continuation of the present military ruler, who has also acquired the office of the president, has dealt a serious blow to the various organizations and institutions of the state, including the armed forces;

Whereas, the government's anti-poor economic and social policies have weakened the state structure to a dangerous extent;

Whereas, the majority section of the country's population has been incapacitated, are not consulted in policy-making and are not involved in conducting the affairs of the state, and a few persons from the landed aristocracy and the capitalist, with the connivance of establishment and the religious elite, are holding the reins of power in absolute disregard to the will of the people;

Whereas, the exploitation by the vested interests had achieved an all-time high, and the society has been precipitously divided into a few haves and an absolute majority of have-nots;

Whereas, sectarianism, religious fanaticism and extremism have touched immeasurable heights, endangering the very existence of the country;

Whereas, Pakistan has been made into a vassal of foreign powers;

Whereas, the Judiciary has been made hostage to the executive and the military;

Whereas, the circumstances thus created by the ruling junta are not conducive for holding of free, fair and transparent elections;

Whereas, Pakistan with its sad history of a mix of outright military regimes or military dominated coalition regimes, once again stands vulnerable to possibility of an outright confrontation between the civil society and the military dominated government with resultant consequences;

Whereas the incorrigible delusion of self-righteousness and an outright self-serving defiant self-confidence with the self-centered conviction of being the saviour of Pakistan, General Parvez Musharraf has brought the country to a pitch of a make or mar situation;

Whereas, all the well-meaning views, suggestions and proposals thus far made to guide him, by friends and foes, at home and abroad, have been falling on deaf ears being of no meaning to him;

Whereas, General Musharraf is now generally perceived to have failed to deliver on his own 7-point agenda, even in seven years, to the dismay of those who had fond hopes from him;

Whereas, Pakistan, having been made a hot-bed of bloody conspiracies in the name of Islam and jihad, and turned into U.S.A's front-line state with the disastrous fall-outs, and now again being used frivolously in the so-called 'War on Terror' as a 'walk-in state', and a taken-for-granted client state.

Whereas, the fine institution of our armed forces consisting of valiant defenders of our motherland is / are second to none in the world, and the nation still wants to continue holding them in high esteem, but when a Chief of Army Staff indulges in an extra-constitutional exercise of politics which is controversial by nature, then such a controversy is bound to cast its shadow on the image of the armed forces.

Now, therefore, the participants of the Council of Elders' meeting, held at Hamdard Center, Lahore on 1st July 2007 have arrived at the firm conclusion that:

General Parvez Musharraf should give up the offices of the President and Army Chief voluntarily and gracefully, and hand over charge to the Chairman of the Senate, as envisaged in the 1973 Constitution.

The army generals should opt out of politics and go back to the barracks for assuming their essential role under the Constitution of defending the frontiers and not involving themselves in politics. The army should be preserved as a respected national institution.

No person or institution should be allowed to make amendments in the 1973 Constitution, except in the manner given in the Constitution.

The present 'Lawyers Movement' for the establishment of the rule of law and democracy should be taken as a God-sent opportunity for getting out of the present political impasse and setting up a truly democratic order, and an all-out efforts in this direction should be made;

Dignity and respectability of the Judiciary should be ensured. The wrongful removal of the Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry by the President should be undone, and the reference against him to the Supreme Judicial Council be withdrawn immediately.

The principle of "sovereignty of the people" should be upheld. The people should be educated at the grassroots level, both academically and politically, consulted directly on important national issues and deeply involved in state matters.

The political parties should do away with their game of power politics for gaining personal benefits through deceit, machinations and confrontation, as being practiced by them, and organize themselves on the basis of "collective leadership", with their office-bearers elected and not nominated. They should shun religious, sectarian and other divisive slogans such as *baradari* etc., and base their politics strictly on public issues. They should not involve their workers in personality-worship but train them to uphold principles. They should work for the amelioration of the lot of the people and bettering of their standard of living, and exert to develop the society and the nation.

A care-taker government should be established with the consent of all political parties, of such persons who hold full confidence of the people and will not run for the elections themselves.

A fully autonomous Election Commission should be set up with full judicial powers and sufficient funds, as in India, with consensus among political parties, to ensure free, fair and transparent elections. Preferably the Election Commission should comprise of those judges who refused to take oath under PCO. Transparent ballot boxes should be used for this purpose.

The voters' list reportedly does not contain more than 30 million eligible voters. NADRA should send its mobile units to provide identity cards to people at the doorstep. Those who have applied but not received the cards should also be allowed to cast votes on showing the valid NADRA receipt. The giving of date for registration of votes is piracy on the rights of franchise. Registration of voters should be a continuous process and anyone coming of age at the time of

announcement of the election schedule has a constitutional right of franchise, and no law can deny that right.

No person should be debarred from taking part in elections, and all those exiled or in self-exile should not be stopped from coming back to their motherland to take part in elections.

There should be amendments in the Constitution in such a way that the Parliament and Provincial Assemblies should be true representatives of the masses and not the vested classes. The quorum in the present assemblies is often incomplete. No legislature should be allowed any allocation of development funds as their main job is to frame laws. The unjust perks and privileges of the legislators should be withdrawn.

The nefarious effect of the present constitutional crisis is the voice, though subdued, for a new constitutional apparatus to ensure Provincial Autonomy. All the political parties and political element should concentrate on improving the 1973 Constitution and make provision for the required Provincial Autonomy and other measures, including deleting anti-democratic amendments made in the Constitution by vested interest.

The different categories of experimentations, initiated by certain groups in the name of democracy and Islam, having failed to achieve positive result in the last 60 years, it is time we now concentrate on an issue-oriented campaign to help Pakistan society play an effective role in the establishment of world peace, international harmony and a balanced tolerant society, as well as accountable, answerable and representative governance. (END)