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HRCP Flags Alarming Political Breakdown and Rights Violations in Punjab

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Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has issued a sharp critique of the political and legislative dysfunction in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province, raising red flags over rising rights violations, parliamentary disarray, and lack of accountability. The concerns were presented during a press conference held in Lahore to launch the organization's annual report titled *State of Human Rights in 2024*.

Despite a noted increase in voter registration and total ballots cast in the 2024 general elections, the report underscores that voter turnout declined, a worrying sign for democratic engagement. The HRCP acknowledged that women's representation in the Punjab Assembly more than doubled, but this symbolic progress has been overshadowed by continued disorder within the House. According to the report, proceedings throughout 2024 were marked by frequent chaos, disregard for opposition input, and rushed legislation. Such behaviour points to deeper structural issues within the assembly, where parliamentary decorum and meaningful dialogue appear to be in decline.



A particularly troubling incident highlighted was a walkout staged by women Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) in response to inappropriate gestures made in the House. The episode exposed the lack of respect and safety female lawmakers continue to face, despite growing in number. Furthermore, the allocation of reserved seats for women and minorities became entangled in legal battles, undermining the spirit of inclusive representation. The HRCP's report paints a grim picture of a legislative body where optics have improved, but substance and safeguards for basic democratic norms are sorely lacking.

This report from the HRCP, a civil society watchdog with a long-standing presence in Pakistan, should prompt serious introspection among Punjab's political leadership. Parliamentary dysfunction and institutional disrespect erode public confidence and weaken the state's capacity to uphold justice. It is no longer enough to boast statistics on electoral participation or symbolic milestones like gender representation. Real political maturity demands discipline, transparency, and above all, the protection of rights for all citizens, regardless of party or gender. As

Punjab stands at a political crossroads, it must decide whether to continue down the path of chaos or reclaim the values of democratic governance through reform, respect, and accountability.

