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Officer Tied to Kidnapping Case Reinstated as SHO, Raising Eyebrows Over Political Influence in Policing

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In a decision that has sparked public concern and renewed distrust in the integrity of local policing, a police officer once jailed over serious criminal allegations has been reinstated to a leadership role. Sub Inspector (SI) Abdul Waheed Panhwar, who previously faced charges in a high-profile kidnapping-for-ransom case, has now been appointed the new Station House Officer (SHO) of Bhattai Nagar police station in Hyderabad, Pakistan.

The appointment came under the orders of Hyderabad's Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Adeel Hussain Chandio, who issued a transfer directive removing SHO Anwar Khanzada and SHO Imtiaz Lark from their posts and assigning them to police headquarters. Panhwar, despite his past legal troubles, was selected to fill the leadership gap.

Panhwar's criminal record is not a matter of rumor; it is a matter of public record. In October 2024, he was arrested for allegedly abducting two businessmen, Muhammad Saleh and Ateeq Haider, from outside the District Court premises. According to the police case, the victims were held captive and released only after their families paid a ransom of Rs1.9 million (approximately USD 6,800). Panhwar and his associates were taken into custody following the incident. He was later released on bail, and the case remains pending in court.

The decision to reinstate Panhwar, especially while the case remains unresolved, has fueled criticism from residents and civil society groups. Many are pointing to possible political influence behind the move, suggesting that connections rather than qualifications are increasingly dictating appointments within the Sindh police force.

"Reinstating someone who is still facing serious charges sends the wrong message to the public," said one local community leader who requested anonymity due to safety concerns. "It undermines public confidence in the rule of law and reflects a broader trend of politicization in our institutions."

Calls are now growing for the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh to review and possibly reverse the appointment. Citizens argue that placing officers under a cloud of legal scrutiny in active duty roles, especially at the leadership level, not only risks operational credibility but also raises serious questions about institutional accountability.

While law enforcement agencies globally follow the principle of "innocent until proven guilty," critics argue that leadership roles in policing require a higher standard of integrity, particularly in a region where trust in law enforcement is already strained.

The public will be watching closely to see whether this case signals a one-off error in judgment or reflects a broader, more troubling trend in law enforcement practices influenced by political interests.