

## Supreme Judicial Council Dismisses Complaints Against CEC and ECP Members

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The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) has dismissed complaints filed against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja and two Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) members, Nisar Ahmad Durrani and Shah Muhammad Jatoi, ruling that the allegations lacked sufficient evidence to proceed.

The complaints, filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), included cases numbered 532/2021, 557/2022, and 563/2022. They alleged irregularities and misconduct during previous general elections. The SJC conducted hearings on November 8, 2024, and December 13, 2024, carefully reviewing the claims submitted by PTI. After thorough deliberation, the council concluded that there was no substantial proof to support further action against the CEC and the two ECP members.

In its ruling, the SJC emphasized that it holds exclusive constitutional authority to adjudicate cases of alleged misconduct involving the CEC and other members of the ECP. This decision effectively clears CEC Raja and his colleagues of all accusations and reaffirms the council's role as the only body empowered to evaluate such complaints under the Constitution.

The dismissal comes at a time of heightened political tensions regarding the electoral process in Pakistan. Opposition parties have repeatedly voiced concerns over the impartiality of the ECP, and the PTI's complaints formed part of broader efforts to challenge the handling of elections. Analysts note that these developments underline the importance of an independent and constitutionally backed mechanism for addressing allegations against electoral authorities.

Under Article 215 of the Constitution, a CEC or ECP member cannot be removed from office except through procedures outlined in Article 209, which governs the dismissal of judges. This provision highlights the importance of constitutional safeguards and the SJC's role in maintaining accountability without political interference. The council's ruling confirms that any effort to remove election commissioners must strictly follow the established legal framework.

CEC Raja, whose constitutional term has now concluded, will continue to serve until a successor is formally appointed. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has initiated consultations with Opposition Leader Omar Ayub regarding the appointment of a new CEC and two ECP members whose terms have also expired. The constitutional process requires both leaders to submit three names each for consideration. If the two sides cannot reach consensus, the matter is referred to a parliamentary committee for final decision. This procedure is designed to ensure broad-based agreement and maintain the independence of the electoral commission.

Observers suggest that the SJC's dismissal of the complaints may help stabilize political discourse and reaffirm public confidence in Pakistan's electoral institutions. The council's ruling demonstrates adherence to legal procedures and strengthens the framework of checks and balances surrounding election management.

As the country prepares for upcoming elections, the SJC's decision ensures that the ECP can continue its work without the immediate pressure of unresolved complaints. It also sets a precedent for how allegations against election officials are handled in line with constitutional provisions, reinforcing the independence and authority of electoral institutions.

Overall, the SJC's ruling underscores the importance of evidence-based adjudication, constitutional adherence, and the maintenance of institutional integrity within Pakistan's electoral system.