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## Three PTI Lawmakers Disqualified Due to May 9 Convictions

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The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) disqualified three Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers—Senator Ejaz Chaudhry, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Muhammad Ahmad Chattha, and Punjab Assembly Opposition Leader Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar—following their convictions in the May 9, 2023, riot cases. The decision has sparked accusations of political targeting, intensifying tensions between PTI and state institutions.

The ECP's ruling stems from 10-year prison sentences handed down by an anti-terrorism court (ATC) for the lawmakers' alleged roles in the violent protests that erupted after PTI founder Imran Khan's arrest on May 9, 2023. The riots saw attacks on military and government sites, including the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. The ECP cited Article 63(1)(h) of the Constitution, which bars convicted individuals from holding public office, as the basis for the disqualifications. "The anti-terrorism court has declared Ejaz Chaudhry guilty and sentenced him to ten years," the ECP notification stated, applying similar reasoning to Chattha and Bhachar, who represented NA-66 Wazirabad and PP-87 Mianwali, respectively.

PTI leadership, including Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, condemned the decision as a "blatant violation of justice." In a post on X, PTI's official account called the convictions "bogus," asserting that no evidence or witnesses supported the charges after two and a half years. "The judiciary has become a tool of a military junta," user @EngrRMHS posted, reflecting widespread sentiment among PTI supporters. The party plans to appeal the rulings in higher courts, with defense lawyer Burhan Moazzam noting inconsistencies, as six co-accused were acquitted under similar charges.

The disqualifications further erode PTI's political standing, already weakened by Khan's imprisonment and prior convictions. Analysts argue the state is systematically dismantling PTI's influence ahead of future elections, pointing to the timing and scale of the crackdown. With Pakistan facing economic strain and political polarization, such moves risk deepening public distrust in institutions, as PTI vows to fight what it calls a politically motivated purge.