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Legal Committee Demands Police Accountability in Shocking Murder of Young Domestic Worker

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A nine-member legal panel is calling for immediate disciplinary action against police officials allegedly involved in mishandling the murder investigation of 13-year-old Iqra, a domestic worker found dead under suspicious circumstances in Abbottabad. The committee's press briefing accused the local police of collusion, negligence, and manipulation of evidence, further fueling concerns about institutional decay and bias under the current administration.

The murder occurred on the night of 8th Muharram (Islamic calendar), when Iqra was found dead in the home of Shahid Latif in Habibullah Colony. His son, Haris Latif, was arrested as a primary suspect. Initially, Haris confessed before Judicial Magistrate-III but later withdrew his statement after meeting his lawyer, a reversal that the committee finds deeply suspicious, suggesting it wouldn't be possible without police cooperation.

At a press conference at the Abbottabad Press Club, several notable figures, including former district *nazim* (administrator) Sardar Sher Bahadur and advocate Ishaq Zakariya spoke out against the police's handling of the case. They accused senior officers, including the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Station House Officer (SHO), and the officer in charge of the Jinnahabad post, of protecting the accused rather than seeking justice for the victim.

The committee's claims were damning. They alleged the suspect received special treatment during his six-day remand, describing his time in custody as more of a "hospitality visit" than an interrogation. They say cold drinks were served to him, not questions. The suspect's statement, shifted under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), is seen as a significant procedural red flag.

What drew particular outrage was the fact that a lawyer was allowed to meet with the accused without first presenting a *vakalatnama* legal document granting the lawyer authority to represent a client. This, the committee emphasized, violates due process and raises questions about who within the department facilitated the meeting.

Even more alarming were accusations of tampering with Iqra's medical report. The committee asked why swift justice is seen in cases involving police personnel but remains elusive when it comes to poor citizens like Iqra. This perceived double standard is widening the gap between law enforcement and public trust.

Speakers at the conference issued a strong warning, stating, "Even if we have to take bullets to the chest, we won't back down." They emphasized that this case will not be allowed to fade quietly and promised to resist any attempt to shield the guilty. Their commitment, they said, is not only to Iqra but to the principle that no one, regardless of status, should be above the law.

As Haris Latif remains in judicial remand, the legal committee continues to demand accountability, urging the immediate removal of the police officials involved. The case has

become a litmus test for the system's integrity, especially under the current, increasingly criticized government, whose policies on law enforcement and justice have drawn skepticism from many corners.

Whether authorities will act transparently or fall back on political expedience remains to be seen. But for Iqra and the countless other marginalized victims, the outcome of this case could mark a turning point, or another missed opportunity for real reform.