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ECP Disqualifies PTI Leaders Over May 9 Riots

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The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has disqualified key opposition leaders from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, including Senate and National Assembly figures, following convictions linked to the May 9, 2023, riots, raising concerns about political stability.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has delivered a significant blow to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) by disqualifying nine lawmakers, including prominent opposition leaders, over their involvement in the violent May 9, 2023, riots. The disqualified include Omar Ayub Khan, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Senator Shibli Faraz, Senate Opposition Leader, and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) chief Sahibzada Hamid Raza. The ECP's decision, announced on August 5, 2025, follows

convictions by an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Faisalabad, which sentenced the lawmakers to 10 years in prison for their roles in the unrest. The disqualifications, enacted under Article 63(1)(h) of the Constitution, bar individuals convicted of offenses involving moral turpitude and sentenced to at least two years from holding public office.

The May 9 riots erupted after the arrest of PTI founder and former Prime Minister Imran Khan on corruption charges, prompting supporters to attack military and government installations, including Jinnah House and the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. The military labeled the events a “Black Day” and pursued prosecutions under the Army Act. The ATC’s July 31, 2025, verdict convicted 108 individuals, including PTI leaders, for vandalism and inciting violence. The ECP’s notification declared the lawmakers’ seats vacant, with by-elections to be scheduled.

PTI leaders have condemned the disqualifications as politically motivated, arguing they undermine democratic representation. Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, a PTI leader, warned that such actions threaten democracy itself, citing concerns over the fairness of political trials. Meanwhile, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar defended the court’s ruling, accusing PTI supporters of damaging state property and endangering national security. He emphasized Pakistan’s role as a bulwark against terrorism, framing the convictions as necessary for accountability.

This development exacerbates tensions between PTI and state institutions, especially as the party protests for Khan’s release and demands an audit of the February 2024 elections, which it claims were rigged. The disqualifications weaken PTI’s parliamentary presence, potentially reshaping Pakistan’s political landscape as by-elections loom.