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Baloch Families Protest Systematic Repression by Pakistani Forces Amid Rising Violence

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Dozens of Baloch families in Islamabad have entered their 11th day of protest, condemning the ongoing repression by Pakistani security forces in Balochistan. The sit-in demands the release of detained Baloch leaders and an end to enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings that have become commonplace in the restive province. Human rights organisations have repeatedly criticized Islamabad's heavy-handed tactics, which include unlawful arrests, intimidation, and violence against civilians.

The protest, centered near the Press Club in Islamabad, faces a strict police blockade and surveillance. According to the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), a prominent Baloch human rights group, access to the protest site is heavily restricted with buses, barbed wire, and blockades, even as elderly women and children suffer from heat exhaustion. The BYC reports that intelligence agencies, often accompanied by local police, have intensified harassment by profiling young male protesters, filming them without consent, and stalking families at their homes in attempts to force the demonstration to end.

Human rights watchdog Baloch Voice for Justice (BVJ) recently highlighted the forced disappearance of Muslim Dad Baloch, a philosophy student at Karachi University, abducted by Pakistani security forces on July 25. BVJ condemned this targeting of students based on their ethnic identity as a serious violation of human rights and academic freedom.

Similarly, Paank, the Human Rights Department of the Baloch National Movement (BNM), condemned the enforced disappearances of Abdul Rehman from Barkan and Imran Baloch from the Kech district, abducted by the Pakistan Army in mid-June and July. Both men remain missing, with no official acknowledgment of their detention.

Adding to the grim toll, BYC reported the extrajudicial killing of Mazar Baloch from the Awaran district. Previously detained and tortured for five years after a 2015 disappearance, Mazar was released in 2020 but continued to face harassment and surveillance by Pakistani forces. On July 21, after being summoned to the Frontier Corps headquarters in Mashkai, he was abducted again and later found dead, allegedly at the hands of state-backed death squads operating with the tacit approval of Pakistan's military.

This wave of repression in Balochistan, a province rich in natural resources but plagued by insurgency and political unrest, has been consistently condemned by multiple human rights organisations. These groups accuse Pakistani forces of a pattern involving violent raids, unlawful detentions, "kill and dump" tactics, use of the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance to silence dissent, and fabricating police cases against Baloch activists.

The situation remains tense as the Islamabad protest continues, highlighting the unresolved human rights crisis in Balochistan under Pakistan's security apparatus, which remains unaccountable to both national and international legal standards.