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Baloch Protesters in Islamabad Brace for Police Crackdown on Sit-In

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The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) continued its sit-in outside the National Press Club (NPC) in Islamabad on July 19, 2025, for the fourth day, fearing an imminent police crackdown as authorities sealed off roads with barbed wire. The protesters, including women, children, and elderly, demand the release of detained BYC leaders and an end to enforced disappearances in Balochistan, highlighting Pakistan's struggle to balance security and civil liberties.

The BYC's sit-in, which began on June 16, follows the detention of its leader, Dr. Mahrang Baloch, and others, remanded by a Quetta anti-terrorism court for 15 days on charges of attacking a hospital and inciting violence. Protesters, enduring scorching heat without tents, face mounting pressure as police deploy buses and riot gear, signaling a potential forcible removal. "We're peaceful, yet they're ready to drag us back to Balochistan," a protester told Dawn, expressing fears of arrest. Nadia Baloch, Mahrang's sister, posted on X, "Riot police have surrounded the NPC with barbed wire, threatening our elders and children," urging civil society to intervene.

Former senator Mushtaq Ahmed, present at the protest, condemned the heavy police presence, stating, "They're demonstrating for their right to live and a fair trial under Article 10A," as reported by Dawn. He criticized road closures, arguing, "This creates fear, not solutions." The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) echoed concerns, demanding authorities respect the right to peaceful assembly. Former senator Farhatullah Babar highlighted Balochistan's core issues—lack of representative governance and enforced disappearances—urging dialogue over suppression.