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Pakistan's Deepening Human Rights Crisis Amid Political Unrest

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Pakistan is under mounting international scrutiny as its ongoing political crisis unfolds alongside serious human rights issues. Since the February 2025 elections, clashes between security forces and supporters of the former Prime Minister Imran Khan's PTI party have resulted in mass arrests and accusations of excessive force.

Police have arrested more than 240 opposition activists during rallies marking the second anniversary of Khan's arrest. Protesters were demanding his release, and law enforcement used batons and tear gas to disperse crowds in cities including Lahore and Karachi. Authorities had banned public gatherings in Islamabad and Rawalpindi ahead of the demonstrations.

Human rights organizations have expressed concern over the use of excessive force against PTI protests, stating that hundreds of party members were arrested. These groups emphasized the need for authorities to uphold the right to peaceful protest and to minimize the use of force.



Media freedoms are also under pressure. Reports indicate that Pakistan has continued to restrict media and civil society. Journalists face harassment and detention, while censorship of critical voices is becoming more common. A Senate bill passed in early 2025 greatly expanded government authority to regulate social media content. Critics argue the legislation poses a serious threat to the freedom of expression.

Pakistan is facing its worst recent economic crisis, with widespread inflation and recovery from the 2022 floods still lagging. Rising living costs are compromising citizens' rights to health, food, and adequate living standards. The post-flood rehabilitation program in Sindh, including land title distribution and housing assistance, is ongoing, and millions of beneficiaries remain eligible for assistance.

The judiciary has experienced growing pressure amid the turmoil. While the Supreme Court has ordered the release of some detainees, lower courts continue to process numerous cases under counterterrorism laws.

Observers have raised concerns that these laws are sometimes used against peaceful protesters.

International reaction has intensified. The United Nations has called for de-escalation and independent investigations into allegations of excessive force. Rights groups have urged a transparent investigation into protest-related injuries and deaths, citing a pattern of intolerance toward peaceful assembly.

As Pakistan's political instability intersects with human rights and humanitarian concerns, the situation continues to draw global attention. The unfolding events raise serious questions about the nation's ability to protect civil liberties while maintaining public order.

