

OpenVoiceNews Pakistan

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

Anti-Terror Court Hands Down Tough Sentences to PTI Leaders in May 9 Crackdown

July 24, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has sentenced over 35 senior leaders and supporters of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), the political party of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, to 10 years in prison for their alleged roles in the May 9, 2023 protests. The sweeping verdict, announced on

Tuesday, is being widely criticized as a politically charged move aimed at silencing opposition voices amid a deepening democratic crisis.

The sentenced individuals include prominent PTI figures such as Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar, the opposition leader in the Punjab Provincial Assembly, and sitting lawmakers Ahmed Chattha and Bilal Ejaz. Among the most high-profile cases is Dr Yasmin Rashid, a 76-year-old senior PTI leader and former provincial health minister, who has been handed a decade-long prison term despite her ongoing battle with cancer. Her prosecution has triggered sharp criticism from human rights advocates and civil society groups, who argue that her age and health status were disregarded in what appears to be an act of political retribution.

These convictions are tied to the violent demonstrations that broke out across the country on May 9 last year, following the brief arrest of Imran Khan. The protests saw state buildings and military facilities targeted, an unprecedented development in Pakistan where criticism of the military has historically been met with forceful suppression. Authorities labelled the unrest a coordinated attack on national security and launched an aggressive crackdown against PTI, detaining hundreds of its members and supporters. While the state insists the law is being applied impartially, the timing and scale of the sentencing raise serious questions about the erosion of political freedoms.

The verdict represents more than just legal action; it reflects a deepening divide in Pakistan's political landscape, where opposition leaders face growing constraints under the guise of national security. By resorting to anti-terror legislation against politicians and civilians alike, the state risks undermining public confidence in judicial fairness and constitutional protections. As Pakistan navigates through political turbulence and

economic uncertainty, such heavy-handed tactics against dissent threaten to derail any hope of national reconciliation. Instead of silencing critics, the ruling only serves to highlight the need for a transparent and fair political process where justice is not wielded as a weapon.

