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## IHC Orders Negotiated End to NPC Protests

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The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has instructed city authorities to resolve the ongoing protest outside the National Press Club (NPC) through negotiations. Chief Justice Sardar Sarfraz Dogar issued the directive during a hearing on Monday, urging Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon to engage protestors in dialogue to clear the area peacefully.

The order came in response to a petition filed by a local fuel station owner, who reported financial losses caused by prolonged road closures

linked to the protest. The demonstrators, reportedly from the Baloch Youth Council, have occupied streets near the NPC for several days, affecting traffic and nearby businesses.

Justice Dogar questioned why officials allowed road blockades without legal clearance. Advocate General Ayyaz Shaukat admitted that the demonstration had no official permit, acknowledging that protestors returned repeatedly despite being temporarily dispersed by police.

The IHC emphasized the need to uphold the right to peaceful assembly without infringing on public rights. “Citizens must be allowed to conduct business without disruption,” Justice Dogar noted, stressing the importance of maintaining both civic freedoms and social order.



Legal observers say the case highlights the challenge of balancing constitutional rights with law enforcement in Pakistan’s capital. The area around the NPC is often used for demonstrations due to its proximity to government offices, raising concerns over public access and security.

Instead of authorizing immediate removal, the court chose to prioritize negotiation. This reflects a broader judicial trend of encouraging dialogue in sensitive civil rights cases, especially after past incidents involving aggressive enforcement tactics.

Deputy Commissioner Memon has now been tasked with initiating discussions to end the protest without conflict. The result could set a precedent for how similar protests are handled in Islamabad and other major cities going forward.

As peaceful assembly becomes a more prominent feature of civic expression in Pakistan, the IHC’s ruling underscores the importance of

protecting both individual rights and public welfare. Whether negotiations succeed remains to be seen, but the court's intervention signals a cautious and rights-respecting approach to protest management.

