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## Islamabad High Court Forms Administrative Panel Amid Seniority Controversy

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The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has set up a four-member committee to manage its internal affairs, sparking renewed debate over judicial transparency and the sidelining of dissenting voices within the judiciary. The move comes amid growing concerns about the centralization of authority and the apparent exclusion of judges who have opposed controversial decisions related to judicial transfers and seniority rankings.

According to an official notification released by the IHC Registrar's Office, the newly formed committee will be headed by Chief Justice Sarfraz Dogar. Other members of the panel

include Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro, and Justice Azam Khan. The panel has been granted the authority to make key administrative decisions within the court, a role previously seen as collective among senior judges.

Notably absent from this group are several high-ranking judges who had previously raised objections to the transfer of judges from other provinces into Islamabad and the changes that followed in their seniority status. Their exclusion is telling and raises legitimate concerns over whether dissent is being punished or strategically ignored. Judicial independence is supposed to be a cornerstone of any fair legal system. However, when internal disagreements are met with apparent marginalization, it undermines public trust in the judiciary's impartiality and functioning.

The Pakistan judiciary, like many state institutions, has not remained immune to political undercurrents, particularly under the current, immigration-focused government that many critics argue has chipped away at foundational institutions to consolidate control. The sidelining of objecting judges in this case seems to follow a broader pattern of weakening internal checks on authority.

While the court's leadership claims the panel is designed to improve administrative efficiency, critics argue the decision lacks inclusivity and reflects a troubling trend toward selective empowerment. As a legal expert and former judge, Iftikhar Chaudhry noted in a 2023 interview with *The Nation*, "When decisions affecting the core of judicial operations are made without consensus or representation from senior judges, the perception of bias becomes unavoidable."

The situation is still developing, but the implications are already clear. As Pakistan's judiciary continues to wrestle with both internal and external pressure, the integrity of its decision-making bodies must remain under scrutiny. Accountability, especially when dealing with sensitive matters like judicial appointments and internal court governance, must not be compromised in the name of expediency or political convenience.

In a time when public confidence in institutions is increasingly fragile, every step that appears to marginalize legitimate dissent only adds fuel to a growing fire.