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IHC Sends Contempt Notices to Shehbaz, Cabinet Over Dr Aafia Case

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On July 21, 2025, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) issued contempt notices to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his federal cabinet for failing to comply with court orders regarding the case of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani neuroscientist imprisoned in the United States. The court demanded a response within two weeks, highlighting government inaction on the matter.

The IHC bench, led by Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, expressed frustration over the government's refusal to submit a report detailing efforts to secure Dr. Aafia's release, provide health updates, or arrange repatriation from the US prison where she is serving an 86-year sentence for attempted murder charges dating back to 2010. "I am issuing a contempt notice to every cabinet member," Justice Ejaz stated, as reported by *Geo News*, accusing the government of obstructing the course of justice. The judge also criticized administrative interference, noting that the case was removed from the court's schedule without his consent, suggesting possible manipulation involving the Chief Justice's office.

The case, initiated by Dr. Aafia's sister Dr. Fauzia Siddiqui, has attracted significant public attention in Pakistan, with many viewing the conviction as controversial. The government's limited involvement in her US legal matters, along with an appeal filed in the Supreme Court challenging the IHC's orders, has led to accusations of negligence. Justice Ejaz warned that such disregard undermines the judiciary's authority and vowed to uphold the court's dignity.

This legal confrontation reflects broader tensions between Pakistan's judiciary and executive branches. The IHC's directive for the cabinet to respond promptly after the court holidays signals a firm judicial stance against perceived government delays. As public scrutiny grows, the case presents a critical test of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government's commitment to transparency and accountability in a sensitive and high-profile matter.