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PTI Sets Protest Strategy

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Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by former Prime Minister Imran Khan, currently imprisoned in Adiala Jail, has announced a coordinated protest plan to demand his release and challenge the government's legitimacy. This article examines PTI's strategy, the government's crackdown, and the escalating tensions fueling public unrest in Pakistan.

On November 13, 2024, Imran Khan, from Adiala Jail, issued a "final call" for a nationwide protest on November 24, rallying supporters of PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) to converge on Islamabad's D-Chowk. Khan criticized the Twenty-sixth Amendment, alleging it weakens judicial independence and accused the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government of electoral fraud in the 2024 elections. His sister, Aleema Khanum, amplified his message, urging mass participation. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief

Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, leading a convoy from Peshawar, declared readiness for the “ultimate sacrifice,” framing the protest as a fight against authoritarianism. PTI’s plan included multiple convoys, with Bushra Bibi, Khan’s wife, leading thousands into the capital, defying security barriers.

The government’s response was severe. Islamabad was locked down with shipping containers blocking highways, mobile internet services were suspended, and schools closed. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi warned of arrests for any Red Zone breaches, where key institutions like Parliament reside. PTI’s 70,000-strong convoy of supporters faced tear gas and rubber bullets, resulting in six deaths, including four security personnel, on November 26. Amnesty International condemned the Amnesty International criticized the security response, citing concerns over excessive force and mass detentions of nearly 1,000 PTI supporters.

PTI’s resilience stems from Khan’s enduring popularity, despite over 150 criminal charges, which the party deems politically motivated. Critics argue the PML-N, backed by the military, fears Khan’s influence after PTI-backed independents won significant seats in 2024. The government’s tactics internet blackouts, journalist arrests, and military deployment, reflect desperation to suppress dissent. Former PM Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, a PML-N critic, questioned the state’s use of lethal force, noting, “How can you justify shooting at protesters?”

The protests highlight Pakistan’s deepening divide. PTI’s strategy leverages public discontent over economic woes and perceived judicial overreach, but the government’s heavy-handedness risks further unrest. With global diaspora protests and international criticism mounting, Pakistan faces a volatile future.