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PTI's Bukhari Claims 2024 Pakistan Elections Rigged to Suppress Millions

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Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Syed Zulfikar Bukhari testified before the United States Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on July 16, 2025, claiming that Pakistan's February 8, 2024, general elections were "engineered to silence millions" through systematic rigging tactics. Bukhari, a former aide to ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan, described the polls as the "most brutally rigged in Pakistan's history," highlighting

alleged manipulation that targeted PTI's electoral symbols, excluded candidates, and suppressed campaigns.

He alleged actions included the removal of PTI's cricket bat symbol, candidate disqualifications, bans on rallies, and destruction of banners. According to Bukhari, vote tallies were manipulated within 24 to 72 hours after polling, referencing one strong claim that a constituency with 400 registered voters recorded 450,000 votes in final Form-47 documents. He further stated that PTI-affiliated independent candidates won between 170 and 180 seats, but had their mandate stolen, enabling a coalition led by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

These assertions align with broader concerns about electoral integrity. On February 17, 2024, Liaquat Ali Chattha, then Rawalpindi Division commissioner, admitted tampering with the results in 13 National Assembly constituencies reportedly changing outcomes by margins of up to 70,000 votes per seat before resigning. His confession sparked widespread protests. Although the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) denied the allegations and Chattha later retracted his confession, several international observers called for independent investigations into the fairness of the vote.

Human rights groups also condemned the shutdown of mobile and internet services on election day, which reportedly hindered voter coordination and monitoring by polling agents. PTI has called for a judicial inquiry, demanding a forensic review of Form-45 and Form-47 records to determine the scale of alleged manipulation.

Sharif's government, while highlighting voter turnout as a success, faces criticism from analysts who warn that focusing solely on economic recovery without addressing democratic concerns may deepen public distrust. With unresolved rigging allegations and political tensions still high, Pakistan's democratic credibility remains at a critical juncture.