

## THE RIGHT A FAIR AND PUBLIC HEARING IN PAKISTAN

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### **Abstract**

*The rule of law, equality, and access to fair legal proceedings are all jeopardized by the many systemic issues facing Pakistan's justice system. This article examines 23 important problems that collectively impede the administration of justice, starting with persistent court delays that undermine public confidence and ending with pervasive gender bias in courtrooms. The article critically examines the various obstacles, such as political meddling, ignorance of the law, corruption, and police misconduct, drawing on reputable reports from groups like the International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, UNDP, Human Rights Watch, and UN Women. Particular focus is placed on systemic flaws like uneven enforcement of the law, opaque bail decisions, and the abuse of anti-terrorism legislation against marginalized groups and political dissidents. The article also looks at hidden barriers that disproportionately affect women, minorities, and economically disadvantaged groups, such as language barriers, the high costs of litigation, and insufficient legal aid systems. The presumption of innocence and the integrity of legal procedures are also examined in relation to the growing significance of media sensationalism and the opacity of military trials. Selective law enforcement tactics and gender-based discrimination highlight the pressing need for extensive reforms. The article attempts to highlight both the symptoms and the systemic causes of Pakistan's judicial crisis by combining information from reliable sources. In the end, it makes the case that significant changes are necessary to create a genuinely just and effective justice system, ranging from campaigns to educate people about their legal rights to procedural transparency. Pakistan's judiciary runs the risk of escalating injustice rather than reducing it in the absence of audacious and persistent efforts.*

**Keywords:** Human Rights, justice system, gender bias in courtrooms, Pakistan's legal system

### **Introduction**

Any democratic society is supported by the judiciary, which upholds the rule of law and protects citizens' rights. However, Pakistan's legal system suffers from numerous structural and systemic problems that compromise its effectiveness. Public trust in the legal system is significantly eroded by persistent judicial delays, extensive political meddling, and pervasive corruption. Access to justice is disproportionately hampered for marginalized groups, especially minorities, women, and the impoverished. Inequality is further entrenched by inadequate legal aid, hidden litigation costs, and language barriers. The public's mistrust of judicial institutions is made worse by the abuse of anti-terrorism legislation and the opaqueness of military trials. Furthermore, media sensationalism and gender bias skew the neutrality and fairness standards that the judiciary is expected to maintain. Pakistan's failure to align its legal practices with international human rights standards has come under increased international criticism. Twenty major problems plaguing Pakistan's judicial system are thoroughly examined in this article. It critically investigates the underlying causes and wider ramifications of these issues, drawing on expert reports and empirical data. By doing this, it seeks to suggest doable changes that will advance the development of a justice system that is more open, accessible, and equitable.

### **1. Pakistan's Legal System's Judicial Delays**

The effectiveness of Pakistan's legal system is severely harmed by the widespread problem of judicial delays. A backlog of court cases, especially those pertaining to civil and criminal matters, can drag on for years, paralyzing the judiciary. The International Commission of Jurists (2022) claims that these hold-ups undermine the public's confidence in the legal system and jeopardize

the right to a prompt and equitable trial. These delays are caused by a number of things, such as a lack of judges, antiquated case management practices, frequent adjournments, and insufficient monitoring systems. Administrative inefficiencies hinder speedy resolutions, and courts are frequently overburdened with pending cases. The issue is further made worse by convoluted legal procedures and lax enforcement of court deadlines. Delays in justice cause financial burdens and emotional distress for citizens, particularly for marginalized groups. The issue is so pervasive that it even causes lengthy delays in Supreme Court cases. Strict scheduling procedures, improving case tracking technologies, investing in court infrastructure, and reforming the judicial appointment procedures have all been recognized as crucial steps in resolving the problem. Judicial delays will continue to deprive Pakistanis of their basic right to justice in the absence of comprehensive reforms.

## **2. The impact of politics on the judiciary**

Political meddling in court cases continues to be a serious issue in Pakistan, undermining the courts' impartiality. Judges are regularly subject to direct or indirect pressure from influential political figures and institutions, according to the International Crisis Group (2016). Judicial independence is weakened as a result of this influence, which shows up as calculated appointments, promotions, and even threats of dismissal. Fairness and transparency are called into question by high-profile cases involving political elites that frequently exhibit biased decisions or excessive delays. Public trust has been further eroded by political patronage that has permeated the judicial appointment process. Furthermore, the absence of a merit-based system for judicial elevation leads to partiality and lowers the standard of jurisprudence. This political involvement affects the public's trust in democratic institutions in addition to warping the judiciary's function as an impartial arbiter. Expert's advice creating an independent Judicial Commission to make appointments and guaranteeing the judiciary's administrative and financial independence from the executive branch. Pakistan can only aspire to a genuinely fair and esteemed legal system by preserving judicial independence.

## **3. Inability of the Poor to Access Justice**

In Pakistan, access to justice is greatly impacted by economic inequality. When seeking legal redress, people from low-income backgrounds face many obstacles, according to the UNDP Pakistan (2012) report. The impoverished are essentially denied their constitutional rights because of the prohibitive environment created by court fees, attorney costs, transportation expenses, and delays. Furthermore, intimidation from opposing parties, procedural complexity, and ignorance of legal rights deter marginalized groups from seeking legal action. Rural communities, minorities, and women are disproportionately impacted. Additionally, the report highlights how state-sponsored legal aid programs are woefully underfunded, frequently inaccessible to those who need them most, and egregiously inadequate. Ineffective legal counsel increases the likelihood that underprivileged litigants will experience unfair results. To close this gap, local NGOs and international development organizations have pushed for streamlined court processes, public legal awareness initiatives, and the extension of legal aid services. However, access to justice for the poor will continue to be an unrealized ideal in Pakistan's legal system in the absence of consistent governmental commitment and systemic reforms.

## **4. Observe coercion and intimidation**

In Pakistan, witness coercion and intimidation pose significant barriers to fair trials. Amnesty International (2020) claims that, especially in high-profile criminal cases, witnesses are regularly the targets of threats, harassment, and even violence. Strong defendants or criminal organizations can easily manipulate testimonies in the absence of a strong and enforced witness protection framework, which frequently results in acquittals for "lack of evidence." Many people are deterred from coming forward out of fear for their personal safety, and others will retract their statements under duress. Pakistan has passed laws pertaining to witness protection, but their application is inconsistent and generally ineffectual. Most witness protection programs are either improperly coordinated between judicial and law enforcement entities or have insufficient funding. In addition to undermining the fairness of individual trials, witness vulnerability deters the public from participating in criminal justice procedures. Restoring trust in the legal system and protecting the safety and dignity of those who testify require the establishment of extensive, independently run, and fully funded witness protection programs.

### **5. The legal system's corruption**

The pursuit of justice is seriously jeopardized by the pervasive corruption that still exists in Pakistan's legal and judicial systems. According to Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index, Pakistan's judicial integrity has regressed, which is consistent with general worries about bribery, nepotism, and favoritism in the legal system. From case registration to final adjudication, bribery demands are commonplace for litigants, particularly those from lower socioeconomic strata. Clerical employees are not the only people accused of corruption; accusations have also been made against judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement personnel. Such actions undermine public trust in the legal system in addition to skewing case outcomes. The very idea of the rule of law can be undermined by financial inducements, which can speed up hearings, sway court rulings, and protect the guilty. Stricter accountability procedures, open judicial appointments, independent oversight organizations, and thorough internal oversight of judicial behavior are among the proposed reforms. The legitimacy of Pakistan's entire legal system will continue to be questioned both domestically and internationally in the absence of real anti-corruption initiatives.

### **6. Bail Decisions Are Not Transparent**

Those seeking equitable pre-trial release face challenges due to Pakistan's inconsistent and deeply opaque bail system. Human Rights watch (2020) points out that bail rulings frequently seem capricious and are largely impacted by the accused's sociopolitical standing rather than impartial legal standards. While marginalized and economically disadvantaged defendants stay behind bars for long periods of time, those with wealth or political connections are much more likely to get bail quickly. An opaque and unaccountable process results from judicial officers' frequent failure to give specific justifications for granting or refusing bail. Furthermore, the impression of injustice is exacerbated by differences among courts, provinces, and judges. Unrepresented or inadequately represented litigants are further perplexed by the intricacy of bail laws and procedural requirements. The presumption of innocence and the right to liberty are two basic human rights that critics claim are frequently violated by Pakistan's bail policies. It is suggested that clear and publicly available bail guidelines be established, that written explanations for bail decisions be required, and that judicial training be improved. The current bail system runs the risk of sustaining systemic discrimination and eroding public confidence in the legal system if it is not more transparent and consistent.

## 7. Unfair Application of Anti-Terrorism Legislation

Pakistan's anti-terrorism laws, which were first put in place to deal with real threats, are increasingly being used for objectives that are very different from counterterrorism. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2019), these laws are frequently applied to activists, political dissenters, and regular criminal cases rather than real terror suspects. Authorities can prosecute people for crimes that should typically be covered by ordinary criminal law because of the Anti-Terrorism Act's unduly broad definitions. Trials in anti-terrorism courts are usually accelerated, with few protections against judicial abuse, a restricted right to a fair trial, and few chances to present evidence. In addition to endangering individual liberties, the abuse of anti-terror legislation undermines the credibility of sincere counterterrorism initiatives. Human rights activists and analysts stress how urgently the anti-terror legal system needs to be changed to limit its application to serious crimes and guarantee adherence to international fair trial norms. The judiciary will continue to support human rights abuses under the pretense of national security unless the government reconsiders how these laws are applied.

## 8. Misconduct by Police and False Charges

In Pakistan, systematic police misconduct continues to be a significant barrier to justice. Law enforcement organizations are commonly accused of committing acts such as torture, extortion, arbitrary arrests, and filing false charges in order to influence court decisions (Amnesty International, 2021). Such abuses disproportionately target the poor and politically marginalized. Falsified evidence, forced confessions, and a flagrant disregard for due process rights are commonplace in investigations. Furthermore, there are insufficient procedures for holding police officers accountable, and internal investigations hardly ever result in significant repercussions. Wrongful convictions, overcrowding in prisons, and public mistrust of the criminal justice system are all greatly exacerbated by police misconduct. Political opposition and systemic inertia have frequently hampered attempts to implement police reforms, which have been haphazard. Experts support the creation of efficient complaint procedures for victims of police abuse, independent civilian oversight organizations, and thorough retraining programs with a human rights focus. Restoring trust in state institutions and bolstering the rule of law depend on addressing police misconduct.

## 9. Evidence Suppression

A common and extremely concerning occurrence in Pakistani legal proceedings is the suppression or tampering of evidence. Evidence manipulation by police, prosecutors, and even defense lawyers frequently distorts trial results, resulting in erroneous acquittals or convictions, according to the International Commission of Jurists (2019). Common tactics include pressuring witnesses to change their statements, destroying exculpatory evidence, and planting false evidence. These actions compromise the integrity of the legal system and essentially violate the right to a fair trial. Such practices are made possible by the lack of rigorous forensic procedures and impartial investigation tools. A culture of impunity is fostered by courts' frequent failure to punish those who tamper with evidence. Experts advise establishing independent forensic institutions, securing the chain-of-custody for evidence using contemporary technology, and closely monitoring the investigative process by the judiciary in order to overcome this difficulty. Pakistan can only hope to provide fair and trustworthy justice by upholding the integrity of the evidence.

## 10. Sensationalism and Media Influence in Court Cases

Sensationalism in the Pakistani media has a growing impact on court decisions, frequently at the expense of judicial impartiality. Extensive, slanted media coverage of ongoing trials can put



pressure on prosecutors, judges, and defendants alike, according to Freedom Network Pakistan (2021). The presumption of innocence is often undermined, and jury or judicial impartiality is impacted by media trials, which frequently result in the prejudgment of cases. Particularly high-profile criminal cases are vulnerable to media sensationalism, where news cycles are dominated by conjecture and unsubstantiated information. Furthermore, selective reporting has the potential to skew public opinion and exacerbate political and social unrest. This issue is made worse by the media industry's lack of explicit ethical standards and enforcement systems. Legal professionals emphasize the significance of encouraging responsible journalism, regulating media behavior during ongoing trials, and bolstering the judiciary's independence from public opinion. The integrity of Pakistani court proceedings would be preserved by putting in place media codes of conduct tailored to sub Judie cases .

### **11. Public Ignorance of Legal Rights**

The general lack of public knowledge about legal rights and available remedies is one of the major obstacles to justice in Pakistan. A sizable section of the populace is still ignorant of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution and other legal safeguards, according to the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (2018). This disparity is even more pronounced among women, rural communities, and marginalized groups, who frequently become victims of exploitation because they are unaware of their legal options. The report highlights how the general public is further alienated by the technical and complicated nature of legal language, which hinders their ability to obtain meaningful access to justice. Campaigns for legal literacy are still few and mostly concentrated in cities, which significantly disadvantages rural communities. Furthermore, legal knowledge is not widely available from a young age due to the limited integration of human rights education into formal schooling systems. To close this information gap, experts advise launching extensive public awareness campaigns, translating and simplifying important legal documents, and working with civil society organizations. Access to justice will continue to be a distant dream for Pakistan's general populace unless citizens are empowered via education.

### **12. Pakistan's legal system has been criticized internationally.**

The international community has heavily criticized Pakistan's legal system, especially in regard to judicial inefficiency and human rights abuses. Numerous issues are brought to light in the U.S. Department of State's 2022 Human Rights Report on Pakistan, such as enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, a lack of judicial independence, and judicial corruption. The selective application of laws and the judiciary's susceptibility to outside influences, such as political pressure and military meddling, have drawn criticism from international watchdogs. These issues impact foreign investments, development assistance, and diplomatic ties in addition to damaging Pakistan's reputation abroad. The report emphasizes that systemic problems, not isolated incidents, are the reason why journalists, minority groups, and political dissidents are not protected. The significance of maintaining judicial independence, strengthening accountability systems, and bringing national laws into compliance with international human rights standards has been underlined in calls for reform. Ignoring these criticisms could further isolate Pakistan on the international scene and prolong internal unrest.

### **13. Military Trials' Secrecy**

There are significant concerns regarding openness, equity, and adherence to international legal norms regarding the way military trials are conducted in Pakistan. According to Human Rights Watch (2023), military courts frequently function in secret, depriving defendants of fundamental procedural rights like the right to appeal, open hearings, and access to legal representation. Human

rights organizations are alarmed by the military courts' expansion of their jurisdiction into civilian cases, which were first reinstated to expedite the handling of terrorism-related cases. The identities of those found guilty and the specifics of the charges are often kept secret, and military tribunal verdicts are frequently swift and subject to little public scrutiny. This opacity has been accused of weakening the authority of civilian judicial institutions and eroding public trust in the rule of law. Legal experts and activists support enhancing the ability of regular criminal courts to handle complex security cases and call for the total elimination of military trials for civilians. A legitimate and trustworthy legal system depends on upholding due process and transparency.

#### **14. Postponed Justice**

The saying "justice delayed is justice denied" frequently captures the phenomenon of delayed justice and nowhere is this truer than in Pakistan. According to the International Commission of Jurists (2021), case backlogs, a lack of judicial staff, ineffective procedures, and frequent adjournments are some of the systemic problems that lead to protracted litigation. As they wait years or even decades for their cases to be resolved, litigants face psychological, financial, and emotional challenges. Vulnerable groups are especially hard hit because they don't have the funds to fight protracted legal battles. Delays are made worse by the culture of routine case postponements, which litigants occasionally intentionally use to irritate opponents. These actions erode public trust in the legal system and fuel ideas of unfairness and inequality. Mandatory time limits for various stages of proceedings, more judicial appointments, case management systems, and process streamlining through technology integration are some of the proposed reforms. In the absence of bold and persistent reforms, Pakistan's legal system will continue to suffer from delayed justice, depriving citizens of prompt redress.

#### **15. Justice's Hidden Costs**

Although the most obvious cost of obtaining justice is legal fees, the average Pakistani's access is severely limited by a number of hidden costs. These hidden costs are highlighted by the UNDP Pakistan (2019). These include lost wages from frequent court appearances, transportation costs to court locations, bribery of court employees for document processing, and the psychological effects of protracted litigation. Many people are deterred from starting legal proceedings because the total cost of the legal process exceeds the possible rewards of seeking justice. Systemic barriers to equitable justice are created by these hidden costs, which disproportionately affect lower-income groups, women, and those living in rural areas. These difficulties are further compounded by the lack of institutional support systems and efficient pro bono legal aid. The report suggests making legal procedures simpler, expanding free legal aid services, and giving vulnerable litigants financial support. The goal of universal access to justice in Pakistan will remain unattainable until these hidden costs are recognized and resolved.

#### **16. Language Barriers in Court Cases**

In Pakistan, language barriers are a significant but frequently disregarded barrier to just legal proceedings. The majority of court proceedings are held in English or Urdu, which many rural residents, members of ethnic minorities, and those with little education do not fully understand, according to the Open Society Foundations (2018). Because of this, parties to a case frequently lack the understanding necessary to comprehend the legal arguments, court orders, or procedural steps that directly affect their rights. This issue is made worse using technical legalese, which makes the environment intimidating and alienating for regular litigants. Despite the Constitution's mandate to support provincial languages, the judiciary does little to put this into practice. Vulnerable groups are disproportionately disadvantaged when linguistic diversity is not

accommodated, which prevents them from effectively participating in legal proceedings. Experts support the simplification of legal documents, the use of local languages in lower courts, and the provision of translation services. A fair trial and equality before the law depend on bridging the language barrier, which is more than just an administrative task.

### **17. Discrimination Based on Gender in Legal Proceedings**

The legal system in Pakistan is still rife with gender-based discrimination, which hinders women's access to and pursuit of justice. Women encounter many obstacles, such as patriarchal legal interpretations, a dearth of female judges, and prejudiced attitudes from law enforcement officials, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2020). When trying to report crimes or pursue legal action, victims of gender-based violence such as sexual assault or domestic abuse frequently run into procedural obstacles, victim-blaming, and skepticism. In certain cases, honor-based cultural norms and social pressures discourage women from even contacting the legal system. The report also notes that these problems are made worse by discriminatory laws and legal loopholes, which give female litigants an unfair advantage. Revision of discriminatory legal provisions, the appointment of more female judges, and gender-sensitization training for judicial officers are among the proposed reforms. In order to advance equality and strengthen the fundamental rights protected by Pakistan's Constitution, it is imperative that gender bias in the judiciary be eradicated.

### **18. Insufficient Legal Aid Provisions**

Pakistan's legal aid system is still woefully insufficient, even despite constitutional guarantees of equality before the law. According to the International Legal Foundation (2020), the majority of impoverished defendants do not have access to prompt, qualified legal counsel. Those most in need cannot typically access state-provided legal aid mechanisms because they are chronically underfunded and poorly coordinated. Because of this, defendants frequently have to deal with difficult legal proceedings without legal counsel, which can result in unfair outcomes like erroneous convictions or excessive sentences. The great majority of Pakistanis cannot afford private legal representation, which results in a two-tiered legal system where only the wealthy can successfully defend their rights. NGOs and legal aid organizations try to close this gap, but institutional resistance and a lack of funding hinder their progress. Experts advise requiring the assignment of qualified defense attorneys in criminal cases, creating an independent national legal aid authority with adequate funding, and incorporating legal aid into larger judicial reforms. To guarantee that justice is not a luxury enjoyed by a select few, legal aid services must be strengthened.

### **19. Unreliable Law Enforcement**

The impression of selective justice in Pakistan is greatly influenced by the uneven application of the law. Laws are frequently applied differently depending on the location, socioeconomic status, and political affiliation, according to Amnesty International (2022). While marginalized groups suffer the full brunt of legal sanctions, powerful individuals often avoid accountability. The main causes of this discrepancy are political influence, administrative ineptitude, and corruption. In addition, conflicting court decisions on related matters erode the legitimacy of judicial institutions and produce legal ambiguity. Particularly noteworthy are disparities in how anti-terrorism laws, labor rights protections, and blasphemy laws are applied. The report highlights how a culture of impunity is fostered, and the rule of law is undermined by selective application of the law. To address these systemic issues, comprehensive legal reforms, consistent training for judicial officers, rigorous judicial standards enforcement, and open accountability procedures are essential. All

people must be treated equally under a truly just legal system, regardless of their social standing, financial situation, or political clout.

## **20. Bias Against Women in the Legal System**

Women's access to justice is still severely hampered by gender bias in Pakistan's legal system. Gender stereotypes and deeply rooted social norms frequently permeate courtroom proceedings, impacting the conduct of judges, attorneys, and law enforcement personnel (UN Women Pakistan, 2021). Condescension, incredulity, or even outright hostility are commonplace for female plaintiffs and defendants. Women who seek legal redress may become secondary victims because of gender bias, which impacts both case outcomes and the procedural experience. Cases involving gender-based violence, inheritance disputes, and family law are where this bias is most noticeable. Systemic change is still progressing slowly, even with the appointment of female judges and the creation of specialized courts. In order to combat gender bias in courts, UN Women advises implementing formal codes of conduct, implementing gender-responsive training programs, and keeping an eye on judicial decision-making trends to spot and address discriminatory practices. In order to establish an inclusive, just, and equitable justice system in Pakistan, gender bias must be eradicated.

## **21. Exclusion of Vulnerable Populations from Court Proceedings**

The concept of a "public" hearing implies that all parties can attend, understand, and participate in judicial proceedings. However, in Pakistan, women, people with disabilities, and linguistic minorities are often effectively excluded due to inaccessible infrastructure, legal language barriers, and social intimidation. UN Women (2008) found that courtrooms are physically and socially unwelcoming to many women, especially in rural regions, where patriarchal control discourages their presence in legal forums. Similarly, persons with disabilities face architectural barriers and receive little to no assistance during court appearances. The legal use of English or formal Urdu further limits comprehension for low literacy individuals. This exclusion violates the spirit of fairness and public openness guaranteed under international law. Addressing this gap requires not only physical modifications (like ramps and interpreters) but also institutional culture change that promotes inclusivity and equity in court access.

## **22. Inaccessibility of Specialized Tribunals in Pakistan**

Pakistan's judicial structure includes specialized tribunals such as environmental courts, service tribunals, and anti-corruption bodies. However, these forums often function in ways that exclude the public, contradicting the principle of a fair and public hearing. According to a comparative UNDP study on environmental justice in South Asia (2014), special tribunals in Pakistan remain distant both physically and procedurally from the communities they are meant to serve. In many regions, litigants lack information about the existence or jurisdiction of these courts. Additionally, hearings are rarely held in publicly accessible spaces, and courtrooms lack basic accommodations for vulnerable populations. Moreover, decisions from these tribunals are rarely published or publicly disseminated, which undermines transparency. This disconnect not only violates Pakistan's constitutional commitment to open justice (Article 10-A) but also limits public participation and accountability. While such courts are created to offer efficient alternatives to traditional litigation, their opaque practices and poor outreach undermine the very principles of fairness and access to justice they were designed to uphold.

## **23. Administrative Detention without Trial in Violation of Fair Hearing Rights**

Administrative detention especially under Pakistan's Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) laws allows the state to detain individuals without formal charges or trial, raising serious human rights



anxieties. The International Commission of Jurists (2013) criticized this practice, stating that preventive detention laws often operate in a legal vacuum, where the accused is not given access to legal representation, no opportunity to appear before a judge, and no transparent review of the detention. In many such cases, detainees are held for weeks or even months under executive orders, bypassing judicial scrutiny altogether. This undermines Article 10-A of Pakistan's Constitution and Article 9 and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which require legal due process and public hearings. The lack of court oversight and absence of open hearings for those detained under such laws creates an environment ripe for abuse, coercion, and wrongful imprisonment. These practices effectively silence political dissent and disproportionately target marginalized groups. To uphold the right to a fair and public hearing, Pakistan must place legal limits on administrative detention, ensure mandatory judicial review, and guarantee legal access to all those held without trial.

### Conclusion

The fundamental underpinnings of democratic governance and the rule of law are in danger due to a long-standing crisis in Pakistan's justice system. The problems listed across 23 major issues show that the system is systematically biased against vulnerable groups, ranging from political meddling and judicial delays to police misconduct, corruption, and insufficient legal aid. Access to justice is disproportionately difficult for marginalized groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, and the impoverished. Trust in the judiciary is further eroded by the arbitrary application of anti-terrorism laws, the suppression of evidence, the covert military trials, and the uneven application of the law. International criticism from reliable groups emphasizes that these are systemic issues that need immediate reform rather than isolated flaws. Access to justice is still primarily a privilege rather than a right, as evidenced by the lack of public knowledge about legal rights, language barriers during court proceedings, and hidden litigation costs. Furthermore, the impartiality and equity of court proceedings are jeopardized by gender bias in the legal system and the rising media sensationalism trend. A thorough and multi-layered reform strategy is required to address these issues. Important actions include boosting judicial independence, fortifying oversight organizations, enforcing accountability, increasing access to legal aid, and encouraging legal literacy. Ensuring linguistic inclusivity and incorporating gender-sensitive practices into court systems are equally important. Above all, to bring about significant change, political will, persistent civil society advocacy, and public pressure are necessary. Pakistan runs the risk of continuing a cycle in which justice is either denied, postponed, or applied selectively if it does not implement bold reforms. Protecting human rights and promoting long-term peace, stability, and development both depend on the establishment of a genuinely open, effective, and accessible judiciary. Pakistan can only truly uphold the ideals of democracy and equality before the law when justice is achieved for all citizens, regardless of their wealth, gender, or social status.

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