



# Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

NGO in Special Consultive Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

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## Statement of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative Advisory Committee 5 November 2007

### Declaration of emergency and suspension of Constitution in Pakistan

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) strongly condemns the proclamation of the state of emergency in Pakistan by Chief of Army Staff General Musharraf. The imposition of a totally unwarranted state of emergency, interference with the judiciary, dismissal, intimidation and detention of members of the Supreme Court and high courts, mass arrests and targeting of human rights defenders, including Chairperson of the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the UN's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Ms Asma Jahangir, are aimed at stifling democracy and peaceful dissent. Political workers and lawyers across the country have also been arrested to prevent any organised opposition to the emergency. The freedom of the media has also been attacked as private news channels have been banned and laws are being amended to further control the press.

These actions run entirely contrary to the fundamental democratic principles of the Commonwealth. As a member, Pakistan is bound to comply with such principles.

CHRI calls on the Commonwealth to immediately condemn these actions and suspend Pakistan from the Councils of the Commonwealth, while the Commonwealth continues to engage with and support civil society working towards an early return to democracy.

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