



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Pakistan

Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 162nd session (virtual session, 31 October 2020)



Security officials of the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) escort arrested senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Mr. Rana Sanallah (left) to court in Lahore on 2 July 2019. Mr. Sanallah was put on a 14-day judicial remand on 2 July, a day after he was arrested by the ANF team for "possessing a large quantity of drugs in his vehicle". | ARIF ALI/AFP

PAK-24 – Rana Sanallah

Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Threats, acts of intimidation
- ✓ Arbitrary arrest and detention
- ✓ Lack of due process at the investigation stage
- ✓ Violation of freedom of movement

A. Summary of the case

Mr. Rana Sanallah is a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan from opposition party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and a vocal critic of the Government. He was arrested on 1 July 2019 on suspicion of drug possession and trafficking. Mr. Sanallah's arrest took place amid a wave of purges of former officials linked to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, including members of the Sharif family and the PML-N leadership. The complainant insists that Mr. Sanallah's trial is politically motivated and maintains that Mr. Sanallah was framed by the Anti-Narcotics Force at the instigation of the incumbent Prime Minister.

Mr. Sanallah was arrested by an anti-narcotics squad while he was on his way to a meeting with fellow members of parliament from PML-N and taken to a police station, where he was detained for 16 hours without any charges being brought against him. The next day, he was brought before a judge and presented with 15 kg of heroin that had allegedly been recovered from a suitcase in his car, which Mr. Sanallah denied. He remained in pretrial detention for six months and was eventually released on bail by the Lahore High Court on 24 December

Case PAK-24

Pakistan: Parliament affiliated to the IPU

Victim: Minority member of the National Assembly of Pakistan

Qualified complainant(s): Section I.(1).(a) of the [Committee Procedure](#) (Annex I)

Submission of complaint: 28 January 2020

Recent IPU decision(s): - - -

Recent IPU Mission(s): - - -

Recent Committee hearing(s): - - -

Recent follow-up:

- Communication(s) from the authorities: - - -
- Communication from the complainant: August 2020
- Communication addressed to the authorities: Letter addressed to the Speaker of the National Assembly (October 2020)
- Communication addressed to the complainant: February 2020

2019, after several unsuccessful attempts to obtain bail at the court of first instance. Given the political context of this case, the Lahore High Court made an exceptional reference to details pertaining to the merits of the case, casting doubt on allegations put forward by the prosecution and finding flaws in the evidence produced by the investigation, which it described as biased and riddled with deception. The court decision recognized that it could not ignore the fact that Mr. Sanaullah was a prominent leader of an opposition party, highlighting that “political victimization [of the opposition in Pakistan] is an open secret”. Mr. Sanaullah has since returned to his seat in parliament and reports that the Government is “preparing fresh corruption charges against him” and has recently frozen his financial assets, together with the accounts of his family members. In addition, the complainant reports that Mr. Sanaullah was placed on the “Exit Control List”, which does not allow him to travel abroad. Since his return to parliament, Mr. Sanaullah has demanded a parliamentary investigation into what he describes as a politically motivated intimidation campaign in an attempt to frame him and discredit the opposition party.

B. Decision

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Notes* that the complaint was submitted in due form by a qualified complainant under section I.1.(a) of the Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints (Annex I to the Revised Rules and Practices of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians);
2. *Notes* that the complaint concerns an incumbent member of parliament at the time of the initial allegations;
3. *Notes* that the complaint concerns threats and acts of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of due process at the investigation stage and violation of freedom of movement, allegations that fall within the Committee’s mandate;
4. *Considers*, therefore, that the complaint is admissible under the provisions of Section IV of the Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints; and *declares* itself competent to examine the case;