

**Roundtable discussion on  
“Democratic Police:  
How to improve democratic credentials and image of police in  
Pakistan?”**





## Introduction

A roundtable discussion was held on the topic “**Democratic Police: How to improve democratic credentials and image of police in Pakistan?**”, at the School of Governance and Society, University of Management and Technology, Lahore. Dr. Naveed Elahi moderated the discussion. The participants included Shaukat Javed, former IG Police, Sarmad Saeed Khan, former IG Police, Kamran Lashari, former Chief Secretary, Mohsin Goraya, Senior Journalist and Columnist, Zafar Kalanuri, Senior Advocate Supreme Court, Professor Rahat ul Ain, Naeem Aslam, Former Dean National School of Public Policy, Dr. Seemi Waheed, and Shahid Rahim, Former Dean National School of Public Policy.

Dr. Naveed Elahi opened the discussion by pointing out that democratic police are defined as one serving the people and upholding the rule of law. Its multidimensional nature has many meanings as the variance in meaning of democracy. However, fairness remains almost a shared denominator. The following points were presented for discussion on the topic:

- I.** There is a general perception that police response in Pakistan, in handling crime, victim, and protests, is inconsiderate to human rights and rule of law. Does it mean it is failing in its democratic credentials?
- II.** Despite efforts and well-meaning intentions, the sense and perception of police as first responders as a defender of the weak is not very positive.
- III.** What should be the shape and form of police if the society desires to transcend from quasi-military (Irish Constabulary model) to democratic policing?
- IV.** Some researches confirm that insulated from local government and people, police worked well till the late sixties. After that it started crumbling due to political-economic developments.

- V. According to Carnegie Endowment for International Peace the post partition reforms of Police brought benefits for police officers mostly. The hop, skip and a jump reforms in electoral democracy and police are surprisingly similar.
- VI. In the ongoing political tug of war, police officers are being targeted, pressurized and victimized. Would it undermine the police morale for times to come and many might react with vengeance?

All the participants expressed their expert views on how to run the police in a democratic way in Pakistan and to enhance credibility and respect of police among the people. All the participants agreed that political use of police and interference in their postings are the root cause of the problem. The police should be a symbol of safety and security, not terror. Police culture needs to change. Actions against police officers on political grounds also lead to ill-will in the force. They should be respected and protected so that they protect and respect the people. A common man must have access to superior police officers. Some participants said that since the whole system has gone haywire, it is futile to expect exceptional performance from one department.



*From L to R Mr. Shaukat Javed, Mr. Shahid Rahim, Prof Rahat ul Ain, Prof. Naveed Elahi*



## Discussion

**Prof. Rahat ul Ain** commented that Police are the servants of the state and they tend to behave as per the prevalent system. If there's a military arrangement, police have a function of maintenance of law and order and in the elected government has democratic agent and police will not work as a force but as a public servant within the boundaries of prescribed rules and regulations. Under democratic mandate, they will not violate the human rights. Presently we can see democratic policing visibly doesn't exist. The irony is that we don't learn from history and continue to tread the old path. Rulers use police for their own advantages. Pakistan ranks 104/167 in democratic index, and the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2021 report shows that Pakistan is among the lowest ranked countries in its adherence to the rule of law, ranking 130th out of 139 nations.

**Mr. Shahid Rahim** opined that societal culture reflects on the behavior of the institutions. The incorrigible feudal setups in Punjab and Sindh reflect in the police and other departments. As a society, we have to go a long way by working on our behaviors and relations. Democracy refers to the rule of law but it is very unfortunate that in Pakistan rules & regulations are violated with impunity. The democratic polity has also suffered due to frequent interventions by the army and other institutions. Police of 1960s and 80s were more regressive. Media did not openly criticize in previous times, however with the advancement, 'freedom of speech' has become a norm which has been respected. Now we have many channels, social media platforms and other digital spaces. We need to ponder on the aspect that how democratic our police department needs to be or how much freedom do they allow to the institutions with whom they are interacting.

**Mr. Kamran Lashari** elaborated that we have put society and culture in a situation that we are still struggling to become a public friendly department. Restrictions are rampant therefore people are intimidated and fearful while dealing with these public servants. The spirit of public service is conspicuously missing. This is very unfortunate



that in democratic country we are still struggling to build 'trust' with public. Instead of going to devise new things or reforms, all we have to do is to make the police department an inclusive arm of good governance. Education and training are lacking. Investment is mostly squandered to meet their luxuries. There is a clear divide and disconnect between senior officers and operational staff. We need to look into our power distribution, and on the differences between authority and power. There should be a realization that people' are important in democracy. Democratic police culture cannot be improved without improving thana system. The Police Order 2002 needs to be revisited and realigned according to new challenges on practical grounds and Public Safety Commission must be enforced.

**Mr. Zafar kalanuri** said that 75 years is a long time for judiciary, executive and legislature to reform and refine their systems. The element of 'goodness' is present in the developed democracies and they do not violate the rules. In Pakistan, there is little awareness regarding 'cyber laws'. It is unfortunate that police still employ third degree methods of investigation. With changing times there is a need for proper training of police force to bring their culture in conformity with the democratic norms. It is equally important to revamp our judicial system. Internationally, county system works well at grass root level but we are hesitant to properly implement local government system. The point is that police, judiciary and local government system go hand in hand therefore all three should be efficient.



*From L to R Dr. Hafiz Syed Mohsin Abbas, Mr. Zafar Kalanauri and Mr. Mohsin Goraya*

**Mr. Mohsin Goraya** lamented that we have redundant system and untrained work force. The Police Ordinance 2002 is just on paper but not in practice. The infrastructure is expanding but human resource management has not been prioritized. The behavioral aspect of police has made it inaccessible to common man. We need to change our ‘thana culture/ magistrate’. Just by changing the uniform, which has been done repeatedly, we cannot expect change in the behavior. There is a need to introduce a check and balance system and importantly police should be free from any political pressure. We need police reforms from the grassroots levels (bottom-up policy making).



*From L to R Mr. Sarmad Saeed and Mr. Naeem Aslam*

**Mr. Naeem Aslam** explained that the contemporary policy problems demand new solutions, methods and systems. We should understand that the police officials are massively over-worked and the police to people ratio is dismal. There are some challenges for police which include: 1) Accessibility, 2) Element of responsibility and 3) Multi-tasking. To maintain their status for 'power', they should focus on maintenance of law & order. The relationship between public and civil servants should be open and accessible. Police need to build a trust-based reputation by scuttling the 'sifarish and bribery culture'. We need visible efforts of our police department in terms of consistency, resilience and hard work as to serve the public wholeheartedly.

**Dr. Seemi Waheed** described the street level bureaucracy by elaborating the class systems within our society. We have heterogeneous society, different provinces and different people. We hardly see someone who interacts with the public and knows values for public service. We need to know the actual 'divide' between elite and disadvantaged



communities. Power and authority are two different things. 'People' are very important stakeholder in democracy. Just by voting we cannot become democratic, there are some principles that need to be attained for democracy. We need to ponder on some serious questions: Is our political culture democratic enough, and are we serious to become democratic? In these answers we can find the causes of the behavior of police and also the solutions to transform them into democratic police.

**Mr. Shaukat Javed** expounded that the democratic police is the one that is operationally autonomous, accountable to internal & external control, totally professional and proficient. Furthermore, democratic society needs protection by the police and from the police. Since 1947 to present times, around 35 police reforms committees and commissions have been formed by the governments of different times. They suggested different recommendations and on the basis of their recommendations, first of all, in 1948, Sindh legislative assembly passed the law named as "city of Karachi police act 1948" which was the emulation of Bombay police act. Why do we need democratic law?

Because it will convert the old system of bureaucratic control of police to control by the people of vigilance and to the society at large. All those institutions which over took and oversee the functioning of police in the shape of public safety commission, police complain record, district criminal coordination committee, must be activated.

In 2017, KPK government, after the 18th amendment which gave opportunity to police to revert back to old law. However, two of the main provinces Baluchistan and Sindh reverted back to 1861 act again with their new nomenclatures. Therefore, Punjab sustained with the "Police act of 2002" with some imperative amendments later. For the accountability of police department, they made other reforms. In 2017, a law and act were formed which were again an improvement on Police Order 2002 but unfortunately those institutions which were to overlook the functioning of police have not been formed.

Despite introduction of reforms by successive governments, police stations have been neglected greatly. Plethora of forces like CTF, Elite Force, Dolphin force have been formed



by spending millions of rupees on new experiments while disregarding the major aspect of police station. Supreme court of Pakistan has given verdict that police law is the federal law. The time has arrived that the federal government should promulgate and own the Police Order 2002 with necessary amendments in it which would ensure that the police is depoliticized, accountable to the citizens, should improve its service delivery specially at the police station level. There is also a need to revamp the whole criminal justice system if we really want to serve the people of Pakistan.



**Mr. Sarmad Saeed** commented that the definition of democratic policing is “the process of physical, psychological and moral portions by police and to uphold human, civil, social rights, and dignities in an equitable manner”. Police officers are those citizens who are paid to pay full time attention to those jobs which are incumbent on every citizen. Every citizen is a police officer. Every citizen can make an arrest under section 59 CRPC and can provide solutions of an offence in his views (he can arrest the offender and can



present him before the police). The crux of discussion today is that the police should be trained, know how to communicate with the general public and refrain from uncouth behavior and torture.

I have tried this community policing as well as democratic policing and the crime was down by more than 50 percent. But our political leadership did not like this idea. We do not like to part with our powers. But I think prevention should be priority instead of reactive approach for crime. There is a need to focus on proactive approach. All police operations should have public approvals. For example, public should know about the check points and patrolling areas. There should be mutual alacrity to cooperate and trust each other.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.** The first and foremost step to introduce democratic police is to focus on improving the conditions of *thana* and the environment prevalent there. It is possible only through proper training, accountability and provision of resources.
- 2.** The Police Order 2002 needs to be revisited and realigned according to new challenges on practical grounds.
- 3.** Community policing and intelligence led policing should be introduced which can be a step towards preventive and public friendly policing.
- 4.** Federal government should promulgate and own the Police Order 2002 with necessary amendments which would ensure that the police is depoliticized and is accountable to the citizens.
- 5.** It should be ensured that police resources are not concentrated in high ranking officers or are squandered. Investigation and *thana* should get adequate resources.
- 6.** The systems and institutions, provided in the Police Order, like, Public Safety Commission, Police Complaint Record, District Criminal Coordination committee, must be activated.



7. Police must give top operational priority to servicing the needs of individual citizens. For example, the response on 15 or other help lines should be quick, robust and efficient.
8. It is essential that monitoring of police actions and operations is done by both police leadership and external organs.
9. Introduce effective complaints procedures, both for making complaints to the police directly and to independent bodies.
10. Develop fair and effective procedures and policies on how to deal with misconduct, including both disciplinary and criminal codes, adequate investigative capacity, procedures for punishment and appeal procedures.

## Epilogue

There is no second opinion that police are the most visible public image of governmental authority. When they use that authority primarily to serve the interests of government, rather than the public, they blot out the democratic promise of government for the people. The most essential ingredient of democratic police is to become responsive to the needs of individual citizens. Police actions in a democracy must therefore be governed by the rule of law rather than by directions given arbitrarily by particular regimes and their members. Transparency and accountability are essential ingredients of the character of democratic police. These two aspects check the arbitrariness and high-handedness of police. It is surmised that with the strengthening of democratic order in Pakistan, police will fall in line. It must be kept in mind that good deeds of police are rarely eulogized, omissions and commissions are criticized quite often. Therefore, the challenges for the police are quite high. Nothing less than deliberate, planned and sustained efforts by the governments and society to transform police into democratic police, can give desired results. It is hoped that the recommendations given above, gleaned from the discussion, can contribute in the transformation of police into a more democratic force.



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