

Ousted Chief Justice in Pakistan Urges Defiance

By David Rohde and Jane Perlez

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ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, Nov. 6 — As lawyers protested for a second day in Pakistan on Tuesday, the ousted chief justice of the country's Supreme Court urged them to continue to defy de facto martial law imposed by the president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

“The lawyers should convey my message to the people to rise up and restore the Constitution,” the chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, told dozens of lawyers on speakerphone at a meeting of the Islamabad Bar Association. “I am under arrest now, but soon I will also join you in your struggle.”

And for the first time, Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the biggest opposition political party, called for street protests.

“I appeal to the nation to join the protest and show their power,” she told reporters gathered outside her home in Islamabad on Tuesday night, Pakistani news media reported. “When people will come out, pressure will mount.”

She has pledged to lead a major protest rally on Friday in Rawalpindi, the garrison city adjacent to Islamabad. But government officials have not approved the gathering. Under the state of emergency, freedom of assembly, speech, and the press, among others, have all been abrogated.

At a news conference in Islamabad, where she flew Tuesday to meet with leaders of other political parties, she ruled out talks with General Musharraf. “The talks are off,” she said. “Instead of going toward democracy, we ended up with martial law.”



Police officers beating lawyers today in Multan, Pakistan.

Khalid Tanveer/Associated Press

The defiance came as protests and arrests continued Tuesday, with the police arresting 50 lawyers in the eastern city of Lahore and 42 in Multan, a city about 200 miles southwest of Lahore, where lawyers clashed with the police.

More than 100 lawyers were injured in street battles in which the police beat lawyers with batons and lawyers hurled stones at police officers. When the head of the Multan Bar Association went to police headquarters for negotiations on Tuesday night, he was arrested as well.

“He was there for peaceful negotiation,” said Munaza Hashmi, a local lawyer. “Not agitation.”

With hundreds of lawyers and human rights activists already in jail, protests were smaller on Tuesday than on the previous day. At least 2,000 people have been rounded up by the authorities, among them 500 to 700 or more lawyers, according to lawyers and political officials.

It was unclear how Mr. Chaudhry, who was fired on Saturday and is under house arrest, was able to gain access to a cellphone. In addition to the call to the lawyers, he has been surreptitiously calling Pakistani newspaper journalists, who are defying an emergency order that prohibits coverage that “brings into ridicule or disrepute” General Musharraf and other officials.

Mr. Chaudhry and other lawyers said they hoped to re-create the protest campaign they carried out this spring when the lawyers mounted rallies in major cities after General Musharraf removed Mr. Chaudhry from the Supreme Court bench the first

time. General Musharraf's popularity dropped, and Mr. Chaudhry was reinstated after four months, invigorating the Supreme Court and the general's opponents.

On Saturday, days before the Supreme Court was expected to declare him ineligible for another term in office, General Musharraf suspended the Constitution, dissolved the Supreme Court, and blacked out all independent and international television news channels in Pakistan. Supreme Court judges, like Mr. Chaudhry, who refused to declare the general's move legal were placed under house arrest.

On Monday, President Bush personally urged General Musharraf to end emergency rule and carry out nationwide elections, previously scheduled for mid-January. On Tuesday, a close aide to General Musharraf said no decision had been made.



Riot police outside the Lahore High Court as protests continued today.
Rahat Dar/European Pressphoto Agency

Anne W. Patterson, the American ambassador to Pakistan, visited the country's election commission on Tuesday and urged it to announce elections for Jan. 15, as had been planned.

"I urged the commissioner to announce the election schedule as soon as possible to reassure the people of Pakistan and the international community," Ms. Patterson said in a statement. "As President Bush has said, we urge President Musharraf to restore democracy as quickly as possible."

The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Joseph R. Biden Jr. of Delaware, who is also a Democratic presidential candidate, said he called General Musharraf on Tuesday and had “a very frank and detailed discussion.”

“I told President Musharraf how critical it is for relations between our two countries that elections go forward as planned in January, that he follow through on his commitment to take off his uniform and that he restore the rule of law to Pakistan,” Mr. Biden said in a statement.

After speaking with General Musharraf, the senator briefed John D. Negroponte, the deputy secretary of state, on the conversation, the statement added.

In Islamabad, several dozen lawyers protested inside the city’s court complex after listening to Mr. Chaudhry’s telephone call. They made no attempt to break through dozens of policemen who had gathered to prevent them from protesting on nearby streets. After shouting anti-Musharraf chants for 30 minutes, they ended the demonstration peacefully.

In his call to lawyers, Mr. Chaudhry said, “Go to every corner of Pakistan and give the message that this is the time to sacrifice,” The Associated Press reported. “Don’t be afraid. God will help us, and the day will come when you’ll see the Constitution supreme and no dictatorship for a long time,” he said.

Potential problems for General Musharraf also emerged on another front. On Monday, the Karachi Stock Exchange, the country’s largest stock market, declined 4.6 percent, its heaviest single-day fall in points, according to Pakistani news reports. On Tuesday, the market recovered somewhat, closing up 1.1 percent, but Standard & Poor’s, the credit rating company, revised its credit rating outlook for Pakistan from stable to negative.

The ratings company said General Musharraf’s decree had created “heightened and prolonged political uncertainty” in Pakistan with a “potential impact on economic growth, fiscal performance, and external vulnerability.”

In street interviews, Pakistanis expressed sweeping opposition to General Musharraf's emergency declaration. The general's popularity, already low, appears to have further declined.

Pakistanis complained that business had dropped off since the emergency declaration over the weekend, with Pakistanis staying at home rather than navigating more police checkpoints.

And they dismissed General Musharraf's claim that he needed additional powers to combat terrorism. The decree, they said, was a naked effort by the general to cling to power. They called for a return to democracy.

"There are weak points in the political parties," said Yasir Mehmood, a 31-year-old cellphone store owner, referring to corruption. "But one cannot deny that political parties and democracy are better than martial law."

One policeman, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he and many other officers believed that General Musharraf was "not acting according to the law." But he said they feared defying orders.

"It would be good if he leaves with dignity," the officer said. "Nobody respects him anymore."

Salman Masood contributed reporting.