



Press Release

CED Calls Upon Political Parties and Government Institutions to Enter in Dialogue and Pave Way for the Conduct of Free, Fair and Inclusive Elections

Islamabad, January 01, 2024: Coalition for Elections and Democracy (CED), a coalition of leading civil society organizations, has urged the political parties and the government institutions to urgently hold serious dialogue and agree on a credible mechanism to steer the country out of political crisis and ensure conduct of free, fair and inclusive elections. Through the dialogue, the key stakeholders must address the complaints regarding the non-availability of level playing field and develop consensus regarding measures that could reduce political polarization, counter campaigns aimed at undermining government institutions, and establish perception of neutrality of government institutions in the political and electoral arena. In the process, the stakeholders must commit to strict adherence to the constitutional obligations and timely conduct of General Elections, and yet they must come up with a plan to address the genuine concerns of all the political and institutional players. Any actions driven by political expediency that undermine the constitutional order, respect of government institutions, and credibility of upcoming General Elections must be avoided in the interest of democratic system and political stability.

The CED consists of civil society organizations including Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), Centre for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA), Individualland (IL), Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (IRADA), Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) and Peace and Justice Network (PJN).

CED has emphasized that, in many ways, the current political situation is unprecedented and, therefore, it requires a grand dialogue on an urgent basis, without causing any delay in the ongoing electoral process. In this regard, it would be quite appropriate for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to take the initiative and engage all the political parties and key government institutions, some of which have legitimate complaints and grievances, which must be fairly addressed in the interest of maintaining state writ, public order, and ensuring legitimacy and credibility of the General Elections. Without such a dialogue and broader agreement, there is a risk that the General Elections may not pave the way for political stability, which is a harbinger for economic revival and prosperity.

The proposed dialogue among political and institutional stakeholders must result in broader consensus on measures aimed at improving the law and order conditions, building trust of the voters in the electoral process, upholding of constitution, and addressing legitimate concerns of all stakeholders. The CED is of the view that the multifaceted crises that Pakistan is faced with, require mature politics and institutional response, which is only possible if all stakeholders sit together and engage in a candid dialogue whereby all the concerns and issues are deliberated upon and resolved, while prioritizing public interest over the short-term partisan and groups interests. Time is short but, with political will and sincere motives, such a dialogue may yield results within days, without affecting the timelines for the General Elections in February 2024. The CED further emphasizes the importance of facilitating voters in the flood affected areas; many of whom lack national identity cards or access to polling stations due to damaged roads and tracks. Moreover, there is a need for robust security measures to promote and protect citizens' participation in the electoral process.



CED expresses its deep concern on the lack of dialogue among political parties and institutions, although ongoing dialogue is considered a hallmark of democratic process in any society. It is even though our politics continues to remain hugely polarized, marred with allegations of victimization and foul play, and focused on achieving partisan interests at all costs without much regard to considerations like legitimacy, political stability, constitutional order, institutional credibility and will of the people. It is imperative that, despite challenges and perceived risks, our government and institutions stick to the Constitution and fulfil their responsibility in accordance with the law for the conduct of free, fair and inclusive elections.

About CED: CED is a coalition of leading civil society organizations including Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), Centre for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA), Individualland (IL), Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (IRADA), Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) and Peace and Justice Network (PJN). Its secretariat is based at the CPDI.

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