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When custodians of law turn into an unruly mob

By Rana Tanveer Published: October 3, 2016

LAHORE:

There was once a time when lawyers played a great role to ensure supremacy of the Constitution. They would never resort to the use of baton to get themselves heard. However, as the values of the Bar are being infiltrated, judicial ethics and lawyers' policy of non-violence have taken a backseat.

Lawyers' high-handedness with the police was named as "wukla gardi", a term often used in the media when the lawyers succeeded in the movement that they carried out between 2007 and 2009 for the restoration of the then chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

However, media also faces the consequences when lawyers' take matters in their own hands by resorting to violent measures. Journalists have been beaten up by lawyers for doing "partial reporting". Besides, lawyers have also condemned media outlets time and again.

Changing ways

One such event was witnessed in the city a few days back.

A group of lawyers, under the leadership of Lahore High Court Bar Association President Rana Zia Abdur Rehman and LHCBA Secretary Anas Ghazi, and enraged clerics from different seminaries barged in the office of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Lahore, where its Council of Complaints was holding a meeting on the complaint of Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya, who had accused two TV channels of airing programmes aimed at spreading hatred regarding them.

The lawyers would have not done so had the former judge of LHC, and father of LHCBA secretary, Nazir Ghazi, not been among those against whom Pemra had initiated proceedings.

Nazir was the host of the show, aired on September 7, in which the members of Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya said remarks were made against them.

The enraged lawyers and clerics also hindered the Council of Complaints to an extent that it could not continue the proceedings.

A Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya representative, who was at the Pemra office, had to hide in the premises to save themselves. However, the council had to carry out the proceedings under the influence of the protesting lawyers and clerics, because of which the application filed by representatives of Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya was disposed of without the complainant being heard.

So the rule of “no one can be condemned unheard” was compromised. No action was taken or even demanded by Pemra, under Section 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions) of Pakistan Penal Code.

Setting precedent?

This episode might have a far-reaching impact, at least on Pemra, which would not dare to take initiative for the rights of Ahmadis.

During the last week, Punjab Bar Council, the provincial regulatory body for lawyers, took an entry test of fresh law graduates for licences for legal practice. However, the aspirant lawyers were facilitated during the exam. They were given books to copy from.

Such practices have allowed corrupt elements to infiltrate the system under which even litigants are suffering at the hands of lawyers.

LHC Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, realising sufferings of litigants at the hands of lawyers, had convened a meeting with all the district judges of the province, asking them to give proposals to stop strikes of lawyers. It is not an easy task, but someone has to take the first step.

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