

Kidnapped judges — the ultimate sign of bad law and order

COMMENT



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The recent event has made it imperative for the government to provide security to judges throughout the country. But the authorities have seemingly not learnt any lesson from the incident at the Sialkot jail a few months ago. The judges deal with all sorts of cases, including those pertaining to terrorism. The failure of the law-enforcement agencies to arrest the kidnappers and get the judges freed could instill a sense of insecurity among judges

Law & Order
THE KIDNAPPING OF TWO JUDGES IN Shikarpur reflects poorly on our law-enforcement agencies. It also dealt a blow to the relatively peaceful atmosphere that has prevailed in Sindh in general and Karachi in particular over the past few months.

As the situation stands, additional judges Abdul Wahab Abbasi and Farooq Channa have yet to be freed from the clutches of their captors since their kidnapping on the night of December 3. Needless to say, the incident has once again put a question mark over the efficiency of our law enforcement agencies as well as the provincial government, bringing to mind the situation prevailing in the deadly nineties when people were routinely kidnapped or killed, and when carjacking too became a regular phenomenon.

In 1990, 79 cases of kidnapping for ransom took place. Looking at the 1990 to 2004 period, we see that the year 1999 had the lowest number of such crimes: with only five kidnappings taking place. From 1990 until today, the number of kidnappings in Karachi, according to the CPLC (Citizen-Police Liaison Committee), remains at 350. The number of solved cases or the cases in which the victims were rescued, released or killed while their captors were apprehended stands at 264. This constitutes 75.43 percent of such cases.

Meanwhile, the cases which were not solved (in which the victims were released but their captors remained at large) stand at 86. In other words, such cases constitute 24.57 percent of these cases.

The number of gangs broken in the same period is 126.

A study of such cases has shown that since 1999, the number of kidnappings is constantly soaring. There were 11 kidnappings in 2000, 14 in 2001, 23 in 2002, 33 in 2003 and 36 in 2004.

The current year has witnessed the highest number of such cases after 1990 (79 cases) and 1991 (45 cases). Since kidnapping-for-ransom cases are not the same as those kidnapping cases

in which no ransom is demanded, the number of all types of kidnapping or abduction cases is much higher than the figures quoted above.

Let us not forget that kidnappings are also taking place in the rest of the province and that the CPLC must also compile data for these areas as well.

At present, there is no information regarding the whereabouts of the judges kidnapped from interior Sindh. Neither is it certain if their captors have demanded ransom for their release or not.

But the incident has been a prelude to widespread protests in the province. It also became a precursor of lawyers' boycott of the lower courts in Karachi.

The people currently leading protest demonstrations include the former chief justice of Pakistan, Sajjad Ali Shah, and former national assembly speaker, Illahi Bux Soomro.

The recent event has made it imperative for the government to provide security to judges throughout the country. But the authorities have seemingly not learnt any lesson from the incident at Sialkot jail a few months ago. The judges deal with all sorts of cases, including those pertaining to terrorism. The failure of the law-enforcement agencies to arrest the kidnappers and get the judges freed could instill a sense of insecurity among judges.

The sooner these agencies get their act together, the better.

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