

Pakistan judge's suspension criticized

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - The International Commission of Jurists Thursday called the suspension of Pakistan's chief justice "virtually unprecedented in the legal annals of the world."

The criticism concerns Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's March 9 suspension of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, who was accused of abusing his position, the BBC reported.

The judge, whose suspension continues to draw countrywide protests, has denied the charges against him, the report said.

The jury panel, whose representative Param Cumaraswamy has been visiting Pakistan, said Pakistan's constitutional order may be irreversibly damaged if the crisis over the suspension continues, the BBC report said.

Pakistan Law Minister Wasim Zafar was quoted as describing the ICJ's finding as incomplete research. "People interested in politicizing this case must have misguided the ICJ," he said.

In its current findings, the panel said it found well-documented instances of executive interference in the independence of the judiciary in Pakistan. It said Chaudhry refused to resign when told to do so by Musharraf. It said the judge was "held in Army House for nearly five hours, virtually incommunicado."

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