
Government appears to be ‘beneficiary’ of enforced disappearances, remarks IHC

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ISLAMABAD:

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has remarked that it appears the government may be the “beneficiary of enforced disappearances” during the hearing of a case concerning the recovery of PTI’s former social media lead Azhar Mashwani’s two missing brothers. The hearing, presided over by Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb on Friday, saw arguments presented by the petitioner’s counsel, Babar Awan. The court inquired about any developments in the case, to which Additional Attorney General Munawar Iqbal Dogal responded that high-level contacts had been made, and efforts were ongoing. Babar Awan, in his arguments, stated that five laws address rebellion and incitement to rebellion, yet there is no clear definition of national interest. He emphasized, “If you ask me what the national interest is, I would say reduce electricity

prices...someone from Balochistan would say provide me with gas, that's his national interest."

During the proceedings, an SP from Lahore Police appeared before the court and informed that the CCTV footage provided by the family was of low resolution, making it difficult for NADRA or forensic agencies to extract any meaningful information. Despite geofencing over 10,000 numbers, no actionable information had been found as of August 23. He said that the Safe City Project also couldn't cover all angles, and no law enforcement agency had made any significant progress in the matter. The court remarked, "It seems that the government is the beneficiary of enforced disappearances". The court questioned how abductions could occur in the country without any action from the chief executive. It was mentioned that the attorney general had assured the court that he would brief the prime minister on the issue. "The chief executive is aware of these matters, yet people continue to go missing forcibly." Awan also pointed out that the prime minister doesn't have the time to read the court's orders. The court questioned the AAG on why the investigation had stalled since the case began in the IHC. He replied that the geofencing report had been prepared. The court inquired about the duration of the brothers' disappearance, to which the police officer responded that they had been missing since June 6. The court expressed concern, stating, "It's been three months since two people went missing forcibly. We can only imagine what their families are going through. People are being picked up, and the Chief Executive is doing

nothing.” The court then asked, “Additional Attorney General, did anything come out of the prime minister and attorney general’s meeting?” During the hearing, Awan requested the court to summon the prime minister, to which the court responded, “The PM is the head of state as per the constitution, and the attorney general is the head of the law...we summoned the attorney general in accordance with due process.” Justice Aurangzeb remarked, “If the government does not want to follow due process, what can be said?” “They don’t realize the damage being done to the country’s reputation. I’m keeping this case until Tuesday, but I won’t be available then”. “We don’t want any delays in this case due to my absence.” The court directed the head of the JIT, SP Lahore, to submit reports and stated that the police must investigate how non-police personnel managed to wear police uniforms. At this point, Babar Awan requested the court to issue a strict order, to which Justice Aurangzeb remarked, “I will pass an order on this case.” IG Islamabad summoned over missing PTI worker During the same hearing, the court summoned the Inspector General (IG) of Islamabad Police regarding the disappearance of a PTI worker, Faizan. Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb presided over the case filed for Faizan’s recovery. The court questioned what progress the investigating officer had made over the past two weeks, inquiring whether the officer had visited the location from where Faizan disappeared or met with his father. The court asked if the state counsel was satisfied with the investigation report, to which the

counsel responded that a detailed report would be presented at the next hearing. Islamabad Police informed the court that they had conducted investigations at all the places Faizan was known to frequent. Subsequently, due to the lack of progress in recovering Faizan, the IHC ordered the IG Islamabad to appear before the court at the next hearing, scheduled for Tuesday.