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## **Membership of 27 govt MPAs suspended in Punjab Assembly after SC ruling**

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In view of a recent ruling by the Supreme Court, Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan took action on Friday by suspending the membership of 27 MPAs of ruling coalition who were elected on reserved seats in the Punjab Assembly. The move follows a decision by a three-member bench of the Supreme Court, which suspended a previous order by the Peshawar High Court (PHC) regarding the

allocation of additional reserved seats to various political parties in national and provincial legislatures earlier this week. During the Punjab Assembly session today, Malik Aftab, a member of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), which mainly consists of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members, raised objections and read out the Supreme Court's decision regarding the members elected on reserved seats. Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan validated the opposition member's point of order and ordered the suspension of the membership of the nominated members on the reserved seats of the ruling alliance immediately. Members of the Sunni Ittehad Council lauded the speaker's decision by thumping the table. Following the speaker's ruling, 24 women's seats and three minorities' seats became vacant in the Punjab Assembly, resulting in the ruling coalition's membership decreasing to 200. Meanwhile, the Sunni Ittehad Council holds 106 seats, and the PPP has become the third-largest party with 15 seats. In addition to the aforementioned parties, the PML-Q has 11 seats, the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) has 7 seats, while the PML-Z, Majlis-e-Wahdatul Muslimeen (MWM), and Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) each hold one seat in the Punjab Assembly. Among those suspended from reserved minority seats are Tariq Masih Gul, Waseem Anjum, and Basruji. This development stems from a previous decision by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on December 22, 2023, which stripped the PTI of its election symbol due to irregularities in its intra-party elections. The Supreme Court later upheld the ECP's order,

leading the party to field its candidates as independents in the February 8 general elections.

Subsequently, independent candidates supported by the PTI joined the SIC and applied to the ECP for allocation of seats reserved for women and minorities in the national and provincial legislatures. However, on March 4, the ECP dismissed the request, citing the SIC's failure to submit a priority list of candidates for reserved seats prior to the polls. The SIC challenged the order in the PHC, which on March 14 upheld the ECP's decision. The SIC later appealed to the Supreme Court, which suspended the PHC ruling in favour of PTI.