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IHC acquits Imran Khan, Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Cipher case

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KARACHI: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday acquitted Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan and PTI leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi in the Cipher case, suspending their 10-year sentences. Chief Justice Amir Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb announced the verdict, noting that the speeches delivered by Imran and Qureshi on

March 27, 2022, “appear to be political in nature.”

Key Points:

- **Acquittal Details:** Imran Khan and Shah Mehmood Qureshi were accused of illegally possessing and disclosing a secret document, but the prosecution failed to link the alleged crime to revealing secrets about the armed forces or sensitive areas to foreign powers.
- **Court’s Observations:** Chief Justice Farooq emphasized the need to know the actual information if it was twisted. The prosecution was criticized for not presenting the cipher, and the court noted that the information shared with the court was not unusual.
- **Defense Argument:** PTI’s lawyer argued that the case against Imran Khan was retaliatory, highlighting that the diplomatic cable was not shown to the investigation officer, which undermined the requirements of a fair trial under Article 10A.
- **Case Background:** The case originated from Imran’s public display of a paper during a rally on March 27, 2022, claiming it as evidence of an “international conspiracy” before his government’s ouster. The FIA began its probe on July 19, 2023, leading to Imran’s arrest on August 5 and later in the cipher case on August 29.

The court’s decision to suspend the sentences and acquit the PTI leaders marks a significant turn in the high-profile cipher case.