

SC issues contempt notice to 34 news channels for airing Faisal Vawda and Mustafa Kamal's speeches

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KARACHI:

The Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) issued contempt notice to 34 TV channels for airing 'anti-judiciary press conferences' of Senator Faisal Vawda and MQM-P leader Mustafa Kamal. A three-member apex court bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa-led and comprising Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan heard the contempt of court case against Kamal and Vawda on Wednesday. Both politicians had delivered strongly worded press conferences criticising the judiciary earlier in May. Vawda emphasised the necessity of evidence before leveling allegations, while Kamal aimed to establish ethical standards for judges, insisting that justice could "only be bought". The apex court issued show-cause notices to both leaders on

Friday for their remarks about the judiciary and also directed the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) to submit video recordings and Urdu transcripts of Vawda's press conference from May 15 and Kamal's press conference from May 16. During today's hearing, Barrister Farogh Naseem, representing Kamal, requested the court to accept his client's one-page unconditional apology. He emphasized that Kamal had actually referred to pending Riba (usury) cases. CJP Isa questioned whether those cases were filed before the Federal Shariat Court.

Regarding the decision to take suo motu action over the speeches, CJP Isa expressed dismay at being subjected to abusive language, questioning if such language was acceptable in any country.

He clarified that the notice wasn't about criticism directed at him personally but rather about criticism against the judiciary. In response to Moiz Ahmed, Vawda's lawyer, expressing his client's desire to discuss Pemra, CJP Isa affirmed their right to speak as counsel. Addressing Ahmed's intention to read out the questions and answers from Vawda's press conference, Justice Saadat scrutinized the context, noting Vawda's explicit targeting of Justice Babar Sattar and Justice Athar Minallah. CJP Isa criticized media channels for broadcasting obscene language and questioned Pemra's ban on reporting court proceedings. He stressed the importance of journalistic integrity and criticized those who spread falsehoods for monetary gain. The court issued notices to 34 TV channels for airing derogatory speeches and instructed them to respond

within two weeks. Additionally, the court requested Pemra's response regarding the ban on reporting court proceedings. Besides, the SC rejected the apology tendered by Kamal in contempt case. Justice Irfan Sadaat Khan urged counsel for Kamal to hold a press conference expressing remorse about the earlier presser against the judiciary. The bench also accepted the request of Vawda's counsel to reconsider his reply. The case has been adjourned until June 28, with Vawda given one week to submit his response to the suo motu notice. Vawda despite a contempt notice from SC, requested the apex court to withdraw the contempt of court notice issued to him. In a written reply submitted by Senator Vawda to the apex court, he submitted that other politicians, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, PTI leader Raoof Hassan, and JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman had also made similar remarks but they did not face the same fate. He begged the court that he "has every respect and regard for the judiciary and can never imagine doing any act which lowers the estimation of the judiciary in any manner." He prayed the court to withdraw the show cause notice.