

## Fazlur Rehman calls for fresh elections with non-interference assurance from establishment

Published on June 30, 2024

Document Date: Sat, Jul 04 2026 10:38:48 pm

Category: ,English,Latest -

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Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman has called for fresh elections in Pakistan, demanding assurances that the military establishment will not interfere in the electoral process. He made these remarks during a press briefing in Islamabad following a meeting of the Central Majlis Shura on Sunday. Rejecting the February 8 elections as “rigged and unacceptable,” Rehman emphasised his party’s ongoing opposition to what they perceive as interference by the establishment in electoral matters. He underscored the importance of upholding the integrity of the electoral process and urged that the people’s right to vote be safeguarded, urging the establishment and intelligence agencies to refrain from meddling in future elections. During the meeting, discussions included assessing various political affiliations with other parties aligned with JUI-F, viewing these alliances as part of a broader political strategy. Despite the Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) internal divisions and its failure to appoint a negotiation team, Rehman extended an olive branch to PTI, expressing readiness for dialogue while criticising the government's perceived inflexibility in addressing JUI-F's concerns. Touching on national security issues, he highlighted the consequences of Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, noting increased national anxiety and a surge in terrorism since 2001. He criticised government statements on potential actions inside Afghanistan, likening them to Pakistan's decision to allow US bases post-9/11. Asserting the constitutional roles of all institutions, Rehman reiterated support for the military in matters of national defence, but criticised a recent resolution by the US House of Representatives, labeling it a diplomatic setback for Pakistan and advising the US to refrain from meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs. Regarding international issues, he condemned the global silence on Gaza and criticised current Muslim leadership, questioning their legacy for future generations. He further reaffirmed JUI-F's support for Pakistan-China relations while acknowledging the need to rebuild Chinese confidence in investing in Pakistan.