

## ECP announces to implement Supreme Court order on reserved seats

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The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced its decision to implement the Supreme Court's July 12 ruling which facilitates the PTI-backed MNAs to take part in the assembly's proceedings under the umbrella of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) rather than the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). In a press release, the electoral watchdog confirmed its commitment to comply with the court's directive but instructed its legal team to identify any implementation obstacles promptly. The apex court's majority verdict overturned the Peshawar High Court judgment dated March 25 and also declared the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) order dated March 1 unconstitutional, lacking lawful authority and having no legal effect. The apex court declared that the denial of an election symbol does not affect the constitutional and legal rights of a political party in any manner to participate in an election and to field candidates whereas the ECP is under a

constitutional duty to act, construe and apply all statutory provisions accordingly. The ECP held meetings yesterday and today to comply with the SC's order, according to the press release. The ECP strongly condemned continuous and undue criticism from a political party directed at the Chief Election Commissioner and commission members, rejecting calls for their resignation as "ridiculous." The commission stated, "The ECP will continue to perform its duties in accordance with the constitution and the law, without yielding to any pressure." The commission clarified that it had not misinterpreted any decisions. It rejected claims by PTI that its intra-party elections were validated. The ECP noted that PTI had challenged this decision on various forums, where the commission's decision was upheld. Since PTI's intra-party elections were deemed invalid, the ECP withdrew the 'bat' symbol under Section 215 of the Elections Act. Accusations against the ECP were deemed "highly inappropriate." The commission explained that the 39 MNAs identified as PTI affiliates had not submitted party tickets or declarations to the Returning Officer, making it impossible to recognize them as PTI candidates. Similarly, 41 candidates declared as independents did not mention PTI affiliation or submit party tickets. These independent candidates joined the Sunni Ittehad Council within three days post-election. The Supreme Court rejected the Sunni Ittehad Council's appeal against the ECP and the Peshawar High Court's decision. PTI was not a party in this case at any stage. The ECP spokesperson reiterated the

commission's commitment to lawful and constitutional operations, regardless of external pressures.