



## **Press Release**

The Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) in an emergency meeting of its Board of Directors on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 has expressed grave concern at the unprecedented situation that its members are facing.

The step of forcing the cable operators to off air all news channels except for the state broadcaster is not in consonance with the norms of natural justice and human rights. The members of PBA are being punished for anticipated action rather than for anything that they have done. PBA condemns this arbitrary act.

The PEMRA amended Ordinance No. LXV of 2007 promulgated along with issuance of Provisional Order 2007 is a serious attempt to stifle and strangulate the freedom of speech, expression and freedom of information of general public at large. Blanket powers have been given to the PEMRA to seize broadcast or distribution service equipment or seal the premises of the licensee under the garb of public interest.

In addition thereto, further unbridled powers have been given to the PEMRA and its Chairman to direct without notice, the closure of any broadcast or distribution network for such period as it may determine. The violation of amendments by media channel owner is liable to be punished up to three years imprisonment or with a fine which may extend to ten millions rupees or with both and in case of violation by distribution service licensee or its representative, they are liable to be punished up to one year imprisonment or with fine up to five million rupees or with both. This amended ordinance is also applicable to entertainment programming in addition to news and current affairs.

All news channels and other entertainment channels have been proscribed without any justification and cogent reason. All licensees of PEMRA and members of PBA were already complying with the PEMRA laws, rules and regulations made there under including the terms and



conditions of license. After promulgation of amended Ordinance, there was no further justification to pass any directions to cable operators of the country to proscribe the private TV channels throughout the country. On one hand, Government is promulgating the amended Ordinance for PEMRA licensees to strictly adhere to it but on the other hand, unjustified proscription orders were issued to off air the private TV and radio channels.

PBA emphatically condemn the amended Ordinance and proscription of private TV channels throughout Pakistan. PBA also condemn the raids and seizure of broadcast and distribution equipments of various licensees which has been simply done to pressurize and harass the private TV and radio channels and cable TV operators. PBA declared the Ordinance as a draconian law and further declared that by its forceful implementation, government wants to seriously deprive the general public at large for exercising their right to freedom of information. The role of private TV channels in this era is highly informative, educational with different genre of mix programming including sports and entertainment, so in this way, not only the public at large has been deprived from viewing their favorite TV channels but at the same time, the licensees of PEMRA and members of PBA are also suffering huge monetary losses due to unlawful proscription of their TV and Radio Channels. They are facing serious hardship and are unable to fulfill various obligations towards the advertisers, and in their other contractual obligations. In case, the proscription is not withdrawn immediately, both public as well as PEMRA licensees shall be seriously prejudiced.

In last, the PBA appealed to the President of Pakistan to issue immediate instructions to PEMRA and other government machinery to immediately withdraw proscription orders of private TV and radio channels and also return all seized/confiscated equipment of broadcasters and TV Operators forthwith. PBA further appealed to the President to withdraw the Ordinance which is totally unjustified and irrational.