

Karachi: 25 March 2020

The Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has urged the Government of Sindh to take appropriate measures for inmates in prisons across the province to protect them from the corona virus and immediately release those in jails in petty crimes.

In a statement released here on Wednesday, the Chairperson of the Commission Justice (Retd.) Majida Razvi and other members of the Commission said that the prisoners are very vulnerable to the widely spreading virus given the overcrowding in jails and need special attention at the moment.

The Commission has also suggested testing of inmates and jail staff and other necessary measures to protect them from virus. It has also asked the jail authorities to chalk out alternate plans of supply of needed food and other stuff while their regular interviews are stopped. "It is quite important that the inmates are provided with adequate and hygiene food and have access to medicines," the Commission statement added.

As the sudden spike of pandemic in every nook and corner of the country has driven the country towards a lockdown, the plight of prisons of Sindh province in Jails needed to be taken care of. The biochemical composition of corona virus suggests that it is very contagious and can spread easily from person to person hence, keeping in view the intensity of the threat the pandemic is posing to the masses the Commission suspects that the jails could become the breeding ground for the virus if timely actions are not taken.

The Commission, during the course of its visits to various jails in the Sindh province has identified and reported to the Government that all the jails of the province are over-crowded. In the present situation all the inmates, whether UTP or convicts, are at a greater risk of contracting and multiplying corona virus with thousands of other inmates.

Although the Honorable High Court of Islamabad has taken cognizance of the situation and has granted bail to various under trial prisoners charged under minor offences, but severity of the situation demands precautionary steps within the jail premises in Sindh as well. Hence, the Commission urges the authorities to add jails of the province of Sindh in their mitigation plan by:

1. Introducing corona virus testing services inside each jail of the province.
2. Formation of an isolation ward and quarantine facility inside the jail premises along with the provision of medical and para-medical staff.
3. Identify and closely monitor the aged, weaker and vulnerable inmates with pre-existing medical conditions and shift them to a separate barrack.
4. Release those in minor crimes on bail.
5. Immediately release of those whose bail has been granted but just languishing in the jails because they don't have money to pay penalties.

The Sindh Human Rights Commission is a statutory body established under Sindh Protection of Human Rights Act 2011, with a mandate to promote and protect human rights in Sindh province by making statutory interventions.

Justice (Retd.) Majida Razvi
Chairperson
Sindh Human Rights Commission
Government of Sindh