

## HUMAN RIGHTS IN TODAY'S SINDH

Human rights are violated by the Federal Government by imposing price controls. In some cases prices fixed are 15-30% above the imported prices to protect local producers. In other cases where due to intervention of the government production costs of local items are high, some quantity of such items is allowed to be imported to keep the prices within limits. These two cases could be justified but there is a third class of cases, where due to serious shortages of the consumer goods, these are imported and sold at about 50% subsidy. This apparently is a benevolent act of the government, but since items of the this category are produced locally, the government forces the producers to sell the commodity at 50% rate, i.e., forces the producers to subsidise the items by 50%. In this case the government itself procures the locally produced commodity and releases it to the consumer at the rate paid to the producer and this is just 50% of rate of imported commodity. By this act the Government has kept a community of producers of certain commodities below the poverty line by not paying them even for their labour.

Wheat is such a commodity. Its C&F price is more than Rs.600 per maund (40 kgs) today. Government in the name of support price allows a price of Rs.415 to the Pakistan farmer. This is not support price but suppressed price. The Government itself procures wheat from the farmers at low price, but imports at Rs.500 per maunds and releases to the flour mills at Rs.415.

The disadvantages are that wheat producers live below poverty line. They reduce inputs to this crop and thereby yield goes down and country cannot be self-sufficient in wheat. Due to shortage of the product, wheat is to be imported. Should prices be rationalised, the farmer will increase inputs and consequently the production will go up. The country can also be self sufficient in food within 3-4 years, as has already been demonstrated. In 1975/76 to 1979/80 prices of wheat were the same as imported prices and for the first and the last time Pakistan became self-sufficient in food in 1981.

The consequences of this artificially created low prices are:

- Rural poverty specially among wheat growers.
- Farmers live below poverty line, cannot afford 2500 K. calories per day, cannot maintain house, family cannot educate children, cannot have proper shelter.
- Illiteracy, superstition, exploitation by land owners, Pirs, Syeds in the name of religion.
- Unemployment in rural areas leading to thefts, decoity, exploitation by police etc.