

**Senate committee calls for abolishing travel blacklist**

ISLAMABAD: Describing the blacklist as being without constitutional and legal sanctity, the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice on Friday recommended abolishing it along with all such lists that impinge upon the fundamental rights of citizens.

“The practice of putting names on the blacklist should be stopped immediately,” said the chairman of the committee Senator Javed Abbasi.

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The Senator was presenting a point of order raised in the house in December last year regarding the procedure for putting names in the blacklist and its legal value.

The point of order was referred by the Senate chairman to the Standing Committee on Law and Justice for consideration.

The committee considered the matter in its meetings held late December and then again this month. It also invited ministries of interior and human rights for their inputs on the subject.

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The house was informed that during the course of the briefings, Immigration and Passports Director General Ishrat Ali said that the blacklist was being maintained in pursuance of the Passport Manual, 2006. The provision has remained part of the manual since 1957. However, some of its parts and categories were incorporated in the Passport Act, 1974, and the remaining continued to be part of the passport manuals, as and when issued.

The report said that the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports do not initiate this list but the names were added on the recommendations of Judicial and quasi-judicial forums.

It quoted the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) director general as saying that the agency only implemented the blacklist through an automated system, which did not process the case of a person whose name had been added in the list.

The report mentioned Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari as stating that such lists and the likes of it were not acceptable in a democracy, which impinged upon the fundamental rights and had no legal sanctity behind it.

It said that the authorities concerned also recognised that the blacklist and the likes of it had no legal value and that the exit control list (ECL) was the only valid list in this regard.

All members present deplored the long-standing practice of issuing and maintaining blacklist and termed it as ultra vires and in violation of fundamental rights.

The committee also noted that the Passport Act was enacted by the parliament and no such power of maintaining blacklist was delegated to the executive.

In absence of any such power, the government had no authority to maintain such lists, it said.

Demanding an end to putting names in the list, the committee recommended that the Ministry of Interior submit a compliance report regarding abolishing it before the Senate within 10 days.

The matter was also taken up the Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights under its chairperson Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar late in December 2018.

It had also described the blacklist and other such practices as a concoction of the FIA and outside the law.

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