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FSC judgement on WPA criticised

ISLAMABAD: Members of the Insani Haqooq Ittehad, a network of non-government organisations, civil society and human rights activists, on Friday condemned the Federal Shariat Court's attempt to revert the Women's Protection Act's clauses 11, 25, 28 and 29 back to the Hudood Ordinance. They said that another alarming aspect of the FSC judgement was its attempt to expand its jurisdiction and undermine constitutional jurisdiction of high courts and the Supreme Court. "We would like to state that women's rights groups struggled for more than 27 years to repeal the Hudood Ordinance. Plethora of evidence was gathered through

research to show the anti-women nature of the ordinance and its massive misuse, particularly the Zina Ordinance," the members said, adding that thousands of women languished in jails under the Zina Ordinance, while the acquittal rate of women charged under this law was more than 90 percent. "In response to consistent demands by women for the repeal of the Hudood Ordinance, the Women's Protection Act was finally introduced in 2006 by parliament to redress the violation of women's rights under these laws. The recent study of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has shown that the Women's Protection Act has brought

tremendous relief to women. Currently, there are hardly any women who are in prison under the Hudood Ordinance," they said, adding that it was highly deplorable that the Federal Shariat Court had made an attempt to reverse the gain made by the Women's Protection Act. "We believe that the institution of the Council of Islamic Ideology and parallel judicial structure of Federal Shariat and Appellate Shariat Court was a part of the political project of Ziaul Haq, who used religion to legitimise his own dictatorial rule. We strongly demand that all citizens of this country be treated as equal, under one law and one judicial system," they said. **STAFF REPORT**