**No To Plebgate**

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In every society, the police force bears the solemn duty of upholding law and order, preventing crime, and meticulously investigating criminal activities. This mission applies not only to Pakistan but to law enforcement agencies worldwide. However, Pakistan’s law enforcement faces unique challenges, including limited resources and adverse working conditions, which add complexity to their task of delivering effective law enforcement services. Among the pressing issues confronting the police in Pakistan, the struggle to gain the trust and confidence of the public looms large. Despite their unwavering commitment, round-the-clock dedication, and numerous sacrifices, the police grapple with a substantial trust deficit. This trust gap can be attributed to a pivotal factor: the glaring lack of respect accorded to constables. Regrettably, the police department itself has at times failed to nurture a sense of self-respect among constables. When individuals value themselves and maintain self-respect, they are more likely to extend respect to others.
The word “constable” has its origins in the Old French word “conestable,” which is derived from the Late Latin term “comes stabuli.” “Comes” in Late Latin meant “count” or “companion,” and “stabuli” referred to a stable. The combination of these elements gives the meaning “count of the stable” or “officer of the stable.” Police constables, though officially recognised as officers by law, often find themselves receiving unequal levels of respect both within and outside the department. This disparity between their legal status and societal treatment further deepens the trust deficit between constables and the public they are tasked to safeguard. It is disheartening to observe how constables frequently endure disrespectful treatment. Powerful individuals, often resorting to intimidation, threats, and a disdainful tone, challenge constables when they dare to enforce the law. “Do You Know Who I Am?” situations are not uncommon, where individuals with influence seek preferential treatment.
Constables undoubtedly constitute the backbone of the police force, often comprising over 80% of the total police strength. They play a pivotal role in upholding public safety and maintaining law and order in our communities. These dedicated officers serve as the face of the police force and interact most frequently with the public. You can find constables at various posts and locations, diligently carrying out their duties even in the harshest conditions. They stand guard at pickets, enduring extreme weather conditions to maintain order. Their responsibilities include patrolling neighbourhoods, supporting polio vaccination campaigns, fulfilling judicial duties, protest handling, and assisting in the transportation of criminals.
Constables are often the first to respond when criminal activities threaten public safety. They actively participate in police raids to apprehend criminals and terrorists, ensuring that those responsible for criminal activities face justice. Their commitment to their roles is unmistakable, as they willingly put themselves in the bullet’s way to protect the community. These officers are entrusted with providing security to individuals of immense importance, both domestically and internationally. They diligently safeguard those at risk, ensuring their safety during movements and events. This responsibility demands constant vigilance, unwavering dedication, and a high level of professionalism, even under challenging circumstances. Constables are a common sight in front of mosques during significant occasions like Eid. They stand guard with unwavering bravery, ensuring the safety of worshippers and maintaining a peaceful atmosphere during these important religious events. While many people cherish holidays and special occasions, constables remain on duty, ensuring the well-being and security of the public.
Recognising the invaluable contributions of constables in the police force is essential for enhancing the public’s perception of law enforcement. Understanding the challenging and diverse roles that constables undertake in society allows us to cultivate a more respectful and supportive relationship with these dedicated officers who work tirelessly to ensure our safety. To foster a community where the police naturally exhibit respect for all, we must extend our respect to constables. Demonstrating through our actions that they are not only deserving of honour and respect but also valued for their sacrifices, services, and duties initiates a positive cycle of mutual respect. This respect is not just for constables; it extends to our state, our country, and our entire nation. If a child offers a flower to a constable while the officer is on duty or if an elder simply extends a hand in a gesture of respect, saying, ‘Officer, we genuinely appreciate the dedication and professionalism with which you carry out your responsibilities,’ it would undoubtedly come as a pleasant surprise to the constable and could potentially have a positive impact on the officer’s demeanour when interacting with the public.
It’s important to emphasise that advocating for respect toward constables does not suggest that the police force is flawless. There is undoubtedly room for improvement in every facet of the police force. However, if we aspire to establish an effective, supportive, cooperative, and esteemed police force for ourselves and future generations, it must begin with the demonstration of respect for constables. This mutual respect forms the foundation for stronger police-community relations and the creation of a safer and more harmonious society. Building trust between the police and the public in Pakistan is a complex endeavour that requires joint commitment.