



## Military should be expelled from Balochistan's education institutions: HRCB, BHRO

Baloch Human Rights Organization (BHRO) and Human Rights Council of Balochistan (HRCB) are concerned about the harassment scandal emerging out of the University of Balochistan (UoB) that university administration and the security department officials are involved in blackmailing and exploiting female students by recording their candid moments without consent.

According to reports, the security staff of the University of Balochistan (UoB) had installed secret cameras to record candid videos of the students and then to blackmail them. Cameras were installed in places like washrooms and smoking areas, as investigation report says.

Balochistan has been under military siege for the last two decades. Independent journalists and human rights activists are not allowed to enter the region. Therefore, it remains isolated from the rest of the world, yet stories of serious crimes often committed by state institutions keep pouring out.

As a counter-insurgency measure, the country's powerful army and central government have deployed thousands of soldiers with immense powers in Balochistan. A recent human rights report said over 700 soldiers were stationed at the university campus alone.

In some cases, schools in rural areas have been closed and the premises handed over to the army.

According to a report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's fact finding mission, released on October 2, 2019, around 10,000 students were enrolled in the university, being watched by over 700 FC personnel deployed at the UoB, after being declared the zonal Chiltan headquarters of the Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force.

The HRCP, before even the UoB scandal exploded, highlighted the complaints of some students that CCTV cameras were installed at their hostel. The report also hints about the harassment and blackmailing taking place at the campus.

The HRCP urged an end to the unwarranted and permanent involvement of the security forces in the affairs of educational institutions.

We, as human rights groups, are looking closely into the progress on the investigation and we are not satisfied. We believe that the FC and military should have been included in the investigation as there have been growing complaints against the FC of blackmailing and exploiting students.

We believe that the latest scandal will also discourage people in the patriarchal Baloch and Pakhtun families living in Balochistan from sending their daughters to school. Girls enrollment rate in Balochistan is already one of the lowest in the world.

We urge the concerned authorities that all the educational institutions be demilitarized and the FC should be made accountable for its growing human rights abuses in the region.