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Barricaded in Home, Bhutto Says President Should Resign

By [DAVID ROHDE](#) and [JANE PERLEZ](#)

LAHORE, [Pakistan](#), Tuesday, Nov. 13 — Hundreds of riot police early today blocked the opposition leader [Benazir Bhutto](#) and her supporters from making a planned long march from this eastern city 160 miles through Punjab Province to the capital, Islamabad. Ms. Bhutto, barricaded in her home here, called for the resignation of Pakistan's president, Gen. [Pervez Musharraf](#), in a phone interview with CNN this morning.

About 900 police officers surrounded the house where Ms. Bhutto was staying here and arrested party workers who tried to cross police lines to reach her. Riot police using barbed wire and dump trucks loaded with sand blocked off the neighborhood.

"We will definitely try to come out," said Farzana Raja, a party spokesman, referring to street protests. "She will definitely try to come out." Minutes later, the police arrested Ms. Raja and several dozen other party workers, and in the interview with CNN, Ms. Bhutto said, "My plans have been taken out of my hands by force."

About 3,500 police officers were deployed around the city, and they arrested hundreds of workers from her political party today. Riot police officers were outside government buildings here as well, in anticipation of protests by Ms. Bhutto's supporters.

[Bhutto also said it was now likely that her Pakistan Peoples Party would boycott January parliamentary elections and indicated that she wanted to build an alliance with other opposition leaders, including former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, to restore democracy, The Associated Press reported.

"It seems unlikely that the Peoples Party will participate in the upcoming elections," Bhutto said by telephone to a group of reporters.]

The Pakistani government placed her under house arrest on Monday for seven days, members of her party said, in an attempt to block the march. On Friday, a huge police presence in the city of Rawalpindi prevented a rally planned by her there.

Other opposition groups have accused her of mounting only token protests while negotiating a power-sharing agreement with General Musharraf, at the urging of the United States.

Standing in front of police barriers, Yousuf Arza Giani, a party vice president, said that the party had broken off all talks with the government. "It's really bad, extremely bad," he said. In her interview with CNN, Ms. Bhutto said that she and her supporters were not talking with General Musharraf either directly or indirectly.

A government spokesman, Tariq Azim Khan, citing intelligence data, suggested that Ms. Bhutto could be a

target for militants. She survived a suicide-bombing attack last month in Karachi when she returned to Pakistan, after eight years in self-imposed exile, to lead her party in parliamentary elections.

Although there is general agreement that a threat to her exists, General Musharraf is widely seen here as using the specter of terrorism to expand his own powers and squelch all opposition. Party officials scoffed at the notion of a threat. "It's a drama — there is no reality to it," a local spokeswoman said today.

About 140 of Ms. Bhutto's party workers were killed in the attack in Karachi on Oct. 18. The government has used that attack as public justification for stopping her protests. It has also made clear that any demonstrations are illegal under the emergency decree.

The decree has also cast uncertainty on parliamentary elections, scheduled for January.

Two of Pakistan's bigger opposition parties said Monday that they would probably boycott the elections if emergency rule was still in place. Ms. Bhutto has not said whether she would pull her party, the Pakistan People's Party, out of the elections. General Musharraf said Sunday that emergency rule would continue at least until the elections.

On Sunday, Ms. Bhutto called the announcement a "positive" but insufficient step. She assumed a slightly tougher tone on Monday, suggesting that her negotiations with General Musharraf had come to an end.

"We cannot work with anyone who has suspended the Constitution, imposed emergency rule and oppressed the judiciary," she said in Lahore.

Raza Zafarul Haz, the chairman of one of the country's biggest parties, the Pakistan Muslim League of former Prime Minister [Nawaz Sharif](#), said that for free and fair elections to go ahead, emergency rule would have to be lifted and judges who were fired after the imposition of the rule would need to be reinstated.

The party will make its final decision within a week on whether to participate, he said.

Liaqat Baloch, the secretary general of Pakistan's most popular Islamic party, Jamaat-e-Islami, said the party was considering withholding its candidates if the emergency was still in place in January.

Despite Ms. Bhutto's tougher comments on Monday, analysts said they believed that she had not completely moved away from her original plan, devised with the backing of the Bush administration, to seek a power-sharing deal with General Musharraf.

As the leader of the Pakistan People's Party, which has usually commanded about a third of the popular vote, Ms. Bhutto is trying to steer a path between a desire to return to power and not to appear to be too close to the widely unpopular president.

Ms. Bhutto was prime minister of Pakistan twice and was twice dismissed before she was able to complete her terms. In the CNN interview, she reiterated her desire to stay in Pakistan. "I prefer to live in Pakistan in jail," she said, "than to leave."

Separately, foreign ministers from the Commonwealth of Britain and its former colonies said Pakistan would be suspended from the organization unless the decree was repealed and General Musharraf stepped

down as army chief by Nov. 22, The Associated Press reported.

Jane Perlez reported from Islamabad, and David Rohde from Lahore, Pakistan. Salman Masood contributed reporting from Lahore.

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