

# Miandad takes guard for his captain

## OUR BUREAU

**Calcutta:** The pressure seems to be mounting on the Pakistan government to release Imran Khan, who has been imprisoned for the last three years, after Javed Miandad became the first high-profile cricketer from the country to openly speak in support of his former captain.

An emotional Miandad, who was an integral part of the Imran-led 1992 World Cup-winning team, expressed concerns about the former Prime Minister's health and appealed to the government to resolve their differences.

In a podcast recorded last week, Miandad also offered to help Imran, 73, who has been serving a sentence since August 2023, in any way possible.

"I pray that what's going on with him gets resolved, because he does not deserve this," a tearful Miandad said. "What's being done to him is not right. It's unnecessary. He has a family too."

"I think about it all the time, what he must be doing

(in prison), what he must be thinking of. We were so close. We used to be together and think so much of each other. We took Pakistan to such new heights. I can't help but feel so sad about it."

Pakistan's former cricketers have refrained from expressing their views on the Imran issue, though they have admired his skills as a player. Ramiz Raja recently spoke about Imran's health in the 'Stick to Cricket' podcast with Michael Vaughan and Alastair Cook, but stayed away from making any appeal.

Imran played 78 of his 88 Test matches with Miandad from 1976 to 1992, and the duo was widely acknowledged to have been the driving forces behind Pakistan's success in the 1980s and early 1990s.

They also played together for Sussex in the English County Championship. Miandad rubbished claims of rivalry and ego problems between the two during their playing days.

"There was no rivalry between me and Imran. There



Javed Miandad and Imran Khan during their playing days.

(Picture sourced from X)

was no fight between us. I've never complained that Imran wronged me in any way. I had a great career which I am very thankful for. Imran and I played county cricket together too, we were together for more than half the year, either in county cricket or with Pakistan. We had a great time together," Miandad recalled.

Last week, 21 former international captains sent an open letter to Pakistan Prime Min-

ister Shehbaz Sharif, requesting that Imran receive adequate healthcare in jail and that his constitutional rights are protected. Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev and Dilip Vengsarkar were among the former India captains who signed the appeal.

Australia captain Pat Cummins was the first current captain to extend support and back the petition, initiated by Greg Chappell, on Friday.

"There's so much respect in the world for Imran," Miandad said. "He has given Pakistan so much. We should think about that. We need to bury the hatchet. He's a former Prime Minister... God forbid, if something happens to him in jail, all of Pakistan will weep. And at that time, they will all ask why they did this to Imran."

"Just release him, what difference does it make to you? If something like this can happen to one of us, we'll all be upset. If something like this is happening to my brother, of course I'll be upset."

Another of Imran's teammates, wicketkeeper Moin Khan, also spoke out in a video on social media on Saturday.

"Imran Khan is very unwell," Moin said. "I appeal to the government of Pakistan that Imran be granted his rights as a former Prime Minister and citizen of Pakistan... I also appeal to all Pakistan cricketers to raise their voice in support of Imran. Those of us who played with him learned a lot from him, and he gave Pakistan cricket so

much."

British broadcaster *Sky Cricket*'s decision to air an interview with Imran's sons on the first day of the ongoing Lord's Test triggered a debate after the Pakistan Cricket Board threatened to not take the field in protest after Lunch. The PCB later lodged a formal complaint with *Sky Sports* for airing the interview.

During the interview with Mike Atherton, Imran's children raised concerns about their father's health and claimed that the Pakistan government was "trying to kill him". It is understood that PCB's threat was carried out under instructions from its chairman Mohsin Naqvi, who is also an interior minister in the government.

Kasim and Sulaiman, Imran's sons from his marriage to Jemima Goldsmith, claimed that their father has lost 80 per cent of his vision in one eye and lives in a "very small cell without any new books" for 23 hours a day. They say there is no air conditioning despite very high temperatures.



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**JAVED MIANDAD**  
on Imran Khan