

Building the Labour Party Pakistan

Saturday 23 January 2010, by [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 22 January 2010).

The political perspectives of the LPP have been put to the test several times in a rapidly changing political situation. From day one we opposed General Musharaf military dictatorship. We oppose both American imperialism and religious fanaticism while some feel they must support one side or the other.

Almost all of the present LPP leadership, including women leaders, were jailed under the Musharaf regime for demanding democratic rights or in the struggle for workers' and peasants' rights. The LLP has worked to maintain its political space and refused to be driven underground.

Unlike the traditional Left parties, who set up organizations controlled by the party, since its inception the Labour Party Pakistan has put special emphasis on helping to develop independent social, labour and peasant organizations and other social movements. For example, there is no trade union wing of LPP. Instead we supported the development of the National Trade Union Federation, formed in 1998, and also aided the Pakistan Workers Confederation from its beginning in 1994.

Likewise the LPP has no peasant party wing. It helped a peasant movement, Anjuman Mozareen Punjab at Military Farms, and in 2003 facilitated bringing together more than 22 peasant organizations. This Pakistan Peasant Coordination Committee united under a common platform.

In 2000 the LPP helped to develop the Women Workers Help Line. As an independent women's organization, the WWHL has become the first organization many working-class women join. [1]

LPP also helped to develop a youth organization, the Progressive Youth Front, in 2003. It is making steady inroads among the youth. The LPP devoted energy to help the National Student Federation form in 2000. We continue to help this traditional Left-wing group develop into a major student organization.

The LPP strategy of working with the social movements has been one of its distinctive characteristics. During a discussion in 1992 among the Struggle Group, a predecessor of LPP, the decision was made to help social movements develop, even to the point of starting and nurturing social organizations. We opened schools for working children and with the help of the Swedish Teacher Union, we expanded this network. Other Swedish trade unions and progressive organizations helped us start several projects. These ranged from organizing new trade unions to establishing a trade unions' resource center, making a video documentary on trade unions, as well as campaigns for peace and democracy. This work was coordinated by the Education Foundation, which today has become the Labour Education Foundation. Since 2000 the LEF has established itself as an independent social organization and played a vital role in developing the trade union movement in Pakistan. [2]

Back in 1992 The Struggle group joined Joint Action Committee For Peoples Rights Lahore (JAC) at its founding and that relationship has continued when the LPP was formed. Although the LLP was criticized by many on the Left in the mid-1990s as an "NGO party," the LLP chose not to respond directly to this attack with the expectation that our work in practice would be the best answer.

The LLP strategy of building networks and alliances includes Left unity in Pakistan. We were part of the Awami Itihad in 1997 and later of Awami Jahoori Tehreek (2006). Today we are part of a coordination committee for progressive parties.

LPP supporters have worked to develop several other networks with other left groups and social movements. These have included the Anti-War Committee Pakistan (1991) and the Anti-Privatization Alliance (2005). Since 1996 we have held the Faiz Ahmad Faiz Amn Mela annually. Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the revolutionary poet had inspired millions in the Indian subcontinent and worldwide, one of the most respected poet of Urdu. He devoted his life to strengthen Left and the peace movement.

We believe it is important to learn to work together in a country where there are many who actively oppose a socialist perspective and some who refuse to even listen. It is important to be, at the same time, very firm in one's ideology and very flexible tactically. This means we express our opinion, even when disagreeing with others, but work to maintain cordial relationships.

Magnifying Our Voice

Within 24 hours of launching the Labour Party Pakistan on Facebook, we received responses from over 200 friends. Just launched on 19 January 2010, our LPP Facebook page has more friends joining the group every day. [3]

LPP has also build a Yahoo email group called Socialist Pakistan News, mostly known as SPN. With over 5400 members, it is the largest of any Pakistani political email group. Launched in 2004, it has become a source of information, views and debates among the progressive forces not only in Pakistan but internationally. [4]

While in 2002 the LPP website [5] was the most read political website in Pakistan, it could not maintain the momentum. However it still has a solid readership and is a good source of information about trade unions, the peasant movement and progressive views.

Since 1997 LPP supporters have regularly printed a weekly magazine Mazdoor Jeddojuhd (www.jeddojuhd.com). For the prior 17 years appeared as a monthly. The weekly has a small subscription-based print edition within Pakistan and is widely read in an on-line edition within Pakistan and across the globe.

International Solidarity Essential

LPP is very keen to participate in international and regional movements and alliances. It has been part of the anti-globalization movement and has helped to organize some of the largest anti-imperialist demonstrations and rallies from a progressive point of view in Pakistan. Our supporters have participated in all the World Social Forums since 2004 when WSF Mumbai was held. This work included the Pakistan Social Forum, and led the way, in 2006, for the World Social Forum Karachi.

During its initial year of existence, the LPP was part of an International called the Committee for Workers International (CWI), but left within the year. Since then it has established close links with several international trends, groups and movements including the Democratic Socialist Party Australia, the Scottish Socialist Party, the Fourth International (FI), as well as both the LIT and UIT in Latin America. With others who left the CWI, the LLP formed a Socialist discussion group [6]. We have also established close links with Swedish trade unions and lately with the Social Democratic Party Sweden Goteburg and Kalmar districts. The LPP became a permanent observer of the FI in 2004.

Preparations for 5th Congress:

The LPP has a proud record of its democratic internal life. We have held all our congress in a timely manner. The 5th Congress will take place 27-29 January 2010. For the first time the LPP will conclude the congress with a mass rally. Two labour and peasant movements have joined together to organize this event; we anticipate an attendance of 30,000. If that happens, it will be the largest gathering of Left forces in Punjab within recent times.

On 29th January an international workers peasant's conference is planned at famous Dhobi Ghat Ground Faisalabad. These events are taking place at a time when the parties of the rich have abandoned the working people of Pakistan. They have been left on the mercy of the sheer exploitation of so called free market and the imperialist aggression. Prices are going up and there is no wage increase.

The religious and right wing parties are giving full political support to all the violent actions of the religious fanatics on the name of fighting "imperialism". The daily drone attacks by Americans are giving some political justifications to the fanatics to carry on. The space for progressive politics has been saturated by the conflict of right wing parties of the rich and the religious fundamentalism.

The LPP congress and the convening of the mass conference of workers and peasants is an effort to snatch the lost space.

The conference on 29th January is been organized jointly by Labour Qaumi Movement and Anjuman Mozareen Punjab, the two most militant and mass organizations of the workers and peasants. There is no parallel to the struggle of these two movements in different districts of Punjab.

The main leaders of different Left and social organizations and movements are speaking at the conference.

One of the main highlight of the conference will be mass participation of working class women. Workers and peasants are bringing their families to the event.

The main aim of the three days event is to build a progressive space in Pakistani politics. It is new beginning. This is our answer to the rise of religious fundamentalism. Mass mobilizations of the working class will strengthen their voice and empower them to challenge for their rights.

We all are making financial contribution to these events by all mean. Day and night is been spent by many to build the event. However, we are in desperate need of raising at least 500,000 Rupees (\$6000) during the next one week.

We have no rich backers. We need your support now. We could have raised this amount earlier. However, the children and the families of the four comrades who died on 13 December 2009 in a road accident became a priority of ours. We have raised nearly one million Rupees and an appeal to raise three million is still on its way.

This is an emergency call to all our friends and supports to come to help us. We have all the hope of raising this amount within this week.

By Farooq Tariq

Please send your amount on line if you are in Pakistan to
Labour Party Pakistan

Account number 2679-3
MCB Bank,
Beaon Road Branch 0949 Lahore

From outside Pakistan

Account Title: Labour Education Foundation
Account Number: 01801876
Swift: ALFHPKKALDA
Bank: BANK ALFALAH LTD., LDA PLAZA Branch, KASHMIR ROAD, LAHORE, PAKISTAN

Or please send through any mean you consider is ok.

Appeal by:

Nisar Shah, Farooq Tariq, Nazli Jave
Labour Party Pakistan

Yousaf Baluch, Nasir Mansoor
Chairman National Trade Union Federation

Azra Shad, Bushra Khaliq,
Women Workers Help Line

Khalid Mehmood, Niaz Khan
Labour Education Foundation

Kashis Aslam
Progressive Youth Front

Mian Abdul Qayum, Aslam Meraj, Nasim
Labour Qaumi Movement

Nadeem Ashraf, Mehr Abdul Sattar
Anjaman Mozareen Punjab

Please indicate your support at
farooqtariq hotmail.com
or call 0300 8411845

Footnotes

[1] www.wwhl.org.pk

[2] www.lef.org.pk

[3] <http://www.facebook.com/p.php?i=564237409&k=5YA5ZYS23T6O4FGAVDXY2USUP3DAY42&oid=255529099498>

[4] [socialist_pakistan_news yahoo.com](mailto:socialist_pakistan_news@yahoo.com)

[5] www.laborpakistan.org

[6] [socialistdiscussion yahoo.com](mailto:socialistdiscussion@yahoo.com)