

Free Baba Jan and all other political prisoners! - Solidarity Statement of the ALTHAR sent to the Pakistan Embassy in the Philippines

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Pakistan Solidarity Statement of the Alliance of Tri-People Advocates for Human Rights (ALTHAR) sent to the Pakistan Embassy in the Philippines

Alliance of TriPeople Advocates for Human Rights (ALTAHR)
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26 September 2011

Asif Ali Zardari
President
Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Thru:

MR. Mohsin Razi
Ambassador, Embassy of Pakistan
Manila, Philippines

Your Excellencies,

Warm Greetings of Peace and Prosperity!

We, from Alliance of TriPeople Advocates for Human Rights believed that solidarity among nations is as important as human dignity and human rights. Thus, knowing the human right concerns in Pakistan, we are disturbed and so we write this appeal to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan thru the Pakistan Embassy in the Philippines. We also believe that both offices and authorities can really help in promoting social justice and human rights in this part of the world.

As an alliance of peace and human rights Muslim, Christian and Indigenous People activists in Mindanao, Philippines we would like to join fellow activists around the world and in Pakistan our call as stated in our appeal below.

Free Baba Jan!
Free all Political Prisoners!
Repatriation for the Victims of Police Violence!

Repatriations for the Victims of the landslide of July 4!

It has come to our knowledge that last August 11, Pakistani police used live bullets against people demanding payment of compensation allowance following a devastating landslide which happened a year before in the valley of Hunza, on July 4, 2101. This landslide, in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, destroyed several houses and important roads. The local administration abandoned the affected community and pocketed compensation payments intended for several affected families.

When villagers demonstrated on August 11, on the occasion of the arrival of the minister for the province, police responded with lethal violence killing Afzal Baig (22 years old), and his father, Sher Ullah Baig (50 years old). In reaction, the population of Aliabad and other localities of Hunza rose up, and for four days the population took control of the city. To calm the people, authorities claimed that persecutions had begun against the police officers responsible for the killing and granted financial compensation to the grieving families. This was only a maneuver to prepare a new wave of repression. On August 19, 36 people were arrested, among them ten members of Labor Party Pakistan (LPP), six of whom remain in detention. A new wave of arrests began on September 16, with 33 arrests.

Baba Jan, a member of the federal committee of the LPP and a leader of the Progressive Youth Front, was very involved in the popular protests. He initially escaped arrest on August 19 and went underground. However, he was in danger of being summarily executed ("disappeared") if found by the police. The area of Gilgit-Baltistan is well-known for violations of Human Rights by the authorities. Baba Jan chose to give himself up to authorities, a month after going underground, but not before holding a press conference so that no one could be unaware of what might happen to him. According to information obtained by the LPP, Baba Jan was removed from his cell by the Pakistani secret services - the ISI - and tortured for two days: suspended by ropes and severely beaten.

Baba Jan and others are the targets of repression because they played an important part in making known the scandal of July 4, 2010 and its sequels. The authorities are now using violence and repression to try and cover up their abandonment and cheating of the victims of July 4 landslide and the killings committed by its police.

We strongly condemn the Pakistani authorities for using violence, arrest and intimidation as a method to try to silence people's just demands and the people's protest against its repressive policies.

We join all other progressive groups, political organizations, human rights and peace activists demanding:

1. The Pakistan Authorities to release immediately and unconditionally Baba Jan and all other political prisoners;
2. The Pakistan government to compensate the victims of July 4 landslide and police violence;
3. The Pakistan government to prosecute the police and intelligence officials responsible for Human Rights violations;
4. The Pakistan government to stop violence in addressing people's democratic demands.

Hand in hand with all human rights activists in the world we call on international and national action groups in Asia, Europe, America and across the world to give solidarity to the political prisoners in Pakistan and condemn the Human Rights violations committed by the Pakistan Authorities and support the people's movement in Gilgit-Baltistan.

We, from ALTAHR would hope that this appeal will be heard by your Excellencies and human rights and justice will prevail!

In Solidarity and Respectfully yours,

Adonna Orquillas
ALTAHR
Mindanao Convenor

P.S.

* Ms. Adonna Orquillas, the Convenor of the Alliance, is a long-time human rights worker in Mindanao and the Philippines and is one of the 14 Human Rights Defender Awardee of the country.