

Pakistan - Protest of power loom workers against 12 unionists trial in ATC in Karachi

Thursday 5 April 2012, by [Correspondent\(s\)](#) (Date first published: 4 April 2012).

Large number of trade union activists staged third protest demonstration against the arrest power looms labourers of Ittehad Town at Karachi Press Club (KPC) on Tuesday.

These workers trial is being conducted in Anti-terrorism Court (ATC) and six of them in the police custody and some other who have been nominated in FIR are currently on bail. These labourers were working for six power looms units of Ittehad Town and they had formed union to get their due rights.

The protest demonstration was organized by All-Ittehad Power Looms Mazdoor Union which is affiliated with National Trade Union Federation (NTUF). The activists condemned the labour disputes trial in ATC which according to them is clear violation of directives of Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The activists demanded from the government to stop anti-workers policies and to release the arrested workers besides withdrawing cases against them.

The participants chanted slogans against anti-labourers tactics and holding placards on which slogans like 'torture on labourers unacceptable,' 'release the workers and accept the demands of labourers were inscribed.

Trade union activists like Abdul Mohammad, Muhammad Amin, Fazal Hayat, Nasir Mansoor and some other speakers made speeches on this occasion.

Moreover, trade union activists have appealed to higher authorities in Pakistan to release the power looms workers immediately who have been arrested on the charges of terrorism and extortion.

In a letter addressed to President of Pakistan and others it urged them to prosecute the officials of Mowachko police station, its SHO and an official of law enforcing agency for keeping labourers in illegal custody and torturing them in order to extract confessions of extortion

On 21 March 2012, the law enforcing agencies including the police and the rangers had arrested seven workers from Ittehad industrial town, Baldia town and released on labourer afterward.

However, the spokesman of the rangers had denied the arrest of any labourers when contacted by *The News*.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Power loom Mazdoor Union has filed an application before the Labour Department of Government of Sindh and asked for an intervention in order to address the malpractices of the owners of the power looms. The owners of the power looms have been accused of not allowing labour inspections, running factories in residential areas, not paying workers according to the government announcements, forcing people to work for ten to twelve hours a day and stealing the electricity from the labour communities.

The workers who were arrested are all from one group of textile mills which is known exporter of the country. The power looms want to avoid the taxes on textile mills and has therefore divided this group into small units. In these smaller units not more than 10 persons are hired in an effort to avoid trade unions and labour laws. In all these units, workers work for 10 to 12 working hours and the owners do not allow for factory inspections. The Labour Department turns a blind eye towards these practices.

There are around 2,000 power-looms and towel manufacturing industries in Ittehad Industrial Town, which are not duly registered under the Factory Act. The workers working in the factories question do not have appointment letters and they are not registered with the EOBI (Employees Old-age Benefit Institution) or with any other organization that is responsible for their welfare.

Barrister Salahudin and Sardar Azmat Advocate appearing in Sindh High Court and in Anti Terrorist court respectively to present the workers.

Today is the hearing in Anti terrorist court and hearing date in high court fixed on 12 March.

P.S.

From The News.