

Balochistan/Pakistan: Awami Workers Party hold demonstration to mourn Sabeen Mahmood's killing

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Dozens of political and trade union activists, civil society organisations and concerned citizens of Pakistan got together in front of the Lahore Press Club on Tuesday to reaffirm their commitment to continue Sabeen Mahmood's mission and hold conversations about Balochistan.

Representing the progressives and leftists of Pakistan, the Awami Workers Party believes that the way to mourn the loss of a dear comrade like Mahmood is to continue her mission. This will entail enabling free flow of ideas and information through constant conversations about issues like the gross violations of human rights in Balochistan.

Addressing the demonstration, AWP finance secretary Shazia Khan said Mahmood's killing was only the most recent example of the silencing of progressive voices that had dared to speak about the plight of the oppressed classes and nationalities in Pakistan. She recalled that in the past intellectuals like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Habib Jalib and leftist activists like Hasan Nasir and Abdul Rehman had suffered the wrath of powers-that-be for raising their voices for democracy, freedom of expression and civil liberties for all peoples and nationalities that inhabit the country. She said the military establishment needs to learn from their past experiences and realise that its attempts to suppress such voices would never bear any fruit.

AWP general secretary Farooq Tariq highlighted the need for progressives to join hands in the struggle for promotion of civil liberties and political rights in the country. He criticised the leadership of major political parties for their failure to protect civilian supremacy. He said the series of events in the wake of the Peshawar attack like the establishment of military courts show that the civilian leadership in the country had completely surrendered their authority to the military establishment. He said the most recent example of this complete surrender of authority by the civilian was the passing of the Cyber Crimes Bill by the national assembly committee. "The bill proposes incriminates political speech and expression on the social media," he said.

Bushra Khaliq said social movements had been allied with progressive forces from day one to secure political rights and liberties for the people. She said Mahmood's sacrifice should serve as a warning to the progressives that they could struggle against the oppressive state elite only through unity in their ranks.

Other who spoke on the occasion include Samson Salamat, Hasham Bin Rashid and Zahid Pervaiz.

The protestors demanded a fair and impartial investigation of Mahmood's assassination. They said an investigation that ended in fixing the responsibility on *na maloom afraad* (unidentified persons) would not be acceptable to the progressive and leftist forces in the country. They added that they would continue to hold demonstrations and stay in the streets until the perpetrators were exposed and brought to justice.

