

## **Saeed Baloch, General Secretary of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum arrested by paramilitary forces in Karachi!**

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The Awami Workers Party condemns the arrest of Saeed Baloch, General Secretary of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum by paramilitary forces in Karachi and calls for his immediate release. Saeed Baloch is a veteran activist and campaigner for fishermen's rights in Pakistan and has been wrongfully accused of involvement with gangs in Lyari. Even though there has been no evidence produced against him in any court, he can now be detained for up to three months without charge under the wide powers granted to the Rangers in Sindh under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The AWP sees the arrest of Saeed Baloch as another instance of political activists and workers being targeted under the guise of acting against 'terrorism'. Mr. Baloch has been an ardent advocate for climate justice, water conservation and environmental protection and an outspoken opponent of coal and nuclear energy. In particular, he has also spoken out recently against the construction of two nuclear power plants on the outskirts of Karachi, a development that scientists say could pose grave and potentially-catastrophic risks to the citizens and environment of the city.

The organization Mr. Baloch heads, the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum is one of the very few people's movements in the country that have effectively organised indigenous and local communities against the elitist and unjust policies of the state.

Over time the PFF has developed into a powerful movement and political force to protect the socioeconomic and political rights of the indigenous fisherfolk communities in Pakistan, which has also routinely ruffled the feathers of the government and paramilitary authorities in Sindh.

The Awami Workers Party extends its solidarity with the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum and demands the immediate release of Saeed Baloch as well as an end to the targeting of political and social activists and workers under the guise of anti-terror operations.

This incident highlights once again the dangers of handing over sweeping powers to military, paramilitary and law enforcement authorities under the draconian Anti-Terrorist and Protection of Pakistan Acts. Instead of actually tackling the material and ideological infrastructure of terrorism in the country, the authorities routinely abuse their powers to target those engaged in resistance to injustice and inequality.

The AWP remains committed to its belief that only a concerted alliance of progressives engaged in mass political and ideological struggle against this exploitative and militarized state can end this cycle of state and non-state violence in the country.

### **Awami Workers Party (AWP)**

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