

Pakistan: Memorial for a Lost Comrade, Asma Jahangir, deeply committed lawyer and human rights activist

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We at the People's Solidarity Forum are sad, devastated and disturbed by the sudden death of Asma Jahangir, lawyer, human rights activist extraordinaire, and above all, an incredible human being. We demand that the prime minister and federal government announce three days of mourning and a state funeral to honour the passing of one of the pillars of human rights in Pakistan.

However, her passing does not leave us hopeless. Her life reflects a message for us all activists, workers, women, students and conscious individuals that the space we cherish as progressives or activists today is rooted in a long-standing struggle by activists such as Asma Jahangir. Always ready and prepared to take a radical stand against oppressive forces, Asma's unwavering commitment to the downtrodden - women, minorities, peasants, workers, students - is a testament to her longstanding commitment and courage.

Asma's politics was rooted in solidarity with the oppressed classes of this country. She paved the way for a long-standing opposition to military rule and other anti-democratic politics that emerged in the country. Unlike traditional forces which remained distant from movements on the ground, Asma rooted her life's work in practice. Through advancing humanist principles undergirded by optimism, a strong commitment which represented emotions of optimism, a strong commitment to fundamental rights and democracy, she leaves behind a legacy of lifelong resistance and struggle.

For activists, Asma demonstrated that regardless of how high the stakes and how heavy the threats, attacks and pressure, if you stand your ground courageously, your stand can make all the difference to occupy and reinvigorate the shrinking space for progressive voices and counter the growing fascism in the country.

For female activists, she will be remembered as an icon that first rose to prominence in a period of rampant insecurity and growing violence against women. Her ability to project the women's movement was seminal to universalizing the rights movement towards a more humanist approach in which the dignity and rights of women, workers, peasants, activists, minorities, students and oppressed peoples was paramount.

The struggle against abuse of power and vicious attacks on democratic forces continues. Asma fought the good fight till the end, leaving behind for us an invaluable source of inspiration. The causes she represented - right of ownership for landless peasants of Okara, the case of environmentalist and socialist activist Baba Jan in Gilgit-Baltistan, missing persons and enforced disappearances, democracy, and the rights of religious minorities and women, among many others - will continue through our collective struggle for a progressive and egalitarian Pakistan.

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Rest in power



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