

Pakistan: Election Manifesto 2018 - An Alternative is Possible!

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There is a common perception in Pakistan that politics is only for the powerful, and that money, clout and deceit reflect “success” in politics. The Awami Workers Party, on the other hand, believes that a politics based on a progressive vision of society is not only possible but utterly necessary. In the upcoming elections we are taking our message to all parts of Pakistani society to convince the electorate that the existing political-economic system can be transformed through the power of the people.

Youth forms the bulk of Pakistan’s population, and the future of the country depends upon this generation of young people entering the political arena. Only by building a progressive politics can we bring prosperity and peace to the approximately 150 million young people, women, minorities, working classes and different nations and ethnicities residing in Pakistan, along with basic rights such as housing, health, education, and water.

Ever since we created the AWP in 2012, we have been striving to introduce progressive politics and ideas to the young generation and to support the struggles exploited and oppressed communities across the country, even while reactionary forces and state institutions lurch from one crisis to the next. The AWP has supported movements against patriarchy, class power, forced and bonded labour, neoliberal privatisation, for the regularisation of kachi abadis in urban areas, and agricultural reforms.

We believe that our role in these elections is the promotion of these movements and their demands. We will not only expose the old, establishment-dominated system, but present solid and practical alternatives in its stead. Many political parties have been tried and tested by the people of Pakistan. The same faces move from one party to another, misleading people through hollow slogans while tightening their grip on power. But this time, a new leadership based on youth, women and the working classes is emerging under the banner of AWP, with a manifesto demonstrating our clear commitment to social transformation.

A summary of our main agenda points are below, however for the full manifesto read the original Urdu manifesto [\[1\]](#).

1. Human Equality
2. Housing as a Fundamental Right
3. Gender Justice
4. Religious Harmony
5. Internationalism
6. Ecological Sustainability
7. A People’s Government
8. A Unified Education System for All
9. Political Freedom

10. A Multi-National Society

11. Dignified Work

Human Equality

In spite of many changes in society – urbanisation, the spread of technology, a growing middle class – the vast majority of Pakistan’s people, whether in urban or rural areas, are propertyless. In fact, the increasing control of international capital over the economy is leading to even greater concentration of wealth. We will impose limits on profits extracted by capital, introduce fundamental changes in the taxation system, and use resources, including land, minerals, forests and so on, for the welfare of the working classes. We will wipe away the remains of the feudal system and redistribute land occupied by the civilian and military bureaucracy through agricultural reforms.

Housing as a Fundamental Right

In addition to agricultural reforms and the distribution of land, the Awami Workers Party will also take steps to provide housing to all working class households in both cities and rural areas.

- Recognising the constitutional right to shelter, housing schemes will be established in all cities and town on a large scale in which low-income earning and homeless citizens will be given a plot of land and interest-free loans to build a home. 5% of the national budget will be allocated towards housing.
- All residents of katchi abadi informal settlement will be given land ownership rights and basic municipal services will be provided to them.
- Legislation will be made to regulate the use of land in cities, with the aim of ending the non-productive use of land, especially the uncontrolled speculative trading of land in the form of “real estate”.
- At least 25% of the area in all new housing schemes will be allocated for low-income earning citizens.

Gender Justice

Pakistan is one of the most patriarchal societies in the world. Women and girls are deprived of fundamental economic, political and cultural freedoms. Even though the number of women in the labour force is increasing at a rapid pace, women are behind men in the attainment of education, health and economic opportunities. And due to patriarchal traditions and discriminatory laws, women are regularly at the receiving end of brutal violence and oppression. We will strive to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination over time, and in the immediate instance legislate for equal educational and economic opportunities for women and girls, including equal pay and better working conditions. We will also create awareness to reduce instances of sexual harassment and abuse in homes, educational institutions and workplaces, and set into place a procedures for restorative justice.

Religious Harmony

The last 4 decades in Pakistan have seen the rise of extremist ideologies and sectarian violence, making the lives of religious minorities and those desiring religious tolerance extremely insecure. On one hand are discriminatory policies enacted by Zia ul Haq, and on the other hand hate-mongering in media and religious circles that target the innocent and oppressed through mass intimidation. Awami Workers Party believes that laws, discriminatory policies and organizations that promote extremism have no place in Pakistan. The Party will redress extremism by changing the curriculum

and adoption of strict media guidelines to promote religious freedoms around the principles of peaceful coexistence and tolerance. The party will struggle for the elimination of terrorism and war in every shape and form, and the propagation of peace not only in Pakistan but the entire region.

Internationalism

From the very inception of the state, Pakistan's rulers have formulated foreign policies on the direction of imperialist powers rather than on the basis of the interests of the country's people. Our relations with neighbouring countries have always been frayed, and as a result Pakistan and other countries have spent immense amounts of wealth on weapons of war instead of the development and betterment of the population. The Awami Workers Party believes that amicable relations with our neighbours is not only necessary for peace and prosperity but will also strengthen democracy. To support pro-freedom movements across the world the Party will develop a non-partisan foreign policy.

Ecological Sustainability

In Pakistan, just as the world over, the environment has suffered immensely because of unrestrained capitalistic practices. Temperatures have been rising throughout the world, while air and water pollution have reached alarming levels. If this situation is not addressed the very existence of future generations will be at risk. The Party vows to focus on renewable and sustainable forms of energy such as solar and wind power, and will make a clean environment one of our foremost policy priorities.

A People's Government

Pakistan's republic has to date failed to be truly democratic, due to the centralised system of government that has remained in place throughout our history. Local governments have historically been created military dictators to serve their own ends. The Awami Workers party will empower elected bodies at the local level in the truest sense so as to strengthen the federation at large. At the same time we will take all the necessary steps to make non-elected thana, kacheri and patwari systems truly subservient to elected representatives of the people.

A Unified Education System for All

An educated society is a strong society. But in Pakistan education has always been paid scant attention, while the curriculum and pedagogical approach has stunted critical faculties rather than promote them. The Awami Workers Party vows to allocate 10 percent of the country's GDP to education. We will ensure the provision of free education to all and will design a curriculum that will promote critical thinking and peace and harmony.

Political Freedom

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protections of the fundamental political and democratic rights of its citizens. In reality, however, these have never been implemented and today the basic freedoms of our citizens remain under threat. The Awami Workers Party will ensure that all political freedoms are respected. In addition we will replace neo-colonial laws and hold the rich and powerful accountable the way they should be in a truly democratic society.

A Multi-National Society

Before the creation of Pakistan many ethnic-nations called this land their home, yet these histories have till this day has not been officially acknowledged. We believe that this is the reason why our

country remains in the throes of ethnic conflict. The Awami Workers Party acknowledges the historical, cultural and geographical existence of all ethnic-nations, and guarantees equality for their languages and traditions. The Party envisions Pakistan as a multi-national state and will enshrine this fact through an amendment to the constitution.

Dignified Work

In homes, factories and offices all over the country, Pakistan's working people are subject to exploitation that no civilized society should tolerate. Privatization has eroded social security benefits and job security, while existing labour laws go practically unimplemented. Awami Workers Party will set the minimum pay for every worker to Rs 30,000 which will be continuously adjusted with inflation. In addition, bonded labour and child labour will be eliminated, and employees in the informal sector – such as women domestic workers – will be brought under the purview of the labour laws and receive social security benefits.

Footnotes

[1] <https://voteforawp.org/manifesto-ur/>