

Pakistan : Sacrifices and Struggle ! The life of Ali Wazir

Release Ali Wazir and his comrades ! Respect Democratic Rights !

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Ali Wazir and Mohsin Dawar, both members of Pakistan's National Assembly, have been arrested by the military the morning of Sunday, 26 May 2019 [\[1\]](#). An international solidarity campaign is launched.

At the present moment in time the whereabouts of comrade Ali Wazir, MNA elected in July 2018 from NA 50 in Wana, South Waziristan are still unknown. This is despite the proclamations by the corporate media servile to the despotic state, that he was presented to an Anti-Terrorist Court (ATC) in Bannu and later on transferred to Peshawar. According to some PTM activists, he has been brutally tortured and his legs have been fractured. His captives are also denying him life-saving medicines for high blood pressure, diabetes and kidney malfunctioning that he suffers from. The demonstrations' going on in several cities of KPK and other provinces of Pakistan have been repressed. Curfew has been imposed in South Waziristan, the constituency from where he had won. Yet there are rumblings in society and a stormy resistance impends.



Many people around the world may be unaware of who Ali Wazir is. We are here reproducing an article written by Ali Wazir in the Summer 2018 issue of the *Asian Marxist Review* that gives a brief introduction of comrade Ali.

Sacrifices and Struggle !

The past few months have transformed my life. Amid the agonies I have endured and the threats, suspicion, and accusations I face, the love, support, and respect I receive is overwhelming. Since February, when we began protesting to draw attention to the suffering of ethnic Pashtuns — among

the worst victims of terrorism — I have learned a lot about the potential of ordinary Pakistanis. Their thirst for change is inspiring and heralds a peaceful, prosperous future we must build for generations to come.

As a Pashtun activist demanding security for Pakistan's second-largest ethnic group, the most rewarding thing I have gathered is that peaceful protests and mobilization can still change societies and transform states for the better. I have learned that right trumps wrong. Pacifism overcomes violence and wars. And, ultimately, the truth prevails over lies and deception.

In a modern state, protection and welfare of all its citizens — irrespective of their caste and creed — is the first and foremost responsibility of all its institutions. This is the crux of what our organization, the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) or Movement of the Protection of Pashtuns, has set out to achieve by articulating key demands and mobilizing masses to ensure our state fulfills its most basic responsibilities.

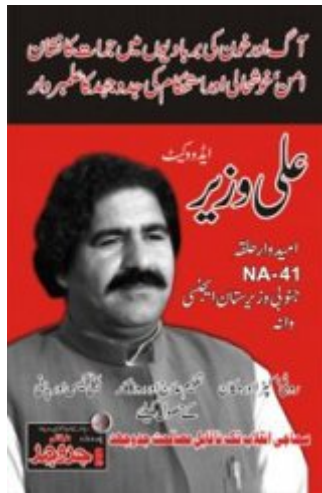
My personal ordeal best illustrates what prompted our demands. I was pursuing a degree in law at the turn of the century when my hometown, Wana, the headquarters of South Waziristan agency, became the epicenter of global terrorism when a host of Taliban-allied groups sought shelter in our communities. No doubt the terrorists had some individual local facilitators, but ultimately it was the state that failed to prevent them from using the territory. When my father, the chief of the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe, and other local leaders complained of their presence, government officials ignored and silenced them. Instead, Islamabad spent years denying the presence of any Afghan, Arab, or Central Asian militants.

By 2003, the militants had established a foothold in South and North Waziristan tribal agencies and were attempting to build a local emirate. My elder brother Farooq Wazir, a local political activist and youth leader, became the first victim of a long campaign in which thousands of Pashtun tribal leaders, activists, politicians, and clerics were killed with near absolute impunity. Their only crime was to question or oppose the presence of dangerous terrorists in our homeland.

In 2005, I was in prison when my father, brothers, cousins, and an uncle were killed in a single ambush. I was there because a draconian colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) law holds an entire tribe or region responsible for the crimes of an individual or any alleged crime committed in the territory. I had committed no crime, never got a fair trial, and was not sentenced, yet I was prevented from participating in the funerals for my family. In the subsequent years, six more members of our extended family were assassinated. The authorities have not even investigated these crimes let alone held anyone responsible. While Pakistani leaders are keen to project the "sacrifices" their compatriots made, no one has ever sympathized with us.

We faced economic ruin after all of the notable men in our family were eliminated. The government failed to prevent the militants from demolishing our gas stations. They later used the bricks to build bathrooms, claiming we were munafiqin (hypocrites) so even the inanimate materials from our businesses were not appropriate to build proper buildings. Our apple and peach orchards in Wana were sprayed with poisonous chemicals, and our tube wells were filled with dirt to force us to surrender to the forces of darkness.

In 2016, our market in Wana was dynamited after a bomb blast there killed an army officer. While local officials admitted to me that it was an accident and we were not to blame for the incident, they nevertheless destroyed our livelihoods under the FCR. After the demolition, the government prevented the local community — mostly members of our Ahmadzai Wazir tribe — from collecting donations to help us. They were told it would set an unacceptable precedent because the government cannot let anyone help those it punishes.



Ali Wazir's Election Campaign Poster

During those years, I didn't lose faith in nonviolence and remained committed to peaceful politics. This is why I ran in the parliamentary elections in 2008 and 2013. I can claim with some certainty that I won the contest in 2013, but my victory was changed into a defeat at gunpoint. I lost the election for just over 300 votes after the Taliban intimidated voters and tortured my supporters and campaign volunteers.

I am aware that since the beginning of the PTM's campaign, our criticism is blunt and direct. We name names and are not shy to address powers that the rest of society, the media, and politicians are too scared to identify, let alone criticize. But as my suffering shows, we Pashtuns have been through hell. Just consider that tens of thousands of civilians were killed in militant attacks and military operations over the course of 15 years, and millions were displaced for years.

Amid the volcano of violence, thousands of civilians have disappeared, and thousands have fallen victim to extrajudicial killings. We are profiled as suspected terrorists across the country, face humiliation at security check posts, and our innocent civilians face violence during security sweeps and operations. As the world's largest tribal society, the Pashtuns are known for their hospitality, commitment, and valor, yet we were falsely reduced to terrorist sympathizers despite the fact that we are their worst victims.

Now that we are protesting for change and demanding the state fulfill its most basic responsibilities, we are accused of treason and are being projected as enemies of the state. Taxpayer money is being squandered to foment and sustain a propaganda campaign. It is ironic that the institutions responsible for protecting Pakistan's territorial integrity and protecting it from dangerous threats are bankrolling thugs to launch a Pakistan Zindabad Movement (Urdu for Long Live Pakistan Movement). Both the leaders and protesters of this movement are paid. All kinds of comical characters are having a field day at the taxpayers' expense. It is telling that former Taliban commanders have addressed their gatherings. We also have indications that efforts are underway to mobilize sectarian terrorists and other fanatics to "counter" our peaceful campaign.

I want to reiterate, for the record, that we do not have a retrogressive or subversive agenda against Pakistan. A radical transformation of the system, society and state is required in Pakistan. We are, however, among the worst victims of terrorism in Pakistan, South Asia, and the world, and we are seeking justice for the wrongs and atrocities we have endured for so long and continue to face.

For Pakistan, the best and only way forward is to honor its own laws and constitution, which binds

us in a social contract. Treating us outside these laws and constitution will only weaken the bonds that tie the country's diverse 207 million people together. We have created a golden opportunity for Islamabad to shun its past as a security state and function as a normal country concerned with the welfare of its citizens.

We sincerely hope the saner elements of the upper echelons of power use this opportunity to exorcise our country of the demons and threats they are sworn to fight against. I know our solution is simple, but the only stable future for Pakistan is to become a nation of laws while upholding the rule of law. This is everything we seek.

Ali Wazir

P.-S.

- Originally Published in The Diplomat, Specially re-edited by Comrade Ali Wazir for the Asian Marxist Review Summer 2018, Reposted May 28, 2019 :

<http://www.marxistreview.asia/sacrifices-and-struggle-2>

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Notes

[1] See ESSF (article 49043), [Pakistan Urgent Call : "Release Ali Wazir, Lift Curfew, Respect Democratic Rights"](#).