

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Asia > Pakistan > Balochistan (Pakistan) > **Pakistan: Solidarity with the Baloch protests!**

Pakistan: Solidarity with the Baloch protests!

Saturday 13 January 2024, by [ISMAIL Sacha](#) (Date first published: 30 December 2023).

Since early December the part of Balochistan occupied by Pakistan has been swept by major protests against killings, disappearances and abductions by the Pakistani army. Protesters against this violence and for holding its perpetrators responsible have also travelled the best part of a thousand miles to Pakistan's capital Islamabad. Across the country they have been met by arrests, repression and state violence.

On 5 January the protest in Islamabad was continuing and being joined by people from other national and ethnic communities concerned about disappearances and state violence.

Balochistan comprises almost half of Pakistan's land area, though it is relatively sparsely populated. Always denied self-determination and subjected to repression, its position has worsened since the military regime of Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008), with a further degeneration under the unelected "caretaker" government that came to power in Pakistan this year.

The Baloch people are also oppressed and repressed in neighbouring Iran.

The current movement in Pakistan was sparked by the killing of four individuals - Balach Mola Baksh, Saif Baloch, Shakoor Baloch, and Wadood Baloch - by the police Counter Terrorism Department in a supposed "encounter" in October. In fact, it seems, the police had already arrested the men and faked the encounter to cover up their murder.

The protests reflect a desperate situation, but also express a surge of Baloch self-assertion. They have been characterised by extensive women's participation and leadership. The Baloch are generally hostile to the Islamist politics that have grown so strong in Pakistan; the protests should perhaps also be seen in the context of women's rights struggles in Iran and Afghanistan.

More on how the protests have unfolded and the issues involved [here](#) and [here](#).

John McDonnell MP has put forward a parliamentary [Early Day Motion](#) in solidarity with the protests: please ask your MP to sign.

The UK labour movement and left must raise our voices in solidarity with the protesters and the people of Balochistan!

Sacha Ismail

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P.S.

Workers' Liberty

<https://www.workersliberty.org/story/2023-12-30/solidarity-baloch-protests>