

# **Pakistan - International Finance Appeal - Help the war refugees and a popular alternative to the Talibans and the Military**

Friday 22 May 2009, by [Labour Relief Committee](#) (Date first published: 21 May 2009).

**The military confrontation between the US, the Pakistan Army and the Talibans in Swat and the North West Frontier Province have resulted in an unprecedented influx of refugees in different part of Pakistan. We are reproducing below and supporting an international financial appeal issued by the Labor Relief Campaign to both help concretely the refugees and the forces projecting an alternative to the Military on one hand and the Talibans on the other.**

## **ESSF**

### Contents

- [The Situation](#)
- [Our Perspective & Strategy](#)
- [What is Labor Relief Campaign](#)

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This is formal appeal by Labor Relief Campaign to help the fight against Taliban and the military operations. The purpose is to provide immediate help to some from over 1.5 million internally displaced people from Malakand Division of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in Pakistan as a result of the fight between Taliban and the government. We also aim to continue the publication of *Weekly Mazdoor Jeddojuhd* in Pushto language on more frequent basis. It is at present published weekly in Urdu and monthly in Pushto language. The purpose is to spread alternative ideas than that of religious fanatics and repressive measures. This is also to help the labour and social movement in the province by publishing their activities and views and bringing them together to form new networks.

## **The Situation**

Taliban have taken over parts of Pakistan. They had threatened to occupy other parts as well. To pacify them, the government went into accord with Taliban in April this year to impose so called *Nizam Adl* (system of justice) in Malakanad division. This gave a breathing space to Taliban who tried to occupy other areas. They had imposed medieval laws in the areas under their control. Women and minorities were the real target of Taliban. The government went to another extreme to start a military operation.

This has resulted in an unprecedented influx of refugees in different part of Pakistan. The army says that the operation is meant to wipe out religious fanatics and it will take time. But the religious fanatics are holding on in several parts and are spreading all over Pakistan. The recent military solution is not what can eliminate the fanatics. On the contrary, it will help them to spread their ideas. The Taliban lost power in Afghanistan after NATO forces occupied in 2001, however, remerged in Pakistan and later in Afghanistan within years. The situation is very complex.

The military operation in Swat covers up the reality that the Pakistan military considers Taliban an asset and not willing to sacrifice that asset to please the USA. While army is flushing the Taliban out of Swat, the *Jihadi*-infrastructure (training camps, seminaries, newspapers, charities; the fronts for the Taliban) remain intact in other parts of the country. These operations do not work, rather exacerbated the scale of insurgency and anti-state sentiment Pakistan confronts, exacerbated the plight of men, women, children in Pakhtunkhwa, with over one and half million Pakistanis festering in under funded refugee camps and inadequate, temporary homes, devoid of gainful employment and divested of all assets.

Another major problem is the US Drone attacks. Over 700 people have been killed since 2006, with 164 killed in 14 attacks under Obama's watch. These drone attacks are further fueling anti-U.S. sentiments. The US/NATO occupation of Afghanistan is detrimental to the overall stability of the NWFP in Pakistan. In fact, without a US withdrawal, it is difficult to see how the area will ever return to normalcy.

## **Our Perspective & Strategy**

The fight against religious extremism can only be successful when the basic problems of the working class in social, political and economic fields are solved. In addition to developing a system of free education with a secular syllabus for all, this must mean an end to feudalism, implementation of land reform and an end to the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. Our strategy is to fight the fanatics with the local defense committees. Both are evils: Neither Taliban nor with the military forces.

### **The Alternatives**

We must find space that chooses neither military action nor the Taliban. Our position is more radical than working for humanitarian help for IDPs (which is absolutely essential) and condemning civilian casualties, and drone attacks on the sovereignty basis. It has to be unequivocal opposition to the war as a military campaign like this will guarantee to violate many more human rights for generations to come.

One of the main aspects of our campaign is to intensify the already initiated ideological campaign against the growing influence of Taliban in the area. The strategy was to build and strengthen the labour and social organization in the areas dominated by Taliban. Since 2004, we have been able to build significant forces of labour, women and peasants in progressive organizations. A proper office, set up in 2004 in Murdan has played a pivotal role organizing the progressive activities mainly of women in different parts of NWFP. Several new trade unions and peasant organizations were set up and many more were brought together to help each other and unite on one platform.

The most significant development was the beginning of the printing of Mazdoor Jeddojuhd in Pushto, the local language of the province NWFP. The paper started on self help basis and over 200 poets, writers, trade union, social and women activists lent their support for the printing of this important initiative. This is the first progressive Pushto paper of the trade unions and progressive writers. Five editions are so far printed and are available on line ([www.jeddojuhud.com](http://www.jeddojuhud.com)). At present, Mazdoor

Jeddojuh is Weekly printed in Urdu and monthly in Pushto. This is one way to counter the growing ideological superiority of the religious fanatics in the language that majority of Pukhtoon working class can read and write. We want to continue the publication of this most important initiative that we had taken in years.

Taliban has become the great danger to our existence. They are like neo fascists. They are not anti imperialist as have been posed by some progressive currents. They must be opposed. The general public is turning against the Taliban. The swing in the public's perception was catalyzed by a video showing the Taliban whipping a girl. This shocked Pakistanis. However Taliban spokesperson Muslim Khan defended the punishment and asserted that the girl should have been stoned.

### **What is Labor Relief Campaign (LRC)?**

After the devastating earthquake in Kashmir and other areas in October 2005, five organizations including Women Workers Help Line, Labour Education Foundation, Labour Party Pakistan, National Trade Union Federation and Progressive Youth Front took up an initiative to deal with the emergency that left over 100,000 dead and many more injured and displaced. Within two months, it was able to raise over half a million US Dollars from inside and outside Pakistan and spent to provide the immediate relief to the affected people.

The LRC has once again started a campaign to help the internally displaced people (IDPS) immediately after the military operation started in the first week of May 2009. LRC relief camps have raised significant amount and was spent immediately to buy goods and distributed from 16-18 May 2009 at different refugee camps in NWFP.

#### **LRC position:**

We believe to develop a long term and short term radical plan to address religious fundamentalism. Following are some points we are working on and will be promoting through our literature:

LRC demands separation of the state from religion.

We believe that at least 10 percent of national budget be spent on education also to end state subsidies to madrassas and nationalize all the major private /religious educational institutions, integrate them into a revamped public education system across classes.

LRC emphasizes for a radical land reform program, effective immediately, Radical reduction in expenses for the army budget, end nuclear program, redistribute army lands.

LRC stands for a comprehensive legal and constitutional reform package that includes the decolonization of FATA, protection of minorities/ women, convene a committee (comprising especially of minorities and women) to draft new curriculum, convening of an assembly to write a new, minority-friendly, secular constitution.

LRC demands the announcement of a living wage policy.

LRC demands an end of occupation of Afghanistan by NATO forces and American forces withdrawal from Iraq and other areas of the world.

#### **Please Donate**

The Labour Relief Campaign requests social organizations, individuals, trade unions and political

activists and parties to come forward to help this important campaign. Please donate to the campaign by affiliating with LRC. To affiliate with LRC, a minimum donation of US \$300 is recommended.

Below are details of the account for sending money to LRC. We will update you with all the relevant information on the campaign and also about the political developments.

### **Contact LRC**

Khalid Mehmood

Labour Education Foundation

khalid lef.org.pk

[www.lef.org.pk](http://www.lef.org.pk)

### **Member organizations**

Women Workers Help Line

[wwhlpk yahoo.com](http://wwhlpk.yahoo.com)

[www.wwhl.org.pk](http://www.wwhl.org.pk)

Labour Party Pakistan

[Labour\\_party yahoo.com](http://Labour_party.yahoo.com)

[www.laborpakistan.org](http://www.laborpakistan.org)

Labour Education Foundation

[lef lef.org.pk](http://lef.lef.org.pk)

[www.lef.org.pk](http://www.lef.org.pk)

National Trade Union Federation Pakistan

[ntufpak gmail.com](http://ntufpak.gmail.com)

Progressive Youth Front

[pyf\\_pakistan yahoo.com](http://pyf_pakistan.yahoo.com)

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### **HOW TO SEND DONATIONS?**

**Via ESSF:** You can contribute to this effort by sending your donations to the ESSF (please mention « Pakistan ») - if simpler :

**Checks in euros payable to ESSF :**

ESSF, 2 rue Richard-Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France.

**Transfers**

***Bank name and address***

Crédit lyonnais

Agence de la Croix-de-Chavaux (00525)

10 boulevard de Chanzy

93100 Montreuil

France

***International bank references :***

IBAN : FR85 3000 2005 2500 0044 5757 C12

BIC / SWIFT : CRLYFRPP

***National bank details (RIB) :***

Bank : 30002, Sorting code 00525

Account number : 0000445757C, Key : 12

Account holder : ESSF

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**Directly to LRC:** Below are details of the account for sending money directly to LRC.

A/C Title: Labour Education Foundation

A/C Number: 01801876

**Route:**

Please advise and pay to Citi Bank, New York, USA Swift CITI US 33 for onward transfer to BANK ALFALAH LTD., KARACHI, PAKISTAN A/C No. 36087144 and for final transfer to BANK ALFALAH LTD., LDA PLAZA, KASHMIR ROAD, LAHORE, PAKISTAN Swift: ALFHPKKALDA for A/C No. 01801876 OF LABOUR EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Contact LRC

Khalid Mehmood

Labour Education Foundation

[khalid.lef.org.pk](http://khalid.lef.org.pk)