

Peace activists of India and Pakistan are organizing Peace Vigil in both countries

Thursday 28 July 2011, by [JAC](#), [PFF](#), [PIPFDP](#), [PPC](#) (Date first published: 27 July 2011).

Pakistan Peace Coalition (PPC), Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) and Joint Action Committee jointly organized a press conference and a Peace Vigil at Karachi Press Club on the eve of the meeting of Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan at New Delhi on Wednesday. The press conference was addressed by Karamat Ali of PPC, Mohammad Ali Shah of PFF, senior advocate of Supreme Court of Pakistan and human rights activist Syed Iqbal Haider, Fahim Zaman and Noor Mohammad. The peace activists from civil society organizations later took part in the Peace Vigil outside of Karachi Press Club. They were carrying banners with slogans of peace and raised slogans for solution of outstanding issues including Sir Creek, Siachin, Kashmir, easing visa and bilateral trade.

PRESS CONFERENCE - VIGIL ON EVE OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Karachi Press Club; July 27, 2011

Dear representatives of the media!

Peace activists of India and Pakistan are organizing Peace Vigil in many cities of both the countries on the eve of a meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries - Pakistan's Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar and India's Shri S.M. Krishna - being held in New Delhi. We welcome the foreign ministers' meeting that is being held at a critical time when both the countries are facing worst kind of terrorism at home. We believe that the occasion is a good opportunity for moving forward towards lasting peace. It is our hope that the peace process would be pursued with renewed vigour after this meeting. People of both countries have been demanding uninterrupted dialogue on all issues, but unfortunately, those talks were suspended after Mumbai terrorist attacks in 2008.

We have been told by both the government that they have almost reached at a settlement to solve Sir Creek and Siachen and some other issues before the Mumbai terrorists attack, but after that the dialogue process was suspended. We demand both the governments to sign agreements on such issues without wasting any further time. Sir Creek's issue is also related to fishermen's plight because presently both the countries are arresting innocent fishermen of opposite country and also confiscate their boats. These fishermen are kept in jails without any trial for years. We have been demanding to stop this inhuman practice of arresting each others' fishermen. We urge both the foreign ministers to sign an agreement in this regard also and also to adopt a procedure of releasing the fishermen after issuing them warnings.

Similarly, people of both the countries have been demanding easing restrictions on visas, but due to

strained relations, the governments have been reluctant to move forward on the issue. The city specific visas are issued after an arduous procedure and formalities. We believe that through people-to-people contact, the bilateral relations between the two countries would improve. The visa issuing process should be made simple and easy so that the divided families, peace activists, students and tourists can travel without any unnecessary hassle of police reporting etc. We demand normalization of visa regime and promotion of tourism in both the countries.

Trade between Pakistan and Indian is another serious issue that needs to be resolved on urgent basis. The bilateral trade is already restricted to certain items through Wagah-Attari borders. We believe under the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), both the countries can explore possibilities of increasing trade. We demand to open the historic and traditional border trade routes including Khairpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Khokhrapar-Monabao routes for the movement of trade goods. Presently there is a weekly passenger rail service on Khokhrapar route. Frequency of this train service can be increased on daily basis, besides a bus service can be initiated on this route. Similarly this important route can also be used for transportation of goods. We also demand that both the countries should also allow transit trade within SAARC countries. Presently Pakistan has allowed India to use its land for trade with Afghanistan, which is also quite restricted, but this type of facilities can be allowed for Pakistani land route trade with Bangladesh and Nepal.

This Peace Vigil's slogan is titled "The People of India and Pakistan - Against Terrorism-For Friendship." In Pakistan, the Pakistan Peace Coalition, the Joint Action Committee, the Pakistan India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy, and other organizations are jointly organizing the vigil for the peace in many major cities including Karachi, Hyderabad, Khairpur, Shikarpur, Lahore and Islamabad.

**Pakistan Peace Coalition - Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy -
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum - Joint Action Committee**
