

Violent repression in Pakistan against progressive activists : 33 more arrests in Gilgit, Baba Jan tortured by ISI

lundi 19 septembre 2011, par [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 19 août 2011).

This article is a follow up of Farooq Tariq previous one (ESSF, article 22863) : [Pakistan: LPP leader arrested for assisting climate change victims](#)

Faced to the gravity of the ongoing repression in Gilgit Baltestan, an international campaign of solidarity is launched.

All relevant information available on ESSF can be found through the key words [JAN Baba](#) and [Gilgit-Baltistan](#)

Sommaire

- [The back ground](#)
- [Gross violation of human \(...\)](#)

A delegation of young activists of Progressive Youth Front Gilgit Baltestan arrived last night in Lahore at the end of two days meeting of federal committee Labour Party Pakistan. They informed us about the arrest of 33 more in Gilgit Baltestan. Baba Jan and five more are already in jail. Police is arresting any one raising voice against the killings of two activists and demand for the arrest of the police officers involved.

The delegation told the meeting that On 11 August around 200 persons was protesting during the visit of the Chief Minister of the province to Aliabad against the delay in the payment of compensation to 25 affected families of landslides near Attabad lake. In an effort to keep the protestors away from the place where the chief minister was staying, the police baton-charged and used tear gas. They also opened fire with live ammunition at the protestors. As a result one young man, Afzal Baig (22), was shot and injured. He later died in the hospital. His father, Sher Ullah Baig (50), tried to stop the police from further shooting but, in complete arrogance, they opened fire and killed him on the spot. The son died on the spot while the father was taken to Gilgit and he died on the way to Gilgit that was 100 kilometer away from this scene.

The next day when the news of the deaths reached Aliabad and other areas of Hunza the people came out into the streets and enraged protestors attacked the Aliabad police station and set it on fire. They also torched the office of the Deputy Commissioner. The administration ran away from the city and the city was under no ones control for four days. People were themselves running the city. Such was the anger that the whole city was on the road against the killings.

To calm the protestors the government officials lied to the people by producing a false FIR against the police officials. Four members of Gilgit Baltistan assembly finally arrived at the city. The Speaker of the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) assembly, Mr. Wazeer Baig, Law Minister Mr. Wazeer Shakeel and two more members of the assembly apologized to the protestors and openly admitted the brutality and negligence of the police. They also showed the photocopy of a FIR registered against the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Baber, and other police officials and promised that they were all arrested. The GB Government used this tactic only to cheat the people. In fact, three days later, they started a crackdown against political activists which still continues.

There were massive public meetings in the city and also in Hunza. Baba Jan the organizer of Progressive Youth Front and a leader of Labour Party was among those who organised these public rallies.

From 11th August to 19th August, there were promises by the government that no one will be arrested, that government will arrest the police officers involved and that we need peace in the city. They even paid compensation of 300,000 Rupees each to the families of the two killed by police. In the meantime, the PPP government in close collaboration with the intelligence agencies, Rangers Northern Squad was preparing an assault on the activists involved in the campaign.

On 19th August, while few trucks load of police and rangers were moving to raid the homes of Baba Jan and others, the PYF activists fought with them on the way to Hunza and were able to stop the whole police caravan for over two hours. This time was needed to ask Baba Jan and others to escape from their homes.

After a week of the incident, on August 19, a joint operation was conducted by the Gilgit-Baltistan police, Rangers and Northern Squad and houses in Aliabad were searched. 36 persons were picked up ; among them were six activists of the Labour Party Pakistan. Most of them are released now and only six were in jail until and new round of arrests is started now on 16th September 2011.

Why Baba Jan presented his arrested at the court room ?

The delegation told us that this was to avoid the extra judicial killings of Baba Jan. Had he not presented himself in a court room, and if he would have handed him over to police after a press conference, as was planned, the police might have refused to accept that he is arrested and he would have been one of the missing persons. Such was the fear of repression in Gilgit at the time. Baba Jan became the most wanted political person in Gilgit Baltistan.

The back ground

A massive landslide occurred on July 4, 2010 near the Attabad village in Hunza Valley, causing a heavy loss of life and property. The landslide blocked the River Hunza, which resulted in the formation of a lake, besides inundating about a two-kilometer long stretch of road.

The Attabad Lake and the damaged road network of KKH have proven to be a major obstacle for trade between Pakistan and China. The local administration did not take any action to save the villages that y by the growing lake ; this has now spread to over 36 kilometers.

Baba Jan and his comrades were first to raise the issue in Pakistan and it became one of the top story at the time because of demonstrations, rallies, press conferences by activists of Progressive Youth Front and Labour Party Gilgit Baltistan.

The incident started when the provincial government denied paying compensation to 25 affected families out of 457 families whose names were mentioned in the official list. It is reported that the provincial government allegedly paid the compensation owed to the 25 families to its political workers. Each family was to get Rs. 400,000 as compensation for the destruction of their houses in the flood after a massive landslide created the artificial lake of Attabad.

Gross violation of human rights

33 more arrests this week shows the intention of the Gilgit administration. They are all out to silence all those who are raising voices against the brutal killings of the two. They want a total silence on the issue. Gross human rights violations are taking place in Gilgit Beltestan. Homes are raided at night.

Baba Jan was dragged out of jail by ISI and was tortured for two days. He told someone who met him after he is sent to jail that the ISI wanted him to accept that he has the head of those who had torched the Deputy Commissioner office that was not the case, it was reaction by the local youth, Baba Jan was not there and when he arrived, he tried to stop the youth. Baba Jan was hanged ups and down several times. He was beaten severely. All this to a person who is organising the youth to protest for a better environment. He is fighting for compensation for all those victims of climate change. He is leading activists who was member of district assembly in Gilgit and also elected to the federal committee of Labour Party Pakistan in its fifth congress held in 2010 at Faisalabad.

The delegation also met Abid Hasan Minto, president of Workers Party Pakistan and other leaders of the party in Islamabad two days earlier to tell them about the gross violation of human rights and whole sale arrests of political activists.

The delegation has appealed to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan to take up the case immediately and demand the withdrawal of all the fabricated police cases, release all those arrested, compensation for all the families effected by the Lake and arrest of the two police officers involved in killing of the two protesting activists.

Labour Party Pakistan federal committee decided to launch a national and international campaign to safe these prisoners of climate change. A poster is being printed, General secretary Labour Party Pakistan Nisar Shah will visit Gilgit along with Farooq Ahmad, another member of LPP federal committee. They will meet the families of the effectees and express solidarity.

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