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Violent repression in the north of Pakistan. For the release of Baba Jan and other prisoners!

Wednesday 21 September 2011, by [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 19 September 2011).

A solidarity campaign is underway in defence of Baba Jan, a leader of the LPP - the Labour Party Pakistan - and other people imprisoned in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, in the north of Pakistan. Baba Jan, according to information from the LPP, was tortured for two days by the secret service.

For more than a month, progressive activists have suffered violent repression in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, the Himalayan "Territories of the North". Last August 11, the police fired live bullets against people demanding payment of compensation allowances following a devastating landslide which had happened a year before in the valley of Hunza, on July 4, 2010. This landslide caused very big floods and the formation of a vast lake; this destroyed many dwellings and a transport route that is essential for local trade with China. The villagers accuse the administration of having abandoned them and of having pocketed the allowances due to 25 of the 457 affected families.

The villagers demonstrated on August 11, on the occasion of the arrival of the minister for the province. The police force killed in cold blood Afzal Baig (22 years old), then his father, Sher Ullah Baig (50 years old) who sought to protect him. In reaction, the following day, the population of Aliabad and other localities of Hunza rose up, clashing with the police, setting fire to a police station and the Deputy Commissioner's office. For four days, the population took control of the city.

To calm the population, the authorities wrongfully claimed that prosecutions had begun against the police officers responsible for the killings and granted financial compensation to the grieving families. They took advantage of this to prepare the repression of progressive circles, in order to impose silence on the events of August 11. Thus, a week later, on August 19, 36 people were picked up (including ten members of the LPP, six of them being maintained in detention). A new wave of arrests began on September 16, with 33 more people picked up.

Six members of the LPP were initially imprisoned. Baba Jan, a member of the federal committee of the LPP [\[1\]](#), a leader of the Progressive Youth Front (PYF), was very involved in the popular mobilizations. Thanks to resistance opposed by the PYF to the police force, he had time to escape arrest on August 19. But he was still wanted and was in danger of being summarily executed ("disappeared") if he was captured, a victim of an "extrajudicial execution". The area of Gilgit-Baltistan is unfortunately well-known for violations of the human rights by the authorities. Baba Jan thus chose give himself up to the authorities, a month after going underground, not before first holding a press conference so that no one could be unaware of what might happen to him.

Nevertheless, according to information obtained by the LPP, Baba Jan was removed from his cell by the Pakistani secret services - the ISI [\[2\]](#) - then tortured for two days: suspended by ropes, severely

beaten for having fought in defence of populations that were victims of climate change! The ISI wanted to make him “confess” that he was responsible for setting fire to the Deputy Commissioner’s office – to which he replied that he had arrived on the spot only later.

If Jan Baba is thus targeted by repression, it is because he played a very active part, with the LPP and the PYF, in making known in Pakistan the scandal of July 4, 2010 and its sequels. Thanks in particular to their action, with press conferences held in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, this issue made it to the front pages of the national press.

The LPP is launching a solidarity campaign for the release of Jan Baba and the other prisoners, and in defence of all the victims of repression. It demands the dropping of the false charges against the demonstrators and effective compensation for all the people affected by the landslide of July 4, 2010. This campaign will be conducted in Pakistan and on the international level. We will give regular reports on it.

Pierre Rousset

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The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), based in Hong Kong, launched last July already an appeal against repression in Gilgit-Baltistan. See:

<http://www.urgentappeals.net/support.php?ua=AHRC-UAC-149-2011>

For the time being, letters of protest can be sent to Pakistani embassies and messages of solidarity can be sent to the LPP (labour_party@yahoo.com).

To find all the information available on ESSF concerning this question, use the key words (n°7650) [JAN Baba](#) and (n°7649) [Gilgit-Baltistan](#).

P.S.

* Translation International Viewpoint.

Footnotes

[1] He joined the LP in 2004 and was elected to its federal committee during the Fifth Congress in Faisalabad, in 2010.

[2] Inter-Services Intelligence.