

# **Labour Party Pakistan under attack, Help us to fight back**

Wednesday 16 November 2011, by [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 16 November 2011).

Several supporters and members of Labour Party Pakistan are locked up in different jails of Pakistan. 9 textile workers including Fazal Ilahi a leading member of LPP are in Faisalabad jail. 15 activists are in Gilgit jail including Baba Jan, an elected member of LPP Federal Committee. They are not terrorists. They are political activists. However, all of them are charged with anti terrorist laws.

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani said on 14<sup>th</sup> November speaking at Mandi Bahaudin, that there are no political prisoners at this time in Pakistan. He was my university fellow, I am telling him that I know at least 24 members and supporters of Labour Party Pakistan are in jail for political reasons. There are many others languishing in jails of Baluchistan apart from those who are missing.

6 among nine political prisoners in Faisalabad are convicted by an anti terrorist court to a shameful 597 years. Their crime was to lead a strike of textile workers in 2010. When a boss opened fire from a factory, workers retaliated in anger. The boss is free and workers are convicted to 490 years.

In Gilgit, when police opened fire and killed two, son and father for demanding a just compensation for all the effects of Atta Abad Lake victims, people retaliated and occupied the area. The police officers involved in killing of two are free, however, Baba Jan, a former member of district council Gilgit, and a leading political activists of the region along with 14 more are in jail. Where is the justice?

In Faisalabad, it is Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz that is after us including the provincial law minister Rana Sanaullah, who wants to teach us a lesson for building a movement of the textile workers in the city, never seen before. In Gilgit, it is Pakistan People's Party including the chief minister Mehdi Shah who wants to teach us a lesson for siding with revolting masses of Gilgit Baltistan against injustices and malpractices.

We are not going to give up and are going to fight back by building a movement for the release of these political activists. We need your moral, financial and political support.

## **A Track Record of building movements**

Labour Party Pakistan, established in 1997, is a small left wing political party that is helping to build the social and political movements in Pakistan. In 2000/2001, we initiated to build support for Anjuman Mozareen Punjab in Okara. The peasant movement went on to set best examples of Pakistan peasant's history. They fought back against the military farms administration, took over 68000 acre of land and are still defiant.

In 2003/2004, we played an important role in building the power looms workers movement in the third largest city of Pakistan. Labour Qaumi Movement, whose leadership is member of LPP, led thousands of workers for better wages and labour conditions. They are now under attack.

In 2007/2008, we played a role in building the lawyers movement. All of us went to jail again and again. We were there every week with lawyer's demonstrations and rallies, we were part of the long march and we led the famous GPO Chouck rebellion in Lahore with police.

We were one of those who opposed the military takeover of general Musharaf from day one unlike many of those who are now claiming to be champions against military establishment. Almost all LPP leadership was arrested several times during Musharaf period. For example, I was arrested 12 times during the General Musharaf dictatorship.

### **Building alternative media**

LPP had been busy to build an alternative media to counter the influence of commercial media. LPP printed a weekly paper Mazdoor Jeddojuhd from 1997 to 2010 without any advertisement. It is now printed as a monthly magazine because of financial constraints.

Socialist Pakistan News (SPN) started in 2004, is now the largest political email list with over 7500 members. Activists of LPP work every day for over an hour to moderate this list on volunteer basis.

We are also part of the team that is producing View Point On line, one of the best read on line magazine.

### **Solidarity and Relief Work**

LPP supporters and members have been active in 2005 earth quack and 2010 devastating rains and floods to raise funds and help those in difficult times.

We did all this to build mass workers political party to build socialist, democratic, feminist, environmentalist campaigns and movements in Pakistan, in particular, and globally, in general.

## **Send your donation now**

We want to raise at least five hundred thousand (500,000) Rupees before 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011. On 26<sup>th</sup> November, LQM plan a protest public meeting in Faisalabad. We are expecting thousands to attend. We need your financial assistance to build this rally and support for the victim families who have no other mean to live on.

### **Urgent Finance appeal for “Faisalabad 6”**

As you all are aware, six labor leaders from Faisalabad have been handed jail sentences of 490 years in total. Their only crime was to lead a peaceful strike for an increase in minimum wages as announced by the government. They are Akbar Ali Kamboh, Babar Shafiq Randhawa, Fazal Elahi, Rana Riaz Ahmed Muhammad Aslam Malik and Asghar Ali Ansari. Four of them were arrested in July 2010 while the other two were arrested in July 2011 on the same charges.

There are three more workers in jail waiting for trial to begin.

All of them are leaders of a power looms works organization called, Labour Qaumi Movement (LQM) in Faisalabad, the third largest city of Pakistan. LQM is a community based labour organization fighting for the rights of the textile workers since 2004.

An anti-terrorist court judge on November 1, 2011, sentenced six leaders under terrorism charges in Faisalabad. As is frequently observed that Terrorists are set free by these courts and workers leaders are charged under terrorist laws in Pakistan

They were accused of burning down a factory during the strike. This is a fabricated charge. The facts are that on the day of strike, July 20, 2010, gangsters in the pay of the factory owner started

shooting at the workers who were leaving the factory to demand better wages. Some workers dared to go inside the factory and forced the gangsters to stop firing. Some of them were beaten up by the angry workers.

During the trial, the workers' advocate asked if the factory had been burned down then how was it able to be operating again three days later.

More than 100,000 power loom workers in Faisalabad district went on strike on July 20, 2010, for an increase of wages that had been announced by the government during the presentation of budget 2010-11. The government announced 17 percent rise in the minimum wage for the private sector workers. The LQM in Faisalabad, Jhang and other districts had been in negotiations with power loom owners for three weeks before the strike.

The long term jail sentences of these workers leaders has been a devastating blow to the workers movement in Faisalabad, and indeed across the country. That the court could hand out such a draconian anti-labor judgment was beyond anyone's expectations, especially since this judiciary itself had been restored through the support of a powerful people's movement. Yet, the anti-terrorist court chose to give a verdict with the sole aim of damaging the power loom workers movement which was slowly becoming a symbol of working class militancy all over the country.

One of the principal methods of disciplining labor under capitalism is to push them to the point where they are only left with an option of negotiating with the bosses on the latter's terms. This is done either through brute state force or by financially crushing the working class so that they only have the option of compromising in order to survive within the system.

The bosses have used the latter tactic to ensure that these labor leaders become examples for anyone who dares to raise his/her voice against the injustices meted out to the workers. All of our jailed comrades are married and were the primary breadwinners of their families. Their families have been pushed to the brink of a financial catastrophe. The families are contemplating removing children from the schools since they are unable to even buy enough groceries.

Knowing that this is part of the political strategy of the bosses to subjugate the workers, and that it is having severe consequences for the families of the jailed leaders, the Labour Party Pakistan, the Labour Qaumi Movement, the National Trade Union Federation and the Labour Education Foundation are launching a finance appeal to support the families of our jailed comrades.

These families deserve our generous support not only because these comrades are suffering due to their involvement with a working class movement. But also, because the outcome of this movement, and our ability to extend solidarity and support to our comrades in difficult conditions, will dictate whether this particular event will deter working class militancy (as wished by the bosses) or act as a shining example of working class solidarity against the hideous tactics of the ruling classes.

On behalf of the LQM, NTUF, the LPP and the LEF, we urge you to donate generously for the families of these victims of state-terrorism. These families are in dire need of financial support and we can only sustain them with a collective effort. The bank details are as follows,

#### **DIRECT TRANSFER TO PAKISTAN**

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.

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## **THROUGH ESSF ACCOUNT**

***It is also possible to send checks in euro or to transfer donations through ESSF account. Specify "Pakistan" on the back of your cheques or transfer orders.***

### **Cheques**

cheques to ESSF in euros only to be sent to:

ESSF

2, rue Richard-Lenoir

93100 Montreuil

France

### **Bank Account:**

Crédit lyonnais

Agence de la Croix-de-Chavaux (00525)

10 boulevard Chanzy

93100 Montreuil

France

ESSF, account number 445757C

### **International bank account details :**

IBAN : FR85 3000 2005 2500 0044 5757 C12

BIC / SWIFT : CRLYFRPP

Account holder : ESSF

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