

Pakistan Afghanistan Progressive parties conference joint declaration

Saturday 24 December 2011, by [ALRO](#), [APP](#), [ARO](#), [Awami Tehreek](#), [LPP](#), [MJDC](#), [PTUDC](#), [SPA \(Afghanistan\)](#), [UKPNP](#), [WPP](#)
(Date first published: 22 December 2011).

The Pakistan Afghan Progressive parties two days conference ended December 22 in Lahore. It was first time after decades that a formal meeting was organised between the progressive groups of the two countries. It was attended by 10 political groups from both countries, four from Afghanistan and six from Pakistan. Almost all the main Left groups of Pakistan attended this conference. It was chaired by three young activists, Sonia Qadir, Ammar Ali Jan and Aman Karriaper. Here is the joint declaration, a press release and a concept note.

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The progressive and democratic forces of Pakistan and Afghanistan met here in Lahore for two days in the first ever joint conference. This is a historic step for the progressive forces of both sides to sit together and share the sufferings of our people at the hands of US-led NATO forces as well as the religious extremists in the form of the Taliban. We also vehemently condemn the military establishment and the governments of both countries who use different excuses to justify the occupation by foreign forces as well as tacit patronization of religious extremism.

We resolve to launch a sustained campaign against the forces of imperialism and religious extremism. We plan to organize coordinated days of action and other initiatives at the political as well as the cultural and educational levels. We plan to broaden this movement and include other left and progressive forces who share the common goals of establishing a just peace and of progress in the region. We resolve to also include the progressive movements in India and Iran in order to build up a broad regional alliance to secure a just peace.

We agree that by occupying a sovereign country under false pretences, in blatant violation of all accepted norms of international law, then cynically deploying the smokescreen of “human rights” and “democracy”, NATO’s active promotion of criminal, misogynist warlords has exposed the myth of bringing democracy and freedom to the people of Afghanistan. The policies of the occupation forces have resulted in the country being hijacked by medieval warlords, who are as adamant in their rejection of democratic processes and denial of civil liberties and equal rights for women as the Taliban regime they have replaced. This has resulted in Afghanistan regaining its ranking as the biggest producer of opium in the world, adding another potent element to the lawlessness that is destroying the fabric of Afghan society.

The violent, theocratic movement of the Taliban is deeply anti-people and promotes the ideal of rule by an elite clergy. The Taliban claim to defend the sovereignty and freedom of Afghanistan, yet they are unable to guarantee basic freedoms and protection to their own population, and their policies make Afghanistan an easy target for foreign interference (e.g., from Pakistan or Iran) and even outright occupation.

It is commonly portrayed in the Western media that the situation of women in Afghanistan has drastically improved since the NATO intervention with the protection of women being used as an excuse to justify the occupation of Afghanistan as well as military operations in Pakistan. We reject these claims as false and point out that after 10 years of occupation, Afghanistan has been awarded the rank of the most dangerous country for women with Pakistan in the top five.

Looking at the effects of the American War on Terror on Pakistan, we note the consolidation of the links between the CIA and sections of the Pakistan Army, resulting in drone strikes inside Pakistan, the abduction and selling of Pakistani citizens to the United States, the continued transit of military supplies to ISAF from Karachi to Khyber, the use of Pakistani military bases by American forces. We also observe that the closing of ranks between the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban and the Pakistan Army – as part of the Pakistani Establishment's policy of dealing with both the Taliban and NATO – has led the Army to adopt a more belligerent attitude in public, and seeking to capitalize on the peak in anti-American feeling in the country, to attempt to derail the India-Pakistan peace process (or at least tarnish the patriotic credentials of the elected representatives) and even, it is feared, attempt to dislodge the government altogether.

We condemn military action in Balochistan and demand the Pakistani government that repressive measures of the establishment in the form of disappearances must be stopped with immediate effect.

Given this history, we reject any military solution to the problems of Pakistan and Afghanistan and pledge to devote all our energy to constructing concrete alternatives to the false choice between NATO and Taliban, a genuinely pro-people, pro-freedom alternative.

The immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops along with measures aimed at achieving socio-economic justice are what we believe can alleviate the suffering of the people of both Afghanistan and Pakistan and lead to a just peace in the region. However, let us be clear that none of these people-friendly measures will ever be given to the people, but will have to be extracted from the impending alliance of local and foreign powers that is planning to dominate Afghanistan even after the withdrawal of NATO troops (the recent Bonn conference is the latest example of attempts to make such alliances). And this can only be done by a genuine movement of the masses of Afghanistan and Pakistan working together with a clear identification of their common enemies: US imperial power, the neo-colonial Pakistan Army and the Taliban and various allied groups. We recognize this struggle as part of the larger fight against the economic colonization of the region in the name of globalization and neoliberal agenda.

We support the enhancing of trade ties between the South Asian countries to promote trade and creating more business and job opportunities.

Afghan Labour Revolutionnary Organization

Solidarity Party of Afghanistan

Afghan Revolutionnary Organization

Malalai Joya Defense Committee

Labour Party Pakistan

Awami Party Pakistan

Workers Party Pakistan

Pakistan Trade Union Defense Campaign

Awami Tehreek

United Kashmir Peoples National Party

Press release: Pak-Afghan people dialogue for peace and progress

LAHORE: Pakistan, Afghanistan left wing parties' people, on Wednesday, agreed upon working together for peace and progress in the region and to fight against the imperialism, extremism and NATO and American invasion in both countries.

The participants were addressing the opening of two-day dialogue and consultation called "Pakistan Afghanistan Progressive Parties Conference" at a local hotel. Awami Party, Pakistan Workers Party, Pakistan Labour Party, Afghanistan Revolutionary Organization, Solidarity Party Afghanistan, Afghanistan Labour Revolutionary Organization and other left wing groups participated in the discussion, sponsored by Swedish Left Party.

The participants called for evolving a consensus that the left wing and progressive parties of Pakistan and Afghanistan have been marginalized and pushed to wall with the designed dominance of imperialism, extremism, and controlled democracies in different periods of history of these two brethren countries.

The conference aimed to work together in future to resist NATO strike, attacking progressive forces, and setting up for a joint strategy as a "third option" to bring peace and make progress on both sides of this long Durand Line.

Ann Carin Landstorm, former member parliament of Sweden and member of the central working committee of the Swedish Left Party, addressing the conference, said that the purpose of supporting this dialogue and taking initiative of this meeting was to strengthen left wing progressive movements and parties. This is the first time that the both sides left wing parties are getting together and joining hands for peace after a long time and after facing the devastating periods of history in the region those led to anarchy, chaos and terrorism instrumented by imperialistic powers of the world. She called for a joint and meaningful peace revolution in the region with the moral support of her party.

Faridoun Aryan of Afghanistan Revolutionary Organization, Arif Afghani, president Afghanistan Labour Revolutionary Organisation, and Abdul Qadir Ranto, Nasir Shah of Solidarity Party Afghanistan called for peace in Afghanistan and condemned American and NATO invasion urging left-wing parties to be on one platform and resist this regime with sincere efforts. They also called for better relations with Pakistani left wing parties and pulling the efforts to resist this "war on terror" designed to hegemonize the region.

Farooq Tariq, Labour Party spokesperson said that the two day consultation would help in evolving a strategy to unite left groups and would start an organized movement against imperialism and NATO and American invasion in the region.

Dr Lal Khan, Jamil Umar, Abdul Qadir Ranto from Pakistan side also addressed the conference. The participants from Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtoonkhawah and Azad Jammun and Kashmir were present on the occasion.

Concept Note on Pakistan Afghanistan Conference, 21 & 22 December, 2011

Afghanistan

We assert our common understanding, based on a clear-headed analysis of power relations, that the major problems in Afghanistan are its occupation by NATO in collaboration with local warlords, the extremely regressive role of the ultra-fundamentalist Taliban movement and the resultant chronic interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs by Pakistan & Iran.

We are here to clearly reject the propaganda of humanitarian imperialism of NATO, but also that of patriotic defense of the Taliban movement.

Occupying a sovereign country under false pretences, in blatant violation of all accepted norms of international law, then cynically deploying the smokescreen of "human rights" and "democracy", NATO's active promotion of criminal, misogynist warlords has worked against its declared aim of bringing democracy and freedom to the people of Afghanistan. The policies of the occupation forces have resulted in the country being hijacked by medieval warlords, who are as adamant in their rejection of democratic processes and denial of civil liberties and equal rights for women as the Taliban regime they have replaced. Far from getting rid of the Taliban, the occupiers have supported ("converted") some of them, while pretending to fight some others. At the same time, every NATO attack that kills one civilian leads to several civilians joining the ranks of the Taliban in retaliation. This has resulted in most of the Afghan territory being re-captured by the Taliban. Further, under the occupation, Afghanistan has regained its ranking as the biggest producer of opium in the world, adding another potent element to the lawlessness that is destroying the fabric of Afghan society.

On the other hand, we reject the Taliban as a viable alternative for the people of Afghanistan. This violent, theocratic movement is deeply anti-people and promotes the ideal of rule by an elite clergy. Given the possibility of their return to power in the wake of a NATO withdrawal, the people of Afghanistan, and especially Afghan women, have as much to fear in the future as they have to deal with in the present. The Taliban claim to defend the sovereignty and freedom of Afghanistan, yet they are unable to guarantee basic freedoms and protection to their own population, and their policies make Afghanistan an easy target for foreign interference (e.g., from Pakistan or Iran) and even outright occupation.

Further, the ten years of war in Afghanistan have led to an entrenchment of a war economy in the country with tragic consequences for the society (drug production & trafficking, arms smuggling, widespread corruption in the Karzai government and even in aid agencies, massive, un-punished human rights violations by both sides betraying their common roots in a patriarchal, feudal mindset) where the warlords - whether NATO, Northern Alliance or Taliban - benefit from the climate of

terror and uncertainty they have created, plundering the wealth of the country, depriving the masses of peace, justice and dignity. It is here that one comes to recognize that the real front in this conflict is not the shadow-boxing between NATO and the Taliban, but between those who dominate the tools of violence, the warrior class, and those whose very agency has been usurped by the dominant warrior class.

Pakistan

Looking at the effects of the American War on Terror on Pakistan, we note:

- the consolidation of the links between the CIA and sections of the Pakistan Army, resulting in drone strikes inside Pakistan, the abduction and selling of Pakistani citizens to the United States, the continued transit of military supplies to ISAF from Karachi to Khyber, the use of Pakistani military bases by American forces. Very recently, the changes in the relationship between the Pakistan Army's top brass and their imperial masters in the wake of Osama bin Laden's assassination and repeated ISAF attacks on Pakistani border posts, signal an awareness on the part of the Pakistan Army, both of the need to rehabilitate their public image as the guardians of the frontiers, as well as of the weaknesses of the occupation regime in Afghanistan. Hence the blocking of NATO supplies transiting through Pakistan and the boycott of the recent Bonn conference;
- that the closing of ranks between the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban and the Pakistan Army - as part of the Pakistani Establishment's policy of dealing with both the Taliban and NATO - has led the Army to adopt a more belligerent attitude in public, and seeking to capitalize on the peak in anti-American feeling in the country, to attempt to derail the India-Pakistan peace process (or at least tarnish the patriotic credentials of the elected representatives) and even, it is feared, attempt to dislodge the government altogether, charging the current leaders with treason, and installing a puppet civilian government in its place;
- as an example of the venality of the Pakistani establishment, the phenomenon of fake military operations targeting entire populations in various districts in Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa, whether it be in Swat or in South Waziristan, where millions of people were turned into refugees in their own country while the military pretended cynically to "flush out" militants, all the while using the opportunity to kidnap, kill or otherwise silence political activists whom the Pakistan Army recognizes as the real threat to their corporate interests. This phenomenon is strikingly similar to the situation in Afghanistan where the status quo of instability mentioned above is exactly what enables each side to subjugate and terrorize the populations under their control, while claiming to fight the enemy;

We reject

Given this history, we reject any military solution to the problems of Pakistan and Afghanistan and pledge to devote all our energy to constructing concrete alternatives to the false choice between NATO and Taliban. What needs to be implemented immediately is effective self-determination for Afghanistan and the provision of adequate and relevant mechanisms to both support and sustain it. The fear of the outbreak of a civil war following the withdrawal of NATO troops should not be used as an excuse to prolong the occupation since the longer they stay, the more likely a civil war becomes.

Consequently, the Obama administration needs to end the charade called the Global War on Terror and give a chance to the people of Afghanistan to struggle for a truly representative democracy. In Afghanistan as in the tribal areas of Pakistan, policies of effective demilitarization need to be implemented along with infrastructural reforms and extensive public programs that benefit the entire population, rather than elite interests.

The Immediate withdrawal

The immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops along with above-mentioned measures aiming towards greater socio-economic justice are what we believe can alleviate the suffering of the people of both Afghanistan and Pakistan and lead to a just peace in the region. However, let us be clear that none of these people-friendly measures will ever be given to the people, but will have to be extracted from the impending alliance of local and foreign powers that is planning to dominate Afghanistan even after the withdrawal of NATO troops (the recent Bonn conference is an example of attempts to make such alliances). And this can only be done by a genuine movement of the masses of Afghanistan and Pakistan working together with a clear identification of their common enemies: US imperial power, the neo-colonial Pakistan Army and the Taliban and various allied groups

Labour Party Pakistan

Awami Party Pakistan

Workers Party Pakistan
