

Pakistan: The Left of the country unites

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LAHORE - Over 500 delegates affiliated with three former Leftist parties, Workers Party Pakistan, Awami Party Pakistan and Labour Party Pakistan, met on Sunday to formalise the convergence of the aforementioned parties into a single leftist union, Awami Workers Party (AWP).

At the founding conference held at Aiwan-e-Iqbal, the delegates oversaw the drafting of the party manifesto and constitution prepared by a sub-committee. The conference elected Abid Hasan Minto as the president, Fanoos Gujjar as chairman and Farooq Tariq as general secretary for an interim period of six months, after which the party's first congress will be held.

The revolutionary spirit was high as the speakers highlighted the purpose of this merger and explained the political forces that had brought about this union. Highlighting all major issues related to AWP, Minto, in his speech, congratulated the efforts of the people involved in this movement and spoke of the historic trends in the rise of the Left. Criticising the stagnating leftist movement in Pakistan and the obsolete socialist movements of China and Russia, he said that the Left is on the rise again, having learned from its mistakes. He added that change is the only constant in politics and it is in this spirit of change that a new Leftist bloc has been formed to correct the mistakes of the past and build a stronger future.

Speaking on private property, he said that the first priority of AWP was the farmer and correcting the social and economic injustices meted out to him. Speaking on the role of women in politics, he expressed his sorrow that women were underrepresented in every walk of life. Quoting the example of AWP itself, he encouraged young women to become more politically active, and welcomed the new generation, men and women, to become the new face of the party. He said that it was imperative for the youth to be involved in the revolutionary movement for it was the youth that understands fully the dynamics of the environment they are raised in. He said that he would not be heading the party after six months, saying that his health does not permit it, and added that it was about time the youth took over.

He stressed that the creation of this party is just the first step, and said, "We have created a party. We have not started a revolution yet."

He said that the current systems of governance were built on historic trends of oppression and it is this very system was the one AWP intended to fight. Criticising the jirga system and the feudal structure, he said that AWP was a political merger that intended to correct the wrongs of the past. He finished his speech by saying, "AWP is a party of the old and new. Old, because we have kept the spirit of the past and new, because we intend to fix our mistakes and move forward."

Addressing the conference, Farooq Tariq said that half the people in Pakistan wanted to leave the country and said that this should be a matter of shame for the current leadership. He, too, said that the rise of the Left was imperative, and the tools for this revolutionary change were already in place. He cited the example of Greece and Holland, and said that their leftist bloc being the second-most dominant force in these countries points to the growing revolutionary movements within Europe.

The conference ended with renowned author Asim Sajjad Akhtar thanking the delegates for their

participation and reading out the agreed points of this meeting. The major agreements made on this conference were expression of deep sorrow over the tragedies and atrocities being committed in Balochistan, a denunciation of terrorism and tragedies that have occurred in the Swat region, and the demand for a more secular force in Pakistan's political structure.

Ali Jaan, a young member of the new party, said "this step was necessary as the left needed to create its own space within the political sphere of this country. There is friction between the peasants and the landlords, between democratic and the undemocratic forces of Pakistan, between the progressives and the conservatives. In order to bring all these issues on to one platform, it was imperative that the Left created a major union. AWP aims for a society with no exploitation. It aims to bring together the oppressed, workers, women, minorities and all neglected members on to one platform where they have a voice."

Sher Ali, a journalist, added to this and said that "Pakistan has seen trends of continuous oppression and suppression. It has seen the problems of the free market, the issues with mass privatization and the resulting economic inequality. In the face of this, adoption of a single agenda was required; the elimination of oppression and social and economic injustice. AWP aims to elevate the condition of the worker, which is the backbone of this nation."

Nazish Zahoor, another party member present at the occasion, said "I am very, very hopeful about the future of this party. Agreed, this is just the first step, we have many, many obstacles ahead of us, but overcoming this one hurdle was one great step on its own."

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P.S.

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