

# Pakistan: The Students' Solidarity March for Student Unions!

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On 2-3 November, Representatives of progressive student organisations from all over Pakistan and its administered areas gathered in Lahore and formed a "Student Action Committee (SAC)" after 51 years [1]. Months before the formation of this Committee, Revolutionary Students Front (RSF) and Progressive Students Collective (PSC) had detailed discussions about the formation and structure of this committee and after months of hard work and commitment, this committee finally came into being. Formed in the start of November this committee consisted of 17 organisations which included Revolutionary Students Front (RSF), Progressive Students Collective (PSC), Connect the Disconnected, Progressive Students Federation (PrSF), Peoples Students Federation Central Punjab (PSF), Baloch Students Organization (BSO), Jammu Kashmir National Students Federation (JKNSF), Berozgaar Naujawan Tehreek (BNT), Jammu Kashmir Students Liberation Front (JKSLF), All Baltistan Movement (ABM), Baltistan Students Federation (BSF), Peoples Youth Organisation Punjab (PYO), Pashtoon Students Federation Azad (PSF), Balochistan Action Committee, Hazara Students Organization (HSO), Sind Students Action Committee and Punjab University Students Federation (PUSF).



At the first meeting, the SAC unanimously decided that a 'Students' Solidarity March' will be organised all over Pakistan around 9 basic demands, further demands based on the specific conditions of a specific area could also be included. These 9 demands included the restoration of student unions and announcement of election dates, increase in budget for education to at least 5% of GDP and an end to budget cuts, overturning of the administrative rule that requires students' to sign an affidavit that bars them from any kind of political activity, establishment of harassment committees at campuses and students' representation in these committees, demilitarization and securitization of campuses, provision of hostels, transport and other facilities on campuses, end of curfew timings imposed on students in university administered and private hostels, introduction of environment friendly policies by the government, announcement of Holiday on 13<sup>th</sup> April in memory of Mashal Khan Shaheed. Furthermore, the government must provide job opportunities to those graduating from universities or otherwise provide an unemployment allowance for jobless graduates.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, Students' Solidarity March was organised in over 50 cities of Pakistan and administered areas under the banner of 'Student Action Committee'. Many other non-member organisations of the SAC also participated in the March and in some areas organised on their own. Below, we are publishing the reports of Students' Solidarity March received from several cities.

## Lahore



Lahore's Students' Solidarity March proved to be the most significant. In which students, workers, and thousands of people from all walks of life participated. The march was supposed to start at 2:00 pm but people started gathering in front of the Government College University at 1:00 pm. The huge gathering made the GC administration lose its senses, which shut the gates of the hostels to keep the students from joining the march, but under the pressure of March, the gates were opened and students from University joined the march. The students started marching towards the Punjab Assembly. A truck loaded with more than two dozen speakers and the organisers led the march. During the march, revolutionary anthems were played and organisers kept the spirits of the marchers high with their blood warming slogans. Brick kiln workers made a historic appearance at the march. The organisers and leaders of Lahore Left Front and workers of other progressive organisations including Haqooq e Khalq Movement, Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (PTUDC), Progressive Academics Collective, Women Democratic Front, Aurat March, Rawadari Movement, Mazdoor Kissan Party, Awami Workers Party, Communist Party and Pakistan People's Party Shaheed Bhutto joined this historic march with students.

The student organisations in the march included PUST, RSF, PSF, PSC, BSO, ABM, Connect the Disconnected, Councils from all campuses and individual students participated in the march. The Transgender Community also attended the march. Representatives of PTUDC and BNT from Faisalabad and Sialkot also came for the march. At every crossroads, the numbers kept increasing. The march stopped outside the assembly and turned into a public sitting which was addressed by several speakers.



*Iqbal Lala, father of Mashal Khan Shaheed, speaking...*

The first speech was given by Shaheed Mashal Khan's father Iqbal Lala, after which slogans were raised in tribute to Mashal Khan Shaheed. The second speaker was Dr Lal Khan, editor *Asian Marxist Review* and International Secretary PTUDC, who shed light on the importance of Student Unions and Student Power. The responsibility of the stage secretary was shared by Zahid Ali, Awais Qarni, Mohiba Ahmad, Raza Gillani, and Haider Butt. Other speakers included Farooq Tariq, Muhammad Shabir, Alamgir Wazir, Kamil Khan, Mohiba Ahmad, Awais Qarni, Sanaullah Aman, Sidra Iqbal, Hussain Naqi, Sibte Hassan and Farrukh Sohail Goindai. The concluding speech was given by Arooj Aurangzeb. A theatre was also performed by Laal Hartal.

At the end of Lahore's historic march, a press conference was held by SAC representatives. Speaking to the press conference Mohiba Ahmad, Spokesperson SAC, said that this march is a start of a movement and if in the coming weeks no significant steps are taken towards the restoration of student unions, then we might make call for a general strike or a public sit-in at the Capital,

Islamabad in which students from all over the country will participate and this battle for restoration of student unions will be fought to the end. A detailed discussion will be held in this regard at the next meeting of the SAC.



The next day, 6 Comrades had an FIR for Sedition lodged against them. The state has stooped so low as to nominate Iqbal Lala, Mashal Khan father, in the FIR. A student of Punjab University was abducted from the University hostel with the help of the Chief Security Officer. Against this oppression and terrorism, the students of Punjab University protested outside the Vice Chancellor's house. Due to the pressure created by students, the state authorities were forced to present Alamgir in Court on Monday, and the court ordered his judicial remand for 14 days. Other nominees in the FIR were granted bail by the court.

## **Islamabad**



After a month's full-fledged mobilization the Students' Solidarity March was observed by 1500 students and workers. The programme started at 2:00 pm in front of the Islamabad press club. The rally started at 5:00 pm from press club to D-Chowk. The organizations that took part in this march include RSF, PrSF, BSO, ABM, BSF, JKNSF, PRM, PSF, JKPSF, PTUDC, WDF, AWP, Peoples Unity of PIA, Hydro Union WAPDA, PMDC workers, YDA and general public participated in great numbers.

Universities that took part in March were COMSATS, NUML, Federal Urdu University, Quaid-e-Azam University, NUST, Arid Agriculture University, RIFAH, Islamic International University, NDU, Gordon College, Asgharmal College and others. The stage was conducted Rehana, Minhaj and Imtiaz Baloch. The opening speech was made by Omer Abdullah of RSF. Other Speakers include Sanagar (PRSF), Tanveer Memon (Chairman Mehran Council), Shareef Ahkunuzada (chairman ABM), Zahid (BNSO) Professor Dr Perviz Hood Bhoy, Danish Yaseen (PRSF), Azhar Rasheed (Chairman Kashmir Council NUML), Rimsha (RIFAH), Rashid Shiekh (Ex-President JKNSF), Altaf Bashrat (JKPSF) and Ammar Rashid (AWP).



The march was concluded with a resolution where the charter of demands was presented by Muneeba of PRSF and it was solemnly pledged by all student to take this struggle in all universities and colleges and continue the fight till victory.

## **Karachi**

On 29<sup>th</sup> Nov, on the call of SAC across the country the Students' Solidarity March had been organized in Karachi in the shape of marvellous Rally from Regal Chowk to Press Club at 3:00 pm. Before moving, the participants gathered at Regal Chowk and chanted slogans and sang revolutionary songs and kept the environment revolutionary. From various institutions of Karachi, students started coming and after a while, the participants were arranged in the rally and Marched towards press club. During the rally, students demanded to restore student unions and also had been chanting slogans against fees hike, worse transport facilities, substandard hostel facilities and harassment of female students in educational institutions.

As they reached press club, rally transformed into a mass gathering, where participants loudly chanted slogans in favour to restore student unions and their demands. Within a few minutes, spokespersons from various organizations delivered speeches. Zahbia from PrSf performed as stage secretary and SAC members started addressing by highlighting students issues.



Adnan Rehmat (NSF), Ali Saqlain (SSC), Zulfiqar Ali (ABM), Hatim Khan (RSF), Connect the Disconnected, Naveed Al Rehman, Darosham Baloch (BSO), Khalid Rafiq (JKNSF), Wazir Zahid (BSF), Safeer Rasheed (PSA), Arghwan (PSO), Fida Kar (Pakhtoon SF), Waqas Aalam (PrSF), and Mubshar (JKSSF) delivered speeches and participated in the discussion. Finally, successful Students' Solidarity March was ended by performing traditional dance 'Atan Raqs'.

## **Quetta**

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, The Progressive Student Organisations of Student Action Committee Quetta, RSF, PSF, BNT, BSO, in Collaboration with PTUDC organised a Students - Workers Solidarity March. Other organisations like Women Democratic Front, Pakistan Workers Federation, Mutehda Labour Federation, Martin Dao Workers' Union, NOP, Paramedics, Balochistan Workers' Federation, Railway Workers' Union, and left-leaning students attended the march. The march started at 2:00 PM from Metropolitan Ground. The enthusiasm of the participants was remarkable. The participants chanted slogans like Asia is Red!, Students are Alive!, Long Live Student Worker Unity!, and for the restoration of student unions. The march passed from several streets and arrived back the

Metropolitan Ground. The march ended with slogans and some blood warming speeches.

## **Peshawar**

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, Students' Solidarity March was organised by RSF and Connect the Disconnected along with other progressive student organisations. At 1:00 PM students marched in Peshawar University from Academic Block to the Main Gate, and from there left for the Press Club where they met students from other institutions to march alongside them from the press club to the provincial assembly. During the march, students chanted slogans while holding placards and banners. In front of the assembly, the demands of the march were put forward by the organisers, the most important of which was the restoration of student unions. Other than RSF and Connect the Disconnected, PSO, PSF, NSF, PrSF, other progressive students attended the march.



## **Swat**

The SAC called for nationwide Students' Solidarity March on 29 November. In that scenario, RSF and PTUDC organised a rally from Green Chowk to Press Club for the restoration of students' union. Wikh Zilmyan and Paktoon Students Federation also participated in the march. Gufran Ahad, Abdul Malik, Adnan Ismael and Adnan spoke to the rally and demanded immediate restoration of student unions.

## **Hyderabad**

On 29 November, organizations of Student Action Committee, RSF and PrSf, Students' Solidarity March has been organized. A huge number of students from universities and colleges of Hyderabad and Jamshoro gathered at Old Campus. They had placards, revolutionary flags and banners in their hands, on which demands and slogans were written. The March began moving in the shape of Rally from old campus with loud shouts of revolutionary slogans and demands. Participants kept the revolutionary momentum of march and finally reached at the press club. Where rally converted into a massive public gathering. Students leaders with belongings to various organizations delivered speeches on students issues. Among them were, Munesh Dharani (RSF), Inayat Khaskheli (PrSf), Baxal Thalho (AWP), Rahul (PTUDC), Suleman (PPP shaheed Bhutto), HyderBux (Mehran University Arts and Literature Society) and Pardeep Kumar (Sindh Shaagird Tehreek).



They said that student Union had been banned for four decades and their consequences can be seen in the political crisis of leadership. They made education business and the fee is hiking day by day. Govt officials had failed in making policies to resolve students issues and they are not interested to resolve students issues at all. In such severe conditions, restoring student unions is the only



solution. Finally, students demanded that student unions must be restored and election scheduled to be announced as soon as possible.

### **Mirpurkhas**

Likewise, all over the country, RSF also organized a Students' Solidarity March on 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2019. It was started right from the Post office chowk. A huge number of students, trade union workers, social activists and others participated with high spirit. There were plenty of banners and placards in the hands of all those participants that were written up with their legal rights and demands. Bypassing from different areas of the city, finally, it rushed towards the press club where it was addressed by Vicky from RSF, Pirshotam and Muhammad Husain Arisar of PTUDC, Mazhar Abbasi and Mir Mazhar Talpur of APCA, Hamid Channa from Sindh Socialist Movement and many others. They strongly demanded the restoration of student unions.



### **Dadu**

On 29 November, Students' Solidarity March had been organized by SAC organizations, RSF and BNT. March had been started from Allama I.I Qazi library park to press club Dadu. A huge number of young people joined this march. Students and protestors picked up banners sheets and flags and chanting slogans regarding student's rights, fees must end, restore student unions. Students representative spoke to rally at press club that includes Sajjad Jamali, Faisal Mastoi, Shahzaib Gopang, Imran Kumbher, Imran Zuanr and Majid Bughio of RSF, Rameez and Sohail Chandio of BNT and Maran Shahae of PSF.



In their address, they said students are under severe pressure right now. On the one hand, students are harassed inside educational institutions on the other hand fees is being raised. They were not being provided with any platform for their rights, the student unions must be restored.

### **Thari Mirwah**



A student march was also organized in Thari Mirwah by BNT at 2:00 pm in front of the press club. The protest was lead by Sharjeel, Sada Hussian and Naseem Aijaz

### **Khairpur Miras**

Like in the whole Pakistan, On 29 November, Students' Solidarity March had also been organized SAC organization, RSF in Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur Miras. After 3 decades, this was the first stance where leftwing students organizations showed their strength.



The rally was started from Central Library of the university at 11:00 am. The students from PrSf and other organizations participated in considerable numbers. With chanting revolutionary slogans and demands, the rally took shape of a massive crowd at Business Department. Where Mohsin, Murk and Mohammad Taqi and other students representatives from various organizations addressed the March and it ended with revolutionary songs.

### **Ban Saeed Abad**

On 29 November, Students' Solidarity March was organized by RSF and BNT on the call of SAC in Bhan Saeed Abad. A huge number of students and unemployees participated in the March with placards and banners in their hands. The March started from Civil Hospital and reached at the press club with shouts of students demands and revolutionary slogans. Anwar Panwar, Shah Mohammad Panhwar, Iqbal Memon, Sajjad Shahani, Badar-u-din Panwhar, Shauqat Marri, Fayaz Jamali and other students representatives addressed the March.



### **Sukkur**

Revolutionary Students Front has organized Students' Solidarity March in Sukkur on the call of SAC on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019. In this march, a huge number of students participated enthusiastically. March began at City point Qasim park to press club. Students were chanting slogans and demanding heir rights. In address students were demanding for restoration of unions and stating objectives of Students' Solidarity March, reduce fees, increase the budget of education they further said committee should be set up at University and colleges to prevent harassment and others problems. Speakers including Saeed Khaskheli, Kashif Qadir, Fazal Yaqoob, Tariq Aziz, Asif Shar spoke to the participants at the press club.

### **Rahim Yar Khan**

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, Students' Solidarity March was organised by RSF under the banner of Student Action Committee in Rahim Yar Khan from Press Club to City Bridge. The march was attended by workers, peasants, teachers, students and people from other walks of life who demanded the

restoration of student unions. Students demanded the immediate restoration of student unions and the announcement of election dates. Student also said that the budget cuts and fee hikes have made it impossible for the students from lower strata of the society to acquire education, the government needs to declare an education emergency, increasing the budget for education to at least 5% of GDP and setting up new institutions, and education must be made free at all levels. The government must not silence the voices of students and ensure their democratic rights by restoring student unions allowing them to elect their representatives. Furthermore, they said that the privatisation of education institutes must immediately be stopped.



Among the participants were Umair Bhatti of RSF, Zaibi Bhatta and Shehzad Shah from Sheikh Zaid Medical College, Izhar Ahmad of PrSF, Malik Fahad Manikof PSF, Raees Ali Waris, Asad Dhillon, Haseeb Chaudhary, Syed Moez, Daniyal Chaudhary, Faheem Nawaz Khan, Rana Fahad, Akram Bhatti, Ahmad Jamil Shah, Shahid Bangash, Chaudhry Umer and Rana Yasir along with dozens of others. Syed Zaman of Mazdoor Ittihad, Haider Chughtai of PTUDC, Nadeem Malik, Raees Tariq, Pir Jee Ashraf, M.D Ganga, Husnain Shah, Mod ul Hassan, Mehr Azam Raees, Saraiki Poet Rasheed Dostum, Azeem Mahandra of Unilever Ltd. along with members of civil society attended the march. The participants also chanted slogans for their demands while holding banners and placards

## **D.G Khan**

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, a Students' Solidarity March organised by RSF in D.G Khan with great revolutionary zeal. March began with Bismil Azeem Abadi's poem and during the march, students chanted slogans for their rights and the restoration of student unions. Students held banners and placards asking for free education, restoration of student unions. Abdul Rauf Lund, Shehryar Zauq and Sattar Lund address the rally outside the Press Club after which the students march back to Traffic chowk. Students from PSF and other organisations also participated in the march.



## **Kot Addu**

Students' Solidarity March was organised by RSF at the call of Student Action Committee from Tabba Shehr Kot Addu to Kot Addu Press Club. While addressing the rally Awais Bhatta of Elementary College, M. Saleem, Ali Rafay and Ali Sawan of Punjab College, Amir Lateef and Ali Akbar from BNT, Chairman Workers' Union Municipal Committee Hameed Akhtar, Ghulam Qasim Khan Shehzad of PPP, Zulfiqar Ali Lund, Fazal Gurmani and Imtiaz Tahir condemned the fee hikes and said that the ban imposed on student unions 35 years ago by Dictator Zia ul Haq is still in force, which has increased the problems in educational institutions. At the march students held placards



which had their slogans and demands written on them, asking for the restoration of student unions and free education.



## **Multan**

On 29 November 2019 Students' Solidarity March was organized by Students Action Committee. It began from Goal Bagh and ended at Jalal square near Chungi number 6 Gulgasht, Multan. There were more than 200 participants in the march. Majority of them were students from several private and public educational institutions including school, colleges and university. Revolutionary Students Front, Baloch and councils and Peoples Students Federation were the progressive student organizations participating in the march. Several labour leaders, trade unionists, lawyers, civil society activists, human rights activists and political leaders also marched with the students, demanding right to unionize, free and quality education. In the end, Nadeem Pasha of PTUDC made a speech to the participants and demanded free education for all at every level. He asserted that students had a key role in revolutions and once again they are awakening. This is a serious threat to the capitalist system because this time students come up with the slogans 'Surkh Hai Surkh Hai! - Asia Surkh Hai!' - stating Asia is Red!.



## **Kashmir**

Students' Solidarity March was observed by JKSNF and other SAC member organizations in eight different parts of Pakistan Administered Kashmir.

## **Muzaffarabad**

In Muzaffarabad on the call of SAC, the Students' Solidarity March was organised by JKNSF from Azad Jammu Kashmir University. Hundreds of male and female students participated in the march. Senior Vice President JKNSF AJK University Raja Khuram, JKNSF organizer Laraib BB, President JKNSF AJK University Hammad Mir Sulehria, Deputy Secretary-General JKNSF Basit Irshad Bagi, JKPSF AJK University President Sardar Asad, Khawaja Ahsen, Arslan Choudary and others addressed the March.



### **Mirpur**

A Students' Solidarity March was organized by JKNSF in Mirpur. Dozens of students participated in the march where they demanded immediate election schedule. Organizer JKNSF MUST Affaq Iqbal Abbasi, Khawaja Hamza, Danyal, Wahab Jamil and others addressed the march.

### **Rawalakot**

In Rawalakot three different marches were observed. First took place in Poonch University by SAC in which students participated in huge numbers. Chairman JKNSF Poonch University Mujeeb Saduzai, Usman Khan, Bilal, Annum, Qurah and others spoke to the participants.

### **Rawalakot II**

Rawalakot Second March held at Post Graduate Girls College Khirik by JKNSF.

### **Rawalakot III**

Another march started from Post Graduate College ground and ended at Kecharey Chowk Rawalakot. The march was organized by SAC (JKNSF, JKSLF) whereas other progressive students organizations, JKPSF and JKPSO, joined the march. A huge number of students participated in this march. General secretary JKSLF Danish Gulfraz, Chairman PSO Poonch University Qadose Khan, JKPSF Sardar Mehtab, JKNSF Editor "Azam" Altamish Tasadduq spoke to the participants.

### **Hajira**

Poonch Tehsil Hajira also observed the solidarity march. This march was organised by the Student Action Committee (JKNSF and JKSLF). March started from degree college and ended at central chowk Hajira Bazar. President JKNSF Abrar Latif, Naveed Shoukat of JKSLF, Arslan Shani, Osama Pervaiz and Tanveer Anwar of JKNSF and others addressed the March.



### **Bagh**

Solidarity March was organised by JKNSF in Bagh. Senior Vice President JKNSF Rashid Bagi, Adnan Khan, Harris Badhshah and others spoke at this occasion.

### **Kotli**

Student Action Committee organised a solidarity march in Kotli. Chairman SLF Abid Raja and others spoke to the participants.

### **Sehnsa**

Kotli's tehsil headquarter Sehnsa also witnessed the Students' Solidarity March, organised by JKNSF. The rally was addressed by Yasir and Yasir Masood and others.

## **Mang**

Students' Solidarity March was organised by JKNSF in Mang District Headquater Sudhnuti. General Secretary JKNSF Yasir Hanif addressed the march.

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Apart from these cities the historical Students' Solidarity March held at Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza, Sibbi, Lesbela, Kohat, Sawabiand many other cities and towns by Students Action Committee (SAC)

## **Revolutionary Students Front (RSF)**

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## **P.S.**

- Asian Marxist Review, December 8, 2019:

<http://www.marxistreview.asia/students-solidarity-march-for-student-unions/>

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## **Footnotes**

[1] ESSF (article 51292), [A countrywide protest called: The Students' Movement in Pakistan is on the Verge of Explosion!](#).