

# Pakistan: Farmers postpone protest after baton-charge, arrests

Monday 9 November 2020, by [Dawn \(Pakistan\)](#) (Date first published: 5 November 2020).

**LAHORE: Protesting farmers and the Punjab government agreed to come to negotiating table after the former were baton-charged and arrested by police when they reached The Mall here on Wednesday and tried to block the road for traffic.**

“We decided to postpone our protest and go for talks when the government agreed to form a committee for discussing ways and means for implementing the recommendations we had submitted to the authorities months ago for improving the agriculture sector,” said Chaudhry Shaukat Chadhar, general secretary of the Kissan Board Pakistan, one of two farmers’ groups who assembled at the Charing Cross earlier in the day to press for their demands.

Their demands include fixing support prices of wheat at Rs2,000 and of sugarcane at Rs300 per 40 kg, and introducing a flat rate of Rs5 per unit for tube-wells.

Activists of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (Anwar group) had assembled a day ago at Thokar Niaz Beg, closing Multan Road to traffic. Police used water cannon and baton-charged them late on Tuesday night to restore traffic. At least 200 of the activists, who pelted the police with stones, were also detained.

Hundreds of members of PKI as well as of KBP, carrying bamboo sticks in their hands, reached the Punjab Assembly building in small groups on Wednesday morning to stage a sit-in there. After failure of initial negotiations, police baton-charged and arrested scores of them.

Mr Chadhar told *Dawn* that Law Minister Muhammad Basharat Raja assured them that secretaries of agriculture and food departments would meet the farmers’ representatives on Thursday (today) morning to discuss problems of the farming community and suggest solutions.

Panel to review demands; opposition, PML-Q flay govt action

He said 500 detained farmers were also being released as per the understanding.

He said if the demands were not met by Nov 10, the farmers would march on Islamabad the same day.

Meanwhile, opposition parties as well as an ally of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf condemned “torture” of the protesters and also announced their support for them.

In a tweet, PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sharif termed the government actions shameful, arguing the tillers were guaranteeing supply of food items to the nation.

ہم نے اس بارے میں ایک ویڈیو بھی بنائی ہے جس میں ہم نے اس واقعہ کے بارے میں مزید تفصیلات دی ہیں۔  
اس ویڈیو کو دیکھنے کے لیے [یہاں](#) پر کلک کریں۔  
ہم آپ کو مزید خبریں بھی بھیجیں گے۔

— Maryam Nawaz Sharif (@MaryamNSharif) [November 4, 2020](#)

PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said arresting the farmers instead of resolving their issues reflected ‘fascist’ thinking of Prime Minister Imran Khan. She regretted that the person who had led 126-day sit-in at D-Chowk in Islamabad could not tolerate a one-day protest by the poor farmers and added that such a treatment to the farming community could be meted out only by “vote thieves”.

PPP leaders Nayyer Hussain Bukhari, Chaudhry Manzoor and Hassan Murtaza also condemned the baton-charge of the farmers and termed it a “reflection of dictatorial thinking”.

They said beating the peaceful growers only for demanding an increase in wheat support price was an anti-agriculture step and alleged that the rulers were deliberately working against the sector, which is the backbone of the national economy.

They recalled that an increase in wheat support price during the PPP tenure had led to an increase in crop yield and the country had become an exporter of the commodity.

The PML-Q, an ally of the ruling PTI, also criticised “torture” and detention of the farmers. Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, a party leader and currently acting governor of Punjab, regretted in a statement that the growers were forced to take to streets to press for the acceptance of their demands.

He urged the authorities concerned to immediately accept the demands as the farming community played an important role in strengthening the economy and they must not be made to protest on roads instead of focusing on tilling their lands.

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