

FACING THE MUSHARRAF DICTATORSHIP

FAROOQ TARIQ



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An Activist Narrative



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an activist narrative

Farooq Tariq

Edited: Merrilyn Treasure



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Acknowledgements

It was 12 October 1999. As usual, I was at the Labour Party Pakistan, secretariat in Lahore. Around 6 pm, Farooq Sulehria called me to break the news that Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif has removed the army chief General Pervez Musharraf who was flying back to Pakistan from his visit to Sri Lanka. Sulehria asked me to issue a press statement to explain LPP point of view. "Wait and see the response of the army," I told him.

A journalist by profession, Farooq Sulehria was at home and his television was on. He called me again after an hour to tell that the television transmission has stopped and the TV screen has went blank. "This is army taking over", I told him. "How do you know"? "I have lived through two army rules and this could be the third one" I replied. I had faced three military dictatorship of General Ayub Khan (1958-1969) General Yahya (1969-1971) and General Zia-ul-Haque (1977-1988). As student activist from my early days, we raised slogans against Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan. But it was the military rule of General Zia ul Haque to which we fought energetically all the 11 years of his dictatorship.

By 8 pm it was clear that army has taken over. But there was no formal reaction from any political group yet. The Pakistan

Television (PTV) started broadcasting war songs. I went out on my motorbike to observe the state of affairs. LPP office was just opposite to PTV building in Lahore. I saw army troops there. I went to Governor House on the main Mall Road of Lahore. The army trucks were there.

Around 8pm, I went to the office of Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, the head of People Democratic Alliance (PDA), Pakistan Peoples Party was part of it. There were jubilations. The PPP activists were happy that Nawaz Sharif is gone. I asked Nawabzada Nasarullah Khan, is he happy with the military take over? Although smiling, he said, let's wait for the military general's speech and his priorities. Meanwhile one PPP supporter brought in some Benazir Qulfa, a popular local flavor of ice cream to distribute among those present in the office. I was getting irritated by this behavior.

I decided to go back to my office. I hurriedly collected record of LPP membership and other important documents to put them at a safe place. The Army rule could mean seizing of the political parties' offices. We had a short meeting of leading comrades and decided to oppose the military rule. Although, we had been opposing Nawaz Sharif power period from 1997 till the day but we were not the one who would welcome the military take over for any reason or justification whatsoever.

I went back home around 10pm. Waited for the speech of General Musharraf. It was full of same old excuses that democracy was not functioning. The General was telling that my plane was hijacked and they were not letting my plane to land and so on.

I immediately wrote a press release opposing military rule and went out to deliver it to Daily Jang and other newspapers. Army trucks were every where but not many people were on the roads. I was very much afraid to be stopped by military personnel and be caught red handed with the press release, opposing the rule. It was around 11.30pm when I arrived at the front desk of Daily Jang.

The next day daily Jang printed only a few lines of LPP statement. But we were satisfied as we knew that every word of the newspapers will be read that day. LPP was one of the very few political parties that opposed the military rule from the day one. On 13 October,

I wrote a lengthy article explaining the reasons of military take over and that why we must oppose it. The article was perhaps the first explanation available on the internet.

Very next week, our weekly paper, *Mazdoor Jeddohd* (Workers Struggle) office was raided and army men took away all the copies of the paper. The title story was "No to army rule". The paper was started in 1980 from Amsterdam, by our small group of Pakistani comrades in exile due the military dictatorship of General Zia ul Haque. So, it was not new for us. We had such treatment several times before as well, not only at the hands of the military rulers during the eighties but also by the civilian government of Mian Nawaz Sharif during 1992.

This was the beginning of our struggle against military rule of General Musharraf. I was arrested over 9 times during the nine years of Musharraf army rule. Numerous police cases were registered against me and other activists of LPP. My house and party office was raided many times during this period by the police to arrest me. Sometimes they were able to catch me, at other times the police raids were ended in failure as I successfully managed to hoodwink them.

During this period I often used to receive threatening telephone calls not only from the police officers but also from army officers and sometimes from intelligence agencies. LPP activists were also threatened by religious fundamentalists several times. All this was due to LPP's staunch opposition to the military rule and its relentless efforts for building an alternative to the politics of the rich and feudal.

This book is not a narration of General Musharraf's 9-year army rule rather a saga of our resistance to the General. This is a story of the decisive last 18 months of Musharaf rule. Some of the articles and diaries I wrote during these 18 months are included in this book. Written at the thick of the activities, it is more like a running commentary of a cricket match.

I must thank Dianne Feeley, editor "Against the Current" USA for editing some articles included in this book. My friend Marilyn Treasure from "Green Left Weekly", Australia, edited the final draft of the book. Pierre Rousset of ESSF, France who was really an expert in

expanding the networks for effective solidarity campaigns for my release, every time, particularly during 2007. Abdul Khaliq Shah, LPP Lahore, spent time with me to chart out the initial recommendations for the book. Naveed Butt a teacher at University of Punjab, Lahore and a known artist of Pakistan designed the title of the book. I must thank my friend and comrade Khalid Malik of Labour Education Foundation to give all the necessary technical advices and support for the printing of this book.

My partner Shahnaz, daughter Mashal and son Abdullah were the real source of inspiration and help during this difficult period. Without the moral and economic support of my four brothers, Mian Ahmad Yaseen, Mian Ahmad Saeed, Mian Javeed Ahmed and Mian Rauf Ahmad, my three sisters Shama Asif, Dr. Ribina Sajid and Yasmeen Afzal, I would have not survived facing the military dictators during all 40 years of my activism. My three brothers-in-laws, Mian Asif Sharif, Sajid Amin and Dr. Mohamed Afzal were equally supportive and have been more close to me than my sisters. My mother Fatima Begum and father Choudry Abdul Ahmed, both died in 2005, extended their full backing to my activism. However, it was my mother late Fatima Begum who was a consistence supporter and a guide to me. It was her kind behavior that attracted me to the politics of working class in the initial period.

My teacher, friend and comrade Maqbool Babri and his partner Majbritt Babri had always been in the forefront to help our working class cause for a just and equitable society, free of exploitation. The family had been saving me by providing practical shelter and help at critical times since my university days in the seventies. Be it my resistance against religious fundamentalists in university of the Punjab or my struggle against dictators, like General Zia and Musharraf, I found the family always there to support me. So is the case of my friend, Furrukh Suhail Goindi and his partner Rima Goindi.

My special thanks to Asma Jehanghir, Chairperson Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Whenever, I was arrested and sent to jail, I was never worried to be long inside, the reason was Asma. As a

senior advocate, she would always be there in the courts, arguing for me and other comrades' release.

Our relations were more than that of lawyer-client. Asma Jehanghir respected our struggle against the military dictatorship. In fact, it were our informal and formal meetings that led to many political changes in Pakistan. In June 2000, we discussed to bring all the political parties at one platform to oppose the Musharraf dictatorship. Committee for Restoration of Democracy was formed and we invited all the main opposition parties at Lahore Press Club on 12 October 2000, to mark the first year of Musharraf dictatorship. Over 1000 attended. Two months later, Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD) was formed. So was the case of several historic gatherings of social and political activists on the issues of women rights, Hadood Ordinance, War on terror, Lawyer's movement and Mumbai terrorist attacks.

When 16 of us were arrested in April 2002, protesting against Musharraf's fraudulent referendum, Asma was at District Courts, Lahore very next day, arguing for our release. So respected she is with legal fraternity that the judge ordered to release us on bail immediately, from the court room. She even presented her own property documents as personal guarantee for our bail. It was a rare gesture of solidarity on her part. So was the case of Hina Jilani advocate, Asma's younger sister and Shahtaj Qazalbash, the convener of Joint Action Committee For Peoples Rights, Lahore.

My special thanks also to Rabbyia Bajwa advocate, a young budding lawyer's leader, determined to be heard by the judges in all circumstances.

Abid Hassan Minto, convener Awami Jamhoori Tehreek, the alliance of left parties in Pakistan, was always ready to help whenever I was arrested. He would organize his supporters to be part of the protest demonstrations. During my June 2007 arrest, the regime had to withdraw the three-month detention order against me, before he could appear in the Lahore High Court the next day as my advocate.

Above all, the LPP activists and supporters, particularly our brave women comrades, around the country and our supporters

worldwide had it possible that I continued to face the dictatorship for all nine years. As my dear friend Toni Usman from Norway would comment after every release of mine, "please do not go to jail, you may be ok in jail but we are not, we can not sleep until you are released".

At number of times LPP activists all over the country risked their lives to provide all sort of help to our activism. When I was released from Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore in 2001, there were many LPP members and supporters to welcome me at the gates of the jail. The leaders of Pakistan Peoples Party and Muslim League, with whom I spent my jail days, were surprised to see the affection and love of LPP activists for me. There is no leader or main activist of LPP who had not been to jail or was afraid to go to jail during Musharraf dictatorship period. I salute them all.

Farooq Tariq
10 February 2009
farooqtariq@hotmail.com

Pakistan: a monstrosity of a state

Roger Silverman

It took a year-long mass uprising by virtually the whole population of Pakistan to finally overthrow the hated military dictator General Musharraf. This unique book is a diary of that struggle by one of its most courageous participants.

With the exception of a handful of wild collapsed states, Pakistan is probably today the most volatile society in the world: the weakest link in the world chain. Since it is also to a great extent the pivotal fulcrum upon which US imperialism is resting in its so-called “war against terror” (more properly, its war against the oil-producing nations), the fate of the whole world largely depends upon how events play out there.

From the start, Pakistan was a monstrosity of a state. Born in a conflagration of communal frenzy, it was an utterly unviable entity, composed of two halves with nothing more substantial than a common religion to connect them, separated by a thousand miles of hostile territory. Millions were slaughtered to create it, as a direct result of a fiendish imperialist conspiracy to cut across the solidarity of a sub-continental-wide national liberation uprising.

Once established, the new state was an abortion. Created out of a communal fantasy lumping together “Punjab, Afghania, Kashmir, Iran, Sindh, Tukharistan, Afghanistan, Baluchistan ” (which gave this artificial construct its clumsy acronym), it never seriously pursued its inflated pretensions to extend its terrain to Iran, Tukharistan or Afghanistan, nor even to Kashmir. It cut a river of blood through Punjab, and has barely managed to maintain a feeble grip on Sindh – to say nothing of Baluchistan or the North-West Frontier Province (Afghania), which is nominally provinces of Pakistan, but where over huge tracts the government’s writ does not run and its armies hardly dare venture. And yet Pakistan emerged from a bloody birth carrying on its back the bleeding half of a ravaged Bengal to which it had never previously laid claim, at a distance of a thousand miles: a people with a distinct culture, language and history, who outnumbered their co-subjects and from the start bitterly resented their annexation by the distant feudal overlords of Punjab. To drag East Bengal into a state dominated by West Punjab was completely unviable, and the secession of Bangladesh was as inevitable as the revolt of the Philippines against Spain. At the very first opportunity, the East Bengalis tore themselves free, though only at the cost of three million lives.

The creation of Pakistan was a blunder even more misconceived and even less viable than that other communal statelet established almost simultaneously... Israel. And its 62-year history has witnessed the burial of an even greater number of victims in the two states’ respective consequential futile wars.

Pakistan could only survive by accepting the humiliating role of a US client state throughout the Cold War, fighting surrogate diplomatic and military wars, first against Soviet-patronized India and later against Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. In the process, Pakistan was forced to stagger under the weight of a constantly swelling tumour, in the form of a crazed clerical-fascist military intelligence state-within-a-state. Among the horrors spawned by the ISI, its coffers swelling with dollars, was al-Qaida, the most notorious of its creatures. Every al-Qaida atrocity bears the hallmarks of the ISI, the monster which the CIA nuzzled to its breast.

The succession of tumbling ex-Sandhurst tinpot military dictators swept away by defeat in the Bangladesh war, which at a stroke reduced the reach of the Punjabi feudal ruling caste by more than half, plunged what was left of Pakistan into revolution. Strikes, gheraos, uprisings, occupations, mutinies, millions on the march, impelled Bhutto the First – a suave playboy left holding the power following the unceremonious flight of the generals – virtually a hostage to the revolution played out on the streets.

Bhutto found himself suddenly denouncing the rule of the “22 families” (including his own), and until the movement began to subside, helplessly ratifying the democratic anti-feudal reforms already enacted by mass action on the ground. For these concessions, he was never to be forgiven by the feudal elite.

Barbaric revenge was soon to be inflicted by its vicious personification, the odious General Zia ul-Haq, in the form of an eleven-year reign of terror: mass hangings, torture and floggings. Bhutto personally was humiliated, tortured and hanged, and countless thousands publicly flogged into submission.

Throughout that long dark night of torture, an entire generation of workers and peasants never forgot that brief glimmer of human hope that they had experienced in those earlier days: that faint spark of expectation that they might one day rise above the level of brute pack-animals. That is the basis of the continuing, though successively tarnished, Bhutto name, and the waning appeal of the PPP, despite the fact that whenever it was returned to power following the fall of yet another general, it cosied up to the US embassy and betrayed once again the people’s illusions. Pakistan has thus continued its tawdry cycle of blundering pantomime military dictatorships, interspersed with brief chaotic interregnums of corrupt quasi-parliamentary regimes.

With the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, the collapse of the USSR, and the rise in the shape of al-Qaida of a new enemy raised and fed from within its own banks and embassies, US imperialism found itself in the humiliating position of having to depend upon a despised and universally derided military dictator who finally had no hope of

clinging even to the last trappings of power for more than a matter of weeks; on a military machine incapable of even encountering, let alone defeating, its enemies; and on an intelligence apparatus half of which continues to support the other side.

Today, we see in Pakistan not only the weakest link in the worldwide chain, but a rapidly developing revolutionary situation too. In writings almost reminiscent of those of John Reed (the brilliant American on-the-spot reporter in Russia in October 1917 who chronicled what he called the “ten days that shook the world”) Farooq too has graphically brought to life in these pages a revolution in the making: the masses’ heroic expression of anger, solidarity and growing determination.

For now, their hopes have once again been betrayed by the party of the feudal dynasty which through an accident of history came to be entrusted with them (the PPP), and cynically exploited by its gangster-businessmen rivals (the PMLN). The leaders of both these parties were united in common dread of the mass movement that was to sweep them into power in a brief coalition, and who even resorted to propping up the tottering dictator for a last few months before he finally had to go.

I have had the privilege of knowing Farooq Tariq as a comrade and friend, together with the pioneers of what later became the Labour Party Pakistan, for 28 years. In 1980, on behalf of a worldwide network of socialists called the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), I visited a group of Pakistani opponents of General Zia who had been forced into temporary refuge in the Netherlands. In 1982, Farooq and his comrades were arrested by the Dutch police on trumped-up charges of “conspiracy to hi-jack an aircraft”. The blame for this ridiculous accusation belonged not to the Netherlands authorities, who were acting in good faith on a false tip-off, but to the dirty-tricks brigade of the Zia gangster dictatorship. *Farooq and his comrades were fully exonerated and went on to launch one of the most successful underground resistance propaganda newspapers ever seen, Jeddo-juhd (Struggle), which operated as a militant faction of the Pakistan Peoples Party.*

With the fall of the Zia regime, the group made an instant impact back home. It was just at this time, however, that the CWI internationally suffered a split which had damaging repercussions in Pakistan along with all the other countries where it had a base. Soon afterwards, both the contending factions of the CWI were to sever their connections with Farooq and his comrades.

From the very beginning, Farooq has shown that same combination of courage, energy, modesty, humour and quiet determination that has since won the Labour Party Pakistan the loyalty of many thousands of super-exploited workers and peasants. Tempered in the crucible of sacrifice, solidarity and struggle, the LPP represents their best hope today.

Will it succeed in taking up its rightful leadership of the masses' struggle? From Farooq's inspiring reports, it is clear that by its courage, its transparent honesty, and its brilliant tactical flair, it has captured the imagination of workers and peasants, at least in some areas, as well as that of a layer of professionals, in the form of the advocates' movement. Will it be able to harness the energies of the masses now that they are once again on the move? Can it ultimately lead them to a decisive victory? And if not this time, can it at least leave behind it a heritage and a lasting tradition which will ensure that the next wave of mass struggle starts from a higher level?

As Farooq would be the first to agree, this will be decided not just by tactics – by agitational brilliance – but also by theoretical and strategic vision. The movement in Pakistan has snatched away from socialist commentators around the world the luxury of comfortable platitudes and abstract discussion, and forced them to focus on the constant crucial decisions of a living struggle. Finding the right means of balancing bold leadership of every democratic struggle, on the one hand, with clear warnings, sharply defined perspectives and a transitional programme, on the other, is precisely the science of revolution, as we see from the deeds of Lenin and Trotsky in Russia in 1917.

Pakistan in 2008 is of course not Russia in 1917. In Pakistan, counter-revolution in the form of mystical obscurantism already has a

mass base, an ideological appeal and an army strong enough in wide swathes of territory to hold the state itself at bay. Conversely, unlike in Russia, the proletariat is relatively weak and scattered. The tireless militant workers of the LPP are facing a harder task. All the more glory to them for their success in building their authority in the struggle.

This authority is not limited to their role within the Pakistani working class. They are rightly building their prestige also internationally, through their contacts in the Indian sub-continent, South-East Asia, the Pacific region, Australia and Europe. Within their own modest limits, socialists internationally share a duty to observe, discuss and support their comrades of the LPP, both practically and in terms of theoretical discussion and an exchange of ideas. We have a lot to learn from their experience. Before too long, we will all be facing similar difficult questions.

Roger Silverman

rsilver100@aol.com

Roger Silverman is an author of several books and former international secretary of Committee for Workers International (CWI). He lives and teaches in London.

“Right In There”

Peter Boyle

In April 2000, I was privileged to attend the first national conference of the Labour Party Pakistan in Lahore. As one of 13 international guests, I witnessed four days of political discussion and debate which left us all with a common impression that this was a party that was going to make a difference to politics.

First, there was a tangible political confidence in the hall of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan where the 138 delegates, from all around Pakistan, and 28 observers worked hard through four days of reports. Among the congress delegates were many seasoned trade union activists who had been involved in recent struggles, such as in the railways where the army had tried to quell two months of strikes and go slows.

There were delegates who recounted a heroic battle between railway workers and the army on the Peshawar Road in Rawalpindi. There were peasant leaders from the Sindh, Baluchistan and Punjab who had stood up to the ruthless assault of big landlords used to having their way. And there were valiant students who persevered on campuses still constrained by political restrictions from the days of the

Zia ul-Haq military dictatorship and now also blighted with right-wing religious fundamentalists.

So this palpable confidence was founded on real experience of persistent and brave struggle. Second, this was a party that wasn't just talking about "left unity" - as many left groups do - but actually doing it. As I recorded in my notes then, many of the delegates had been members of other political parties, including the Communist Party, National Workers Party, Watan Dust Peasant Party, Socialist Party, Sindh Peasant Committee and People's Party. But they had all found common cause in the LPP in rejecting the old orientation of most of the Pakistan left of looking to the "progressive" national capitalists for a "national democratic" alliance.

The delegates to the LPP conference were agreed that the Pakistani capitalist class -- whether governing in military or civilian mode -- had demonstrated that it was against the great majority of the population and in league with the big landlords and the imperialist capitalists. The delegates still had some differences about the exact political theory that explained this, but they were totally united in opposing the approach of the old left.

In a sometimes heated but ultimately comradely discussion, the delegates worked to bridge the political gaps between leftists who previously dismissed each other "Trotskyites" or "Stalinists".

There was a lively discussion on the national question. Pakistan was carved out by the capitalist and landlord classes of the Indian sub-continent to stop the advance of communism. The country's borders contain several nations (or part of them), including the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Kashmir and the Siraiki nations. The Punjabi capitalist class clearly dominates Pakistan politically and economically and so there is an issue of national oppression. The LPP conference resolved to support the struggles of all oppressed nationalities and minority religions.

A major issue at the congress was the nature of General Pervez Musharraf's military rule. Musharraf had seized power the previous October in a military coup against the government of Nawaz Sharif but, as Farooq Tariq explained, when Musharraf took power,

many people had illusions in the new regime because the previous regime was so corrupt and repressive. However, the military had shown since then that it hadn't "changed its spots",

Just two weeks before this LPP conference, the military and police had raided the offices of the LPP and the homes of its leaders, who were forced into hiding for a week. The LPP was raided because it had dared to hold a peaceful demonstration in Lahore against the visit of then US President Bill Clinton. The raid was widely condemned in the local media and by progressive groups around the world.

Yet at that time, some of Pakistan's old left leaders and non-government organization leaders were supporting the military regime. In sharp contrast, the LPP congress called for the military to return to barracks, for a democratic government based on worker and peasant representatives, and for free and fair elections in 90 days. It dismissed Musharraf's offer of non-party political local elections as an attempt to cloak military rule in "democratic garb".

Musharraf went on to make himself president of Pakistan, and in the wake of US President Bush's declaration of the so-called "War Against Terrorism", he became the beneficiary of more than \$10 billion in US military aid – at least \$700 million he is alleged to have stolen for himself! However, eight years later, Musharraf has been humiliatingly forced into resignation under the pressure of a massive popular movement galvanized by a militant response to his sacking of judges who refused to do his will.

The LPP comrades were "right in there" (as they say in Australia) in this movement, defying one of the world's most brutal armed forces and showing a militant lead all the way. They fought side-by-side with the most militant lawyers' movement the world has ever seen! And, at the same time, they were also organizing among the workers and the peasants battling feudal and military landlords. As I wrote on behalf of the DSP, earlier this year, in a letter of congratulations to these brave Pakistani comrades:

"Congratulations to the fighting masses in Pakistan for their latest victory! Given the history of Pakistan has been so bloodied by

military dictatorships, such a humiliating end to the political career of the latest military dictator is a great victory for people's power.

“This was a victory made in the streets by masses that braved the guns, batons and bayonets of the military. The whole world watched this valiant struggle progress, critically around the sustained mass response to Musharraf's removal of the 'inconvenient' top judges who refused to keep doing his bidding.

“An angry mass response to an outrageously anti-democratic act by a ruler is not an uncommon thing in our times. What is less common is a sustained mass resistance, one that does not fade away after a protest rally or two. It was a sustained mass resistance that we saw in Pakistan and it was that sustained mass resistance that finally forced Musharraf to resign.

“Only the braveness and resilience of the masses and their fighting political leadership can account for this.

“Of course dirty deals have been done by the new PPP-led government to smooth Musharraf's exit into a comfortable retirement villa somewhere.

“But as Comrade Farooq Tariq's message signals, the fight to bring the dictator to account, to restore the removed judges and to end the neo-liberal policies that Musharraf has forced on the Pakistani people goes on. As does the fight to smash the deadly military and political alliance with US imperialism.

“Congratulations! “Down with dictators, down with imperialism! “Working masses of the world unite!”

This brings me to the role of Comrade Farooq Tariq. The LPP clearly gathered and developed many great leaders, only a few of whom I have had the privilege to meet. But I remember those I have met, and treasure the conversations we shared. In the stories brought back from visits by other DSP comrades, I've also heard about these many other leaders, young and old. However, Farooq Tariq, who was its secretary general until the last LPP conference, clearly was a comrade who played a critical role in bringing the LPP together and building it into what it is today. My comrade and partner, Pip Hinman,

noticed in her visit to Karachi for the 2006 regional World Social Forum, the clear love and respect of many comrades (from the LPP and other groups) for Farooq Tariq

I had met Farooq before the 2000 LPP conference as he had visited Australia earlier but meeting him on his home ground really consolidated some impressions of him.

Farooq is a warm man. I will always remember him waiting to meet me at the border crossing from India – itself an extraordinary experience! Farooq's warm welcome made me feel at home in a place that otherwise struck me as a strange combination of an ancient, almost “biblical”, scene (complete with donkey!) and a military parade ground.

A lot of lefties can spout political theory, make rousing speeches, etc but to give real political leadership in the revolutionary movement demands the deepest and strongest humanity. This famous quote of Che Guevara sums it up: “At the risk of sounding ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by feelings of love.”

Farooq is a brave comrade. His years of struggle against dictatorship and his in-and-out history with Pakistani jails (all for political stands) attest to this. But my firsthand insight into Farooq's plucky spirit came when we were briefly detained by Indonesian police along with several other foreign guests at a conference on globalisation near Jakarta in 2001. First, there was Farooq's hilarious failed attempt to evade arrest – via the conference toilet -- and then over the subsequent couple of days' detention, Farooq demonstrated his experience how to deal with bullying police. His pluckiness even earned briefly him a sort of short-term pass out, which he promptly used to go out and buy us some tasty food from stall holders outside the police station. I've also seen him in action in a demonstration in Sydney (against the detention without trial of refugees). This is not a comrade who shies away from confronting the forces of the state – indeed the opposite.

Farooq is also a wise comrade and, while principled in his politics, he is clearly by nature a builder and not a splitter. I've experienced and appreciated this in the course of his many visits to Australia and in various political correspondences. Here in the DSP, we've had our

own challenges, including in recent times a pretty hard and protracted internal dispute. Farooq has always played a role in trying to help us stay as united as possible while retaining a respectful distance to avoid interference. I deeply appreciate this. But this is more than evidence of the wisdom and skill of a single comrade, it reflects another important characteristic of the LPP itself – its genuine internationalism.

Farooq has said to me that he learnt from his earliest contact with the DSP that while international solidarity and collaboration – especially between revolutionaries – is priceless, we cannot build serious parties in different countries without independent political leaderships. But I suspect that is only part of the story, and that the truth is that the LPP, like the DSP, has learnt this from its own political experience.

Peter Boyle

Sydney, September 2008

Peter Boyle is general secretary of Democratic Socialist Perspective (DSP) which is part of Socialist Alliance Australia. He works full time for DSP in Sydney.

On The Musharraf's Dictatorship

The Red Mosque Saga
July 2007

At a time when hundreds died of government negligence during the terrain rains and floods across Pakistan, the Musharraf regime has finally been able to clear the Red Mosque of "Alqaida and Taliban" supporters after killing 80, according to official claims.

The claim of 80 killings is not accepted by all the critics of the regime. In a highly charged atmosphere, the siege went over nine days with thousands of army personnel involved. The Musharraf regime was bent on showing its international donors that it is able to take on the religious fundamentalists at any cost.

The message to American imperialism was clear, "Trust us, you do not have to come, we can do the job for you". The killings of dozens of innocent students and a handful of religious fanatics during the misnamed "Operation Silence" has earned much needed respect for General Musharraf from American imperialism and other allied forces. What silence during the operation, gun fire was heard all over Islamabad for over nine days, terrifying children who were asking their parents why there was so much noise all the time.

It was a total failure of a military operation in professional terms. Ten soldiers were killed including two officers and paid the price for this failure. It was a story of misjudgments and

misinformation. There was a total collapse of moral values during such an operation. It was a real manifestation of the psychology of a military general who is also a president of a country. "Kill them if they do not listen".

The initial successes of the military operation in arresting the chief cleric Abdul Aziz Ghazi without resistance led to the thinking that it would be all over within hours. Government officials claimed a "drop scene" within hours after three days of the operation. Even Ghazi Abdul Rashid, the junior cleric who fought till the end was ready to surrender at that crucial time. But it was sheer high headedness of the military rulers which lost precious time.

Those who came out of the Mosque to save their lives were branded as terrorists and those who "surrendered" in total humiliation, were paraded in public without shirts with their hands up. It was like an army to army operation with some soldiers surrendering. The sheer humiliation of Mullah Abdul Aziz who was interviewed by Pakistan Television in Burqah after his arrest was the turning point in the thinking of those who were still inside the mosque. The incident gave the impression that if they come out, there could be worse treatment for them as well.

Instead of using the initial victories in a humble manner to get the others to come out, the military officials went crazy in euphoria. They were all convinced, "That is it, and it is all over, showing the mullah in total humiliation in public will teach them a lesson". This cruel behaviour of the architects of Operation Silence at the crucial time led to just the opposite thinking by the remaining fanatics inside the mosque. "It is better to die than this humiliating behaviour, at least we will all go to heaven, our sacrifices will help in bringing the Islamic revolution" was the outcry of the fanatics inside which was conveyed in these terms to many interviewers by Mullah Abdul Rashid.

Later the military officials tried to lessen the harm that was done already. "No taking off the shirts, no hands up, a safe passage,

home detention with ailing mother for Mullah Abdul Rashid”; all these offers were rejected by the fanatics inside. It was total break of trust caused by the sheer humiliating behaviour of the army officials. Most of the commercial media headlines of “drop scene” after the arrest of Mullah Abdul Aziz were proven absolutely wrong as the fanatics inside opted for all-out resistance till the end.

The Red Mosque saga was televised all over the world as headlines for some days. The impression was given that Musharraf is a tough guy and is ready to have a head-on fight with the religious fundamentalists. Some papers commented that Musharraf has enhanced his international standing as a close ally of American imperialism. It is a wrong impression. The Musharraf regime must take full responsibility for the killing of dozens of innocent students along with the religious fanatics.

The Red Mosque incident can best be termed a fight between two monsters. The two mullahs, Abdul Aziz and Abdul Rashed, were helped, developed and assisted in all means by those who are in power today. The present fight was between two close friends who had developed some conflicts of interest. When two friends fight each other, they know each others weaknesses. They are well equipped with information about the opposite group. In this case, the Red Mosque mullahs were the junior partners and were developed to use them at proper times.

The junior partner, the Mullahs of Red Mosque, went out of control gradually after 9/11. History is full of examples of such incidents, where gangsters run out of the control of their bosses. The Indian and Pakistani film industry glorifies such stories in many feature films. The political history of the Indian subcontinent has also several such related stories.

In June 1984, “Operation Blue Star” by the Indian army on the Golden Temple in Amritsar resulted in the killing of hundreds of rebellious Sikhs including their leader Bhinderwalle. Bhinderwalle was

helped and developed by Indira Ghandi, the then Indian prime minister to counter the growing influence of Akali Dal, the main party of the Sikhs in Punjab. Bhinderwalle was arrested in 1982 on the charges of killing many leaders of Arya Samaji, the fanatic Hindu organization. He was released after two days on the orders of anonymous forces. He went out of control of Indira Ghandi to go on an all-out war against Hindus and for an independent Sikh State. Bhinderwalle had to be killed by Indira Ghandi's forces two years after his release. Within six months of the killings at Golden Temple, the holiest place of Sikh religion, Indira Ghandi herself was killed on 31 October 1984 by two of her Sikh guards. Her killing resulted in a civil war where over 1000 Sikhs were massacred within days of the assassination.

It was a similar case of these two Mullahs, who were arrested as being close allies of Alqaida in 2004 by the Musharraf regime, but were helped in their release by the present federal Minister of religious affairs Ijaz ul Haq. It is no coincidence that Ijaz ul Haq is the eldest son of late military dictator General Zia ul Haq. General Zia was primarily responsible for helping the religious forces on the instruction of the American imperialism. However, when general Zia went against the American plan of conciliation with the Soviet Union and opposed the Geneva accord in 1986, he did not live long. He died in a plane crash in 1988, no one knows up till now who killed him.

The changing relationship between the religious fundamentalists in Pakistan and the state forces was felt in many incidents after 9/11. The decades-old close relationship between the two has resulted in the growing influence of religious fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalist forces now control North West Frontier Province (NWFP), one of the four provinces. They share the coalition in the second province of Baluchistan with the ruling Muslim League, a staunch supporter of General Musharraf. The official opposition leader in the so-called parliament is from MMA, the alliance of religious forces. Thanks to the support of the government the majority party in the parliament, the Pakistan Peoples Party was deprived of being the official opposition. The total votes of the religious forces in the

fraudulent general elections were around 15 per cent. Incidents like Red Mosque have definitely helped the religious forces to increase their share of votes and sympathies.

Religious fundamentalism cannot be defeated by the use of force. The war and occupation policies of American imperialism are evidence of this phenomenon. It has to be a political fight to expose the real meaning of religious fundamentalism for the lives of ordinary people. "You can not kill ideas" is the lesson of the growing influence of the religious forces across Muslim world. By killing dozens at the Red Mosque, General Musharraf's regime has created a more difficult situation for the genuine progressive forces in Pakistan. The incident has polarized the Pakistan society.

The incident has led to the re-groupment of different political parties and alliances. It has shattered the seven-year-old Alliance of Restoration of Democracy, ARD. Pakistan Peoples Party has not joined the recently announced All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) in London. Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto has given full support to the military operation saying that General Musharraf had no other choice. This is in conflict with her policies during the last few months. The PPP hopes to form the next government with the support of General Musharraf.

The progressive forces in Pakistan must have an independent position to condemn both. We cannot lend our support to one enemy in opposition to the other one. The military junta with the support of American imperialism, and the religious fundamentalists are both enemies of the working class. They are both against trade unions and radical social and political organizations. They are both believers in private property and the free market. They both have the same economic policies which are primarily responsible for the absolute poverty-stricken conditions of the masses across globe. We cannot sit aside to see the fight between the two bulls. We must oppose both to build our own ranks by fighting for the rights of the working class.

Musharraf's Days Are Up
Embassy pickets a most effective way of opposition
November 2007

General Musharraf could not have imagined the political scenario that has emerged after five days of the martial law he imposed on 3rd November. His hopes for a normality of the situation have been dashed even after he has used the most vicious repression against the advocates and political activists. More unpleasant surprises will come

in the future for the military regime which was used to a rather stable political control until now.

After advocates, now students are emerging as the political opposition to the military regime. Demonstrations took place on 7th November in most of the public and private universities in the main cities of Pakistan. "Student power rises from slumber" was the headline of News International on 8 November.

All the courts across Pakistan are on stand still and Pakistan Bar Council has announced an indefinite strike till the new Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) is withdrawn. There have been daily demonstrations by the advocates across Pakistan. This is an extraordinary militancy shown by the middle classes during this period.

Most of the newspapers in Pakistan are full of stories of the arrests, demonstrations and strikes of different actors of the society. But it is the fifth day; no private television channel is allowed to broadcast in Pakistan. You can only watch songs, dances, sports and religious readings on different channels but no news bulletin is allowed apart from the official Pakistan Television.

The most surprising opposition to the military regime has come from Benazir Bhutto. She was in negotiation with Musharraf's regime for a power-sharing formula. But the advocates' movement intervened in this unholy alliance forcing Benazir Bhutto to come out openly against the military regime. Almost half of the arrested advocates belong to Pakistan Peoples Party.

It left very little room for Benazir's maneuvering and playing games with the regime. She asked the Pakistani masses to rise up against the martial law of General Musharraf. "Restore the constitution or we will have long march from Lahore to Islamabad on 13 November" she warned the regime. This resulted in the arrests of Pakistan Peoples Party activists across the country. They were spared by the regime in the first phase of repression starting from 3 November.

The media organizations of the bosses and employers are also joining the mass movement after unprecedented repression against the electronic and print media by the regime.

It was a black Monday on 5 November for the stock exchange in Pakistan. The stock exchange crash resulted in a net loss of four billion dollars in one day, unprecedented in the history of the last 17 years of the exchange.

Musharraf's close imperialist friends from US, UK and European Union have been forced to condemn this imposition of emergency, at least in words, for the first time since 9/11. Any gross violation of human rights in Pakistan since 9/11 was always an internal matter for the US imperialism. Even Australian imperialism is now condemning the sorry state of affairs in Pakistan and terming Musharraf "a dictator" for the first time, a fact the Pakistani people have known for eight years.

But it seems General Musharraf is trying to show his anger to his bosses, the same way the religious fundamentalists are going out of control of the military regime in Pakistan. "You can not control a monster for long" it seems from the action of General Musharraf. The Netherlands has suspended aid to Pakistan and the US is reviewing its relationship with the military regime, according to reports printed here.

The movement is still growing in all spheres of life. This is despite an unprecedented level of repression during the first five days of the emergency; the real name is martial law. The police entered the office of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and arrested over 80 social and political activists who were discussing their strategy to oppose the military action. This was unheard in the past, that police would enter this most prestigious independent building in Lahore. Police went into the buildings of Lahore High Court and arrested over 700 advocates from the chambers of the judges, libraries, bar rooms and canteen. This was not done even under the most brutal martial law of General Zia Ul Haq in the eighties.

According to the home ministry in Punjab province, 1734 political activists, journalists and advocates were arrested during the first four days of the martial law. Similar figures are stated by the administrations of the other three provinces. This is the most brutal repression of the opponents of the Musharraf regime in the last eight years. The arrested advocates and political activists have been charged

under the Anti-Terrorist Act and they have been sent to far off places away from their home towns. No one can meet with them.

Similarly repressive treatment has been used against those judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts of Pakistan who have courageously refused to take oath under the new Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO). They are put under house arrest and their children are not allowed to go to school. Doctors have been refused entry to houses where they have been called on emergencies.

Police are raiding the houses of the advocates and political opponents of the military regime on a regular basis. Pakistan has become a police and military state in the real sense of the term. Police are seen everywhere in the main cities. There has been an increase of thefts and robberies during the last four days because police are only deployed to curb the opposition to the regime.

General Musharraf now has more opposition than ever among the general public in Pakistan. Musharraf is losing his internal and external support at a fast speed. He has almost lost the support of his most recent friend, Benazir Bhutto. The religious parties have been forced to break their long lasting relationship with the regime. ***Old alliances and formations are in crisis. There is a real crisis of the Pakistan state. The regime is becoming more isolated day by day. Now, there are only two political parties supporting the regime, Muslim League Q and Muhajir Qaumi Movement, both partners of the military government. However, both are hated more and more by ordinary citizens of Pakistan.***

The path of repression to control the opposition is losing its weight day by day. The state can not repress all the growing voices against the regime. The implementation of a neoliberal agenda at a faster speed has been marked by daily price hikes and growing unemployment. It is the brutal rule of the free market monopolizing the economy. The growth of the capitalist economy has not touched the bottom line and the bottom line is over 70 percent of the population of 160 million.

Several activists of Awami Jamhoori Tehreek, the left alliance of seven political parties and groups are under arrest, including Nisar

Shah, the chairperson of Labour Party Pakistan. Abid Hassan Minto, the convener of AJT and president of National Workers Party has asked all the left forces to join the movement and fight the military regime. The left is not any longer an insignificant force in Pakistan . The student uprising against the regime is mainly the work of the left wing forces and radical social activists.

The regime can not last long. The movement is on and is growing. The advocates' unprecedented courage has influenced many and they are taking the road of active opposition.

The opposition to the military regime will be strengthened by the active solidarity of our friends and comrades outside Pakistan. The pickets of Pakistani embassies all over the world will be one of the most effective ways of opposition. We know we are not alone.

Note: The article was written during the underground days.

Lifting Emergency is a farce
Struggle to continue until the end of the Musharraf
dictatorship, A Labour Party Pakistan statement
15 December 2007

The Labour Party Pakistan rejects the claim of General Musharraf that the emergency was lifted on 15th December. It is lifted only with the constitution amended by a decree to protect all the repressive measures. General Musharraf's actions within the 42 days of "emergency" can not be challenged by any court and do not have to be ratified by a two-third majority of the future parliament.

This is just a farce. We condemn this dictatorial maneuvering and ask the working class of Pakistan and internationally to continue its struggle until the overthrow of General Musharraf.

The lifting of emergency is littered with over 10,000 arrests of lawyers, political activists and students. Many thousands were forced to stay away from their houses under the threat of being arrested. Many hundreds were brutally beaten up and hundreds were injured. Top judges and advocates' leaders are still in detention.

The main aim of the emergency was to get rid of the independent judiciary. That mission has been accomplished with new hand-picked judges installed at the Supreme Court and High Courts. All these repressive, dictatorial, undemocratic, brutal and unjustified actions of General Musharraf from 3rd November have been "legalized".

The real name of emergency was martial law; rule imposed by the military commander in chief can only be described as martial law. No demonstrations were allowed. All the electronic and print media were put under watch and several were closed down completely. The private television channels were off the air for a month and GEO, the most popular private television channel, is still off the air today.

The emergency was not a bump on the road to democracy as was claimed by Richard Boucher, the American secretary of state, but a wall erected to stop the path to democracy. The wall is still there.

The calling of elections under the emergency rule was another political maneuver to dodge the growing international opposition to military rule. The general elections on 8 January with all the repressive measure protected by the amended constitution do not give equal

opportunity to all those interested in elections. The elections under the new caretaker government with the same Musharraf supporters and hand-picked judiciary and Election Commission will not be fair and free.

The boycott of these elections is the only option left for genuine opposition to General Musharraf. The boycott response of 25 political parties to the call of Pakistan Bar Council is the right strategy to further the struggle for restoration of democracy and independence of judiciary. Without the restoration of the judges who refused to take oath under PCO, there can be no guarantee of free and fair general elections.

Labour Party Pakistan will fight alongside other political parties and civil society organizations for an immediate end to General Musharraf's rule. Its candidates for national and provincial assemblies have withdrawn their nomination papers.

Benazir's assassination:
The Unprecedented Mass Reaction

29 December 2007

Pakistan has never seen so many people protesting in the streets as over the last two days since Benazir Bhutto's assassination on 27 December. They were all united in condemnation of her brutal murder. The news was heard with great shock; immediate mass anger erupted. 28 December was the first day of a general strike called by many organizations, ranging from political parties to various professional groups.

The first targets were most of the Pakistan Muslim League's election posters, banners, flags and billboards. The PMLQ is a major split from Pakistan Muslim League, which is headed by Nawaz Sharif, the former prime minister. The PMLQ--comprised of the most corrupt feudalists, capitalists, former army generals and black marketers--has been in a power-sharing arrangement with General Musharraf since 2002.

The PMLQ had spent billions on its election advertising; all that was gone within a few hours. Removing all these anti-people election materials was done with utmost sophistication. None of the Pakistan Peoples Party or Pakistan Muslim League material was removed.

In many cities throughout the province of Sind (Bhutto's home province), banks were attacked and burned, and most ATM machines were destroyed. Banks were targeted because they had made unprecedented profits over the last few years, while also eliminating services such as free banking. In some places, people were lucky enough to bring some money home.

In Sindh, there were also incidents of trains being damaged. According to the Daily Jang, 28 railway stations, 13 engines and seven trains have been burnt, resulting in a loss of over three billion Rupees. Earlier, in a bid to reduce railway losses, the Musharraf regime increased rail fares several fold, partly privatizing the system as well. However, since the night of 27 December, the railway system has

collapsed. Thousands of passengers are waiting in the railway stations but there is no sign of service being restored. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and two private airlines, Air Blue and Shaheen Air, have cancelled their domestic flights in the name of “rescheduling.” The reality is that the staff did not turn up.

Throughout the country, hundreds of private buses were burned. During Musharraf’s eight years of rule, public buses have been eliminated and fares on the private lines have skyrocketed. In fact, many PMLQ government ministers have their own bus companies, making huge gains out of mass poverty.

Thousands of private cars have been damaged all over Pakistan by angry mobs, mainly youth. They were showing their anger at the car companies (mainly Toyota, Suzuki and Honda) because, while the majority of the population has no subsidized public transport, the companies have been raking in tremendous profits. Many leasing companies have been robbing the growing middle class by offering cars at abnormally high prices.

Houses and offices of PMLQ politicians, local mayors and administrators were also damaged or burnt. Over 100 people involved in incidents related to mass protest have died during the first 40 hours. They were murdered by police or were caught in cross fire between different groups.

Following the death of Benazir Bhutto, hundreds of thousands have raised slogans against Musharraf’s regime and American imperialism. The anger accumulated during the last eight years simply exploded. This was the masses’ response to the strict implementation of a neoliberal agenda, resulting in unprecedented price hikes, unemployment and poverty. After the assassination, anger that was to be channeled through either boycotting or participating in the elections has spilled over.

There is a great anti-Musharraf consciousness. It is been shown in different ways in different parts of the country and to different degrees. The so-called capitalist economic growth under Musharraf has left millions in absolute poverty. There was no “Pakistan shining” as the dictatorship proclaimed.

2007 has been a year of mass awakening. It started with the lawyers' movement after the removal of Iftikhar Choudry as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The Chief Justice said "No" when the generals pressured him into resigning. He was removed, only to be reinstated on 20 July, after a massive movement of 80,000 lawyers. They were joined by political activists from almost all political parties, but not by the masses. The masses only welcomed the chief justice from the sidelines; they did not actively participate in the movement for his reinstatement.

Then Musharraf got himself elected as president for the second five-year term in a "democratic manner" by a parliament elected for one five-year term. He was still wearing military uniform when elected as a "civilian" president. His theme was "Elect me as president for a second term and I will take off the uniform after taking oath as a civilian president."

The November imposition of martial law in the name of an "emergency" was used to remove the rather independent top judges of Pakistan. The law also put restrictions on the media; over 10,000 were arrested.

So Musharraf got himself duly elected president and took off his uniform after removing the top judges. His hand-picked judges gave him all the necessary backing. He was helped in this process by Benazir Bhutto who, in the words of Tariq Ali, was forced into an "arranged marriage" by US. and British imperialism. In this unholy alliance, everyone was cheating everyone with utmost honesty.

After large-scale repression and removal of an independent judiciary, Musharraf announced general elections for 8 January and lifted the emergency. The regime was happy that everything was going according to "plan." The three major parties [Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party, Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League, and Quid Azam (PMLQ)] had agreed to participate in these fraudulent elections. The religious fundamentalists' political alliance (MMA) had split over the question of participation, with a major part contesting in the election.

However, when the religious fundamentalists struck and killed Benazir Bhutto on the evening of 27 December, the “plan” was shattered into pieces. It was a big blow to the agreed-upon terms and conditions of various participating parties. It was not a bump on the road to conciliation and compromise but a total destruction of the road.

The murder of Benazir Bhutto is a double-edged sword. While it is a big blow to the plans of British and American imperialism, it will not cause celebration for the religious fundamentalist forces. The initial anger has gone against the military regime and its crony politicians. But it can go against the fundamentalists as well. No party will be able to celebrate the shocking killings.

The Musharraf regime understands this clearly and now is trying consciously to steer the direction of the movement against the religious fundamentalists. On 28 December, in a two-hour press conference, a military brigadier representing the government, named Baitullah Mehsud, an Al-Qaeda associate in the tribal areas of Pakistan, as the one who carried out the attack.

Foolishly, the military officer tried his best to prove that Benazir Bhutto, while waving to crowds after the bomb blast, was not killed by a bullet but by the lever of the sun roof in the bullet-proof car. What difference does it make if it is proven that Benazir Bhutto was not killed by the bullet but in another way? Not much.

The brigadier’s explanation did not satisfy the angry journalists, who asked him again and again about the connection between Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and Abdullah Mahsood.

Their question went unanswered: Why was Mahsood released quietly on the day emergency law was imposed, the same day that over 200 Pakistan army men, kidnapped by Mahsood’s group the week before, were also released? The ISI has had a relationship with religious fundamentalists dating back to the ‘80s, when imperialists and fundamentalists were close friends.

It is a very volatile, unstable, unpredictable, explosive, dangerous, impulsive, fickle and capricious political situation. It has

been many years since mass reaction has erupted to this degree. The general strike was a total success. All roads were empty. No traffic at all. All shops were closed. All industrial and other institutions were completely shut down.

After initial reluctance to curb the strike, the regime has now issued strict orders to kill on the spot if there is any "looting." It has called the regular army into 16 districts of the Sindh provinces and paramilitary forces elsewhere in Pakistan.

The regime has not postponed the scheduled election so far but it will be very difficult to hold it on 8 January. Nawaz's Muslim League and several other political parties have already announced their intention to boycott the fraudulent elections.

The Labour Party Pakistan is demanding the immediate resignation of the Musharraf dictatorship and the formation of an interim government comprised of civil society organizations, trade unions and peasant organizations.

This government would then proceed to hold free and fair general elections under an independent election commission. The LLP is also demanding immediate restoration of the top judges and their convening an investigation into the two attempts on Benazir Bhutto's life. Further, as part of the All Parties Democratic Movement, the LPP is supporting a three-day general strike, linking it to the overthrow of the military dictatorship. It is asking that all parties reject the fraud of general elections on 8 January.

Pakistan collapsing; Musharraf must go

20 January 2008

Pakistan is on the fast track to collapse under the Pervez Musharraf dictatorship. The state is in immense crisis. The infrastructure, industrial and social, is in total chaos. The economic crisis is showing its muscles. Inflation is uncontrollable and unemployment is ever increasing.

The vast majority of the ordinary people of Pakistan believe that Musharraf will never leave power alive: "If he is not killed, he will kill us all one by one." He has become the most unpopular president of Pakistan. Musharraf is widely seen as the person who orchestrated the murder of Benazir Bhutto. "Qaatal Qaatal Musharraf Qaatal" ("Murderer the murderer, Musharraf the murderer") was the main slogan of the mass reaction.

All the twist and turns of the Musharraf dictatorship after the murder has strengthened the doubts of the masses in this regard. "He asked her to come to Pakistan by negotiating and let her be killed" is a remark you hear very often. Despite that, Musharraf has consistently shown that he will stick to power by any means: "He is the ultimate power," "Pakistan needs him, Pakistan first," "Pakistan my top priority" are some of the routine slogans.

Here in Pakistan many do not trust him anymore. The desperation of the masses to remove Musharraf is clear everywhere.

The mass movement had attempted to throw him out of power after the assassination of Benazir. This was an unprecedented movement for five days from 27 December 2007. Not a single shop was open, no wheel on the move, no factory working, no bank open, no office functioning, no restaurant or hotel open, no train on the move, flights cancelled, schools and colleges closed and thousands and thousands were on the streets protesting -- this was the most unexpected outburst of mass anger after the killing.

Unfortunately the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leadership has not learned from history. They saw in this crisis an important occasion to show that they are responsible defenders of the system. They appealed to the masses to cool down, go back to their work and turn their anger into votes for the Pakistan Peoples Party.

This was the time when the majority of the political parties had declared a boycott of the elections and demanded Musharraf's immediate resignation. Had the PPP joined other parties in boycotting the general elections, Musharraf would have gone by now.

They did not understand the post-assassination scenario or anticipate the total collapse of the economy in the following days. They had not thought of the tactics Musharraf's supporters would use to rig the election if given the chance. In the Sind province (the PPP's stronghold) alone, over 4000 police First Investigation Reports (FIR) have been registered against a record number of half a million PPP and other opposition political activists. Many PPP activists were arrested to be released on bail later. Many thousands have gone to secure bail even before being arrested.

The tactics of the PPP leadership put the party in a defensive position. Three weeks after the assassination, the PPP is on the run. Yet Musharraf had been on the defensive immediately after the killing. He was relieved when the PPP leadership took the decision to participate in the elections. At a time when the consciousness of the whole of Pakistan was anti-Musharraf, with the active participation in the mass movement, the PPP leadership's announcement was like a fire truck putting cold water on the boiling heat.

Moreover, what kind of election will take place on 18 February? Before the announcement of the general election, 60 top judges were put under house arrest on 3 November 2007 when martial law was imposed in the name of emergency; many are still under house arrest, particularly Chief Justice Iftikhar Ahmed Choudry. As of 14 January, all public meetings and election rallies were banned for a month on the name of "security." Thus, effectively, there is not going to be any mass campaigning by political parties.

Most of the opposition parties that are taking part in the election are already complaining that it will be rigged, and that they found proof in the voting lists. All the rules lay out by the Election Commission of Pakistan about the size and width of the posters, pamphlets, stickers, signboards and banners have been widely violated by most of the candidates.

It is a race of money among the candidates, like a business competition --not a democracy that is going to be restored by the election, but a mockery of democracy. The general election has given the masses a chance to choose among exploiters. The condition that a candidate must be at least a university graduate means that less than one percent of the whole population had a chance to become candidates.

Three weeks after the assassination of Benazir, on 17 January 2008, there is unprecedented price hikes for everything. Wheat flour, the most used food item in Pakistan, has shot up from 13 Rupees a kilogram to 25 to 50 Rupees, if you can find it in shops. After being unable to buy wheat flour from the government concessional utility stores, some women have attempted suicide. Food riots have been reported in many parts of the country.

There is regular news on television and newspapers that "smugglers" of wheat flour have been arrested. Previously smuggling was restricted to gold and electronic items. Now wheat flour "smugglers" are the main enemies of Pakistan. Almost every province has restricted the transportation of wheat flour, creating more problems for the people of North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan and many

in Afghanistan who are dependent on wheat flour from Punjab and Sind.

There is also a massive electricity crisis. Electricity is released on a load-shedding basis, with electricity available for 10-12 hours a day in most parts of the country. The countryside is worst hit by this shortage. There has been no commercial gas available to industries for the last two weeks, thus closing down hundreds of factories. Even hospitals are not spared. Hundreds of thousands of workers have been laid off from the factories; they are asked to wait until electricity and gas is fully restored.

LPG gas has disappeared. The price has gone up from 50 Rupees a kilogram to 100/110 Rupees a kilogram, if you can find a gas shop open. The price of one kilogram of vegetable oil has gone from 100 Rupees to 125 Rupees. There is a 25% price hike of almost everything available in shops and supermarkets. Yet there is neither a wage increase nor any temporary compensation for the people.

This is fertile ground for the very rich politicians from Muslim League Q, who are the main supporters of Musharraf. They will buy votes in bulk for the general election. The hardship of life under Musharraf, with the PPP taking part in the election, may cut across the massive sympathy wave that PPP is counting on.

The Musharraf dictatorship, however, has failed to curb the ongoing suicide attacks. Religious fundamentalist groups in Waziristan and Swat are not backing down. Despite a heavy military operation, they are striking back repeatedly. On 16 January, a group of religious extremists occupied a fort in North Waziristan, which was used by the Pakistan military. The newspapers reported eight army men killed with 20 disappeared, while unconfirmed reports put the casualties much higher. The government reported that 50 militants were killed.

There are several incidents where most of the suicide attackers have been less than 16 years old. The completely new generation has been motivated by religious fundamentalism to wage an all-out war against the friends of imperialism and "enemies of Islam." There is also much discontent among the police force and bureaucracy. They are sick and tired of being used against the masses. Many police officers speak

against the Musharraf government to their friends and contacts. There is no support among the public employees for the military dictatorship, but they are forced to go on.

The Musharraf dictatorship is isolated and the most hated in the history of Pakistan. It is a dictatorship supported only by American imperialism and its allies. It is trying its best to survive. However, the days of the military regime are numbered. It cannot survive for long despite the help of its political friends. Musharraf has survived through the most modern security arrangements available, but these will not work all the time in the wake of tremendous hatred that is building up.

Can Musharraf survive?

24 January 2008

It seems that Musharraf is on his last leg. He has become the most detested and despicable president in the history of Pakistan. No longer are there progressives, liberals or moderates in his camp. His enlightened moderation has been buried with the passage of time.

Musharraf is unloved even by most religious extremists. His previous policies gave them space into which they have moved aggressively. However, Washington demanded that he suppress them in order to prove his usefulness to US imperialism and he did so half heartedly. However, he did not please either Washington or the extremists.

The economic crisis has isolated him from the vast majority of ordinary Pakistanis, including formerly close associates. His traditional support from the stock exchange and Chambers of Commerce has evaporated. They are no longer his enthusiastic supporters.

Musharraf's comment about democracy during his nine-day European tour (starting 20 January 2008) has annoyed democrats inside and outside Pakistan. The comment that the "West is obsessed about

democracy” was a direct insult to the people of Pakistan, but his sarcastic and taunting tone did not please his European friends either. *Gone are the days, when he could say any nonsense and get away with it!*

His recent comment echoed his remark during his 2006 US tour, when he managed to annoy women’s organizations inside and outside Pakistan. He had prevented Muktaran Mai, who was gang raped on the order of the local Panchait, from leaving Pakistan. In explaining his action he told reporters that his impression was that she had been "raped in order to get a visa."

The recent murder of Benazir Bhutto was a shock to many of the European governments that had been friendly to Musharraf. He had previously projected the image that he was their much needed friend in the war on terror. But the unprecedented reaction to Benazir's brutal assassination is shattering his image at home and abroad.

The US and British governments' projected Plan A for maintaining stability in Pakistan was built on the unholy governing combination of Benazir and Musharraf. This has been undone by the Benazir assassination. There seems to be no Plan B. Has Musharraf outlived his usefulness to his imperialist masters? His tour of Europe may be an attempt to reassure his colleagues in Pakistan that he is still able to secure the support of his European friends. One recalls a similar trip to Washington in October 1999 by Nawaz Sharif, just before his overthrow.

Musharraf’s repeated assurances that nuclear weapons are in safe hands and religious fundamentalists cannot defeat the army illustrate the concerns of the friendly European countries. His trip is to address these worries by putting on a “brave” face. However, his justification in imposing the emergency, arresting and disposing of the country's top judges, arresting thousands and curbing the media will satisfy none. Now he is imposing democracy as he imposed the emergency, with the barrel of his gun.

In the face of the proposed 18 February 2008 general elections, there are two political camps: those participating and those boycotting. The massive turnout at the boycott meeting by All Parties

Democratic Movement on 22 January in Loralai, Baluchistan indicates that the boycott campaign is picking up steam. This was the fourth successive APDM mass rally in Baluchistan.

The Pakistan Muslim League Q (PMLQ), Musharraf's favourite, is in absolute crisis after the recent shortages of food, electricity and gas. The PMLQ candidates are the target of anti-Musharraf consciousness. The general perception is that if you are against Musharraf; do not vote for the PMLQ. Following the Benazir assassination, the wave of sympathy has opposed the PMLQ.

Unless there is an all-out rigging of the election, there is no guarantee that Musharraf-supported candidates will win. If the Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) candidates gain a majority in the next parliament, Musharraf will find it very difficult to repeat what he did following the 2002 election, when he bribed many PMLN and PPP parliamentarians to join hands with the PMLQ to form a majority government. At that time, shortly after 9/11, both US and European governments supported Musharraf's military regime. However, in 2008, he is standing alone. It will be difficult for any parliamentarian elected on anti-Musharraf feeling to cross over to his camp.

Boycott, or no boycott, the future scenario seems more and more problematic for Musharraf. His departure seems written on the front door of every home. Only another 9/11-like situation could alter his fate. Students are awakening and so is the trade union movement. That, combined with the pressure from the lawyers' movement and growing participation by civil society, may succeed in pushing him from power.

Pakistan may take a page from their nearby Nepalese brothers and sisters. "If they can get rid of the King, why can not we do it here with the military dictatorship?" is the question many of the activists ask.

Let's do it the Nepalese way: with a peaceful massive movement everyone can get out into the streets and make it clear that Musharraf must go. "Go Musharraf Go."

A golden prospect to oust Musharraf

February 2008

Throughout Pakistan the massive anti-Musharraf vote on 18 February 2008, spoke volumes: We do not like the military dictatorship! We want Musharraf out!

Those still supporting the military dictatorship have been punished. Despite the poll-rigging beforehand, the pro-Musharraf Muslim League Q (PMLQ) lost badly. However, the religious fundamentalist parties taking part in the elections took the worst hit. It was an electoral revolution against the military dictatorship.

Contrary to the predictions of many, the All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) boycott campaign helped the anti-Musharraf vote express itself in a united manner. The APDM campaign was particularly successful in Baluchistan and in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Here the split in the MMA (Muttahida

Majlis-e-Amal, an Islamist party) on the question of boycott strategy provided the opportunity of victory of the Awami National Party (ANP) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

Had the APDM parties taken part in the elections, the MMA might have been united in participating, in which case, they might not have been humiliated as they are now. The MMA's vote dropped from 15 percent in the 2002 general elections to less than five percent. If Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf, the left parties and the nationalist parties of Baluchistan and the NWFP — the main parties behind the APDM — had taken part in the general elections, the anti-Musharraf vote would have been even more divided.

Repudiating Dictatorship

Instead there was an all out frontal attack on Musharraf. Those boycotting, and those participating, had one popular and common slogan: "Go Musharraf Go."

Last year, the development of the lawyers' movement and the courageous stand by the top judges made Musharraf very unpopular. But he did not believe the pre-election surveys, which predicted less than 12% support for him.

The defeat of pro-Musharraf parties parallels the historic defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the 2004 general elections in India. The BJP's "India shining" sloganeering was mimicked by the PMLQ during this election campaign. PMLQ leader Choudry Shujaat Hussain was so convinced of his winning slogan of so-called "development work" that he even went to sleep in calms in the afternoon of the Election Day. Two days beforehand he commented to the private television channel, GEO, "I have provided electricity to every village [in his constituency]; there is no need for more of a campaign." He lost both seats he was contesting. He forgot that while he provided electricity to all the villages, the price of everyday items had dramatically increased.

The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) landslide in Punjab was due to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's clear stand on restoring the judiciary, lowering prices and not compromising with the

Musharraf dictatorship. The demand to restore the top judges is very popular in Punjab, where the lawyers' movement is particularly active.

Unfortunately, the Pakistan Peoples Party of assassinated Benazir Bhutto hesitated over the demand to restore the judges, ultimately deciding not to support it. Consequently, the PPP paid the price in Punjab, where despite the entire wave of sympathy over Benazir's assassination, the PPP was unable to capitalize fully on the anti-Musharraf vote.

The masses have spoken; now both the PPP and PMLN leaders have to act accordingly. They must take up the restoration of the judges immediately. They must not share power with Musharraf but demand his immediate resignation. Further, they must reverse the Musharraf era's economic priorities and end implementation of a neoliberal agenda. That model of so-called "development" cost massive suffering. Acting upon the advice of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Musharraf presided over unprecedented price hikes, exposing his lofty claim of economic growth as without substance.

I wrote an article, "Can Musharraf Survive?" on 25 January, 2008. It begins:

"It seems that Musharraf is on his last leg. He has become the most detested and despicable president in the history of Pakistan. No longer are there progressives, liberals or moderates in his camp. His enlightened moderation has been buried with the passage of time."

The article continued:

"The Pakistan Muslim league Q (PMLQ), Musharraf's favourite, is in absolute crisis after the recent shortages of food items, electricity and gas. The PMLQ candidates are the target of anti-Musharraf consciousness.... If Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim league Nawaz (PMLN) candidates gain a majority in the next parliament, Musharraf will find it very difficult to repeat what he did following the 2002 election, when he bribed many PMLN and PPP parliamentarians to join hands with the PMLQ to form a majority government."

It ends on this note:

“Boycott, or no boycott, the future scenario seems more and more problematic for Musharraf. His departure seems written on the front door of every home.”

The Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) understood the processes that were going on among the working class in Pakistan. Unfortunately, we did not have the mass base to bring this anti-Musharraf consciousness to its conclusion with an end to both capitalism and feudalism, and the beginning of building a socialist Pakistan. The LPP, along with other left parties, will continue to press demands for the total separation of the military from politics.

Those responsible for atrocities under military dictatorships should be brought to the people's courts, where there can be real accountability for the generals who have intervened in politics. The vote on 18 February is a vote of no confidence on Musharraf's policies. The PPP and PMLN must change the course of his neoliberal economic policies. Otherwise the brief honeymoon will end with them being exposed as betraying the wishes of the masses. The PPP and PMLN, parties of the rich and the capitalists, have been able to capitalize on anti-Musharraf feelings. But they cannot go very far on the short leash of IMF and World Bank policies. There is no other alternative but to build a party of the working class. That is what Labour Party Pakistan is all about.

Pakistan after General Elections *February 2008*

There is a new government in Pakistan. Led by the Pakistan Peoples Party, it has the support of the majority of the parliament of 342 members. This was the magnificent result of the general elections held on 18 February 2008. It was a massive anti-Musharraf vote.

There were two political camps prior to the general elections. One advocated a boycott of the elections under General Musharraf's

dictatorial rule. The second, including the major political parties, opted to contest the election. The boycott campaign exerted pressure on the regime and it could not carry out its plan to rig the election; over 70 percent voted for parties opposing General Musharraf who has been in power since 1999.

Before the announcement of the general election, 60 top judges, including Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan Iftikhar Ahmed Choudry, were put under house arrest on 3 November 2007 when martial law was imposed. All public meetings and election rallies were banned for a month in the name of "security."

Earlier, on 27 December 2007, the assassination of PPP leader Benazir Bhutto after a public rally sparked an unprecedented reaction by the masses against the military regime. They held Musharraf directly responsible for the murder as he was unable to provide adequate security.

These events followed a massive economic crisis and a collapse of the country's industrial and social infrastructure including a scarcity of electricity, gas and food. Electricity was released on a load-shedding basis, available for 10-12 hours a day in most parts of the country. The countryside was worst hit by the shortage. For two weeks no commercial gas was available to industries, thus closing down hundreds of factories. Thousands of workers were laid off; they were asked to wait until electricity and gas is fully restored.

The Pakistan Muslim League Q (PMLQ), which has been sharing power with General Musharraf since 2002, was in absolute crisis over these shortages. The PMLQ candidates were the target of anti-Musharraf consciousness. The general perception was that if you are against Musharraf; do not vote for the PMLQ. Following Benazir's assassination, the wave of sympathy has opposed the PMLQ.

Benazir Bhutto's PPP won nearly 36 percent of the votes while the government-supported PMLQ got nearly 23 percent and the PMLN received 19 percent. The religious fundamentalists were the real losers. They dropped from 15 percent (their votes in 2002) to 4 percent. The reason was a split among the religious parties with one major religious party boycotting.

The MMA, the religious fundamentalist alliance, split over the question of the boycott. There were already many problems within the MMA alliance however the decisive split came over the question of participating in the election. If MMA had a united election strategy, undoubtedly it would have received a stronger vote.

The second positive result of the boycott strategy was that anti-Musharraf vote did not split apart the two main parties, the PPP and the PMLN. Already the PMLQ has won some seats because the PPP and PMLN contested each other and got very high votes, but where neither vote was sufficient to win the seat. The Labour Party Pakistan along with the other Left parties boycotted the general elections and became part of All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM).

The defeat of pro-Musharraf parties has parallels with the historic defeat of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the 2004 Indian general elections. The so-called "India shining" sloganeering was repeated by the PMLQ during this election campaign with massive advertisements in the electronic and print media. But "development" at the cost of human suffering will never result in victory, a lesson the PMLQ learned with its humiliating defeat.

The PMLN landslide in Punjab was due to Nawaz Sharif, the former prime minister, who was deposed by General Musharraf on October 1999. The party took a clear stand on the restoration of the judiciary, lowering prices and not compromising with the Musharraf dictatorship. The demand to restore the top judges was very popular in Punjab, where the lawyers' movement has been most vocal.

Unfortunately, the Pakistan Peoples Party of assassinated Benazir Bhutto ultimately decided not to support the demand to restore the judges. It paid the price in Punjab, where the PPP was unable to capitalize fully on the anti-Musharraf vote.

The general elections in Pakistan are normally like a business competition among the candidates --not a democracy but a mockery of democracy. The general election gives the masses a chance to choose among exploiters. The condition that a candidate must be at least a university graduate means that less than one percent of the whole

population has a chance to become a candidate. It is true that the election registered a massive anti-military dictatorship vote but the reality is that all those contesting elections were from the rich and feudal class. We can expect little from a parliament dominated by rich politicians and feudal lords.

General Musharraf accepted the election results and the new government has taken over. However, the decisive powers rest with General Musharraf who, as president, can dismiss parliament any time and without any stated reason. The main demands at present remain the restoration of the deposed top judges and the resignation of General Musharraf.

Unfortunately, no one in the newly elected parliament is talking about General Pervez Musharraf. After Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani of the Pakistan Peoples Party took the oath of office, administered by Musharraf himself, the prime minister spoke about “the need for cooperation with the president.” But General Musharraf has no right to be president of Pakistan. He is a dictator and must go.

Yousaf Raza Gilani ordered the release of the judges in his first speech. How could he not? The PPP failed to win a number of seats because they did not demand their reinstatement. The reality is that no one can stop their reinstatement. Thanks to the strengthening of the Pakistan lawyers’ movement not even General Musharraf’s imposition of the emergency decree on 3 November 2007 can stop the demand. Yet in his first speech, Prime Minister Gilani did not say a single word about General Musharraf. He did please the Bhutto family by demanding a probe of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s judicial murder. In 1979, Bhutto was hanged by the orders of the Lahore High Court, with the decision subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court. Yet in his speech, Mr. Gilani only demanded that parliament apologize to the nation. Why parliament? Why not the generals and the judges who conspired to hang Bhutto?

Another unfortunate fact is, the PPP leadership is seeking collaboration from General Musharraf’s allies, the MQM. This is a party based on linguistic trends and has a mass base in Karachi and other cities in Sind Province. The PPP leadership wants to establish a

government of reconciliation, which will be a government of the rich by the rich and for the rich, but in the name of the poor.

The PPP has no program that could solve any of the basic problems ordinary people have. The party's head, Asif Ali Zardari, husband of Benazir Bhutto, was sure to reiterate in his recent interview with an American news channel that he wants to move ahead with privatization.

Also eager to demonstrate the PPP's willingness to continue neoliberal policies, the leadership welcomed the visit of US Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher to Pakistan. They want to show that they are good partners with US imperialism in the so-called "war on terror." They are saying, "The plan will work. We are going as we planned, but unfortunately not with Benazir."

The present change of faces has come about because of the incredible sacrifices of the lawyers and many more political and social activists. These activists did not put their careers first but carried out their campaign for an independent judiciary. They boycotted the election for a principled reason. Those who allow Musharraf to remain in the presidency are not respecting the wishes of the Pakistani people. He is a dictator who has used every dirty tactic to maintain his power. He is not a democratically elected president. The majority feel the so-called president has got to go.

The masses have spoken. Now the leaders of PPP and PMLN have to act accordingly. They must demand an immediate resignation of Musharraf. They must take up the question of restoration of the judges immediately. They must not share power with Musharraf.

They must also change the economic priorities of the Musharraf era and end the implementation of the neoliberal agenda. The masses have suffered a lot because of these policies. There have been unprecedented price hikes because of so-called "free market" policies. Musharraf has acted upon every advice of IMF and World Bank. His claim of economic growth stands absolutely exposed.

What about General Musharraf?

March 2008

No one in the newly elected parliament is talking directly about General Pervez Musharraf. After Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) took the oath of office,

administered by Musharraf on 25 March, he spoke about “the need for the president’s cooperation.” But General Musharraf has no right to be president of Pakistan. He is a dictator and must go.

Mr. Gilani only demanded that parliament apologize to the nation for Bhutto’s murder. Why parliament? Why not the generals and the judges who conspired to hang Bhutto? There have been two occasions since Bhutto’s murder that the Pakistan Peoples Party has come to power. During those periods, Mr. Gilani served as a minister under Benazir Bhutto and as a speaker in parliament. Why didn’t he raise the issue then?

Back then, there was a deal with the military generals: No truth commission, no investigation, no arrests, no public hearings and no public trial. Now Prime Minister Gilani is raising the issue as if to reconfirm his credentials as a supporter of the Bhutto family. Yet what about Benazir Bhutto’s recent murder? Who is the single person most responsible for failing to provide proper security measures? General Musharraf! Nevertheless not a single word is uttered. How unfortunate that the new PPP leader is not ready to demand Musharraf’s resignation.

General Musharraf wanted to rig the election, but was unable to do so. For ourselves, we are happy that the Musharraf political forces are in retreat. However, we cannot welcome a government that walks hand in hand with US imperialism. We can celebrate the release of the judges, although this is more the result of the lawyers’ movement than the PPP’s leadership.

The present change of faces has come about because of the incredible sacrifices of the lawyers and many other political and social activists. These activists did not put their careers first but carried out their campaign for an independent judiciary. They boycotted the election on a principled basis. Red salute to those who boycotted this election and exerted maximum pressure on the regime. Red salute to PPP leader Aitzaz Ahsan, who boycotted the elections despite his party’s strategy.

Shall we congratulate those who are making compromises with the murderers? The German Social Democrats and the so-called

communists did this in the early 1930s with the result that fascism came to power without a single shot being fired. Will the Pakistan Peoples Party alliance with the MQM be paid with such a heavy price? Today even Mian Shabbaz Sharif of the Muslim League raises no objection to this unholy alliance. They are too busy preparing to assume power in the state of Punjab.

Those who allow Musharraf to remain in the presidency are not respecting the wishes of the Pakistani people. He is a dictator who has used every dirty tactic to maintain his power. He is not a democratically elected president. The majority feel the so-called president has got to go.

Yet Amin Fahim, senior vice chair of the PPP, was angry about the anti-Musharraf slogans being shouted from the press gallery on parliament's opening day. He even called for the newly elected speaker Fahmida Mirza to take action. But the "Go Musharraf Go" slogans represent the voices of millions throughout Pakistan. We salute those who raised these slogans inside parliament.

I personally was not arrested repeatedly to see half of a democracy. "Democracy" under Musharraf is a farce. It was a fraud in the past and it will be a fraud, if he is allowed to hold onto the presidency, in the future as well. We must continue our struggle for a real democracy and get rid of all the remnants of the military dictatorship.

Pakistan: A dictator is gone but not his policies

LAHORE, August 19, 2008

Thousands across Pakistan celebrated the humiliating departure of dictator Pervez Musharraf on August 18, 2008. As he announced his resignation - in an unscheduled nationally televised speech of one hour - private television channels showed an instant response of jubilation and welcoming the decision in all four provinces. General (retired) Musharraf resigned as president of Pakistan as he was facing an impeachment move by the Pakistan Peoples Party-led ruling alliance of four parties.

For the first time, not a single political party defended General Musharraf after the announcement of the move by the ruling alliance. He was very isolated in the political field. Even Mutihida Qaumi Party (MQM) was not ready to defend him publicly, a party that he was associated for long time. All the four provincial assemblies had passed resolutions asking Musharraf to take a fresh vote of confidence from this electoral college of the presidency. Sindh and Baluchistan voted unanimously while in Punjab, over 90 and in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) over 98 per cent voted against Musharraf.

Such was the revulsion against Musharraf among the masses that many of those who were hand picked politician of General Musharraf decided to abstain from the votes. The resolutions in all four provinces brought the extreme weak social base of the dictator Musharraf supported by nearly nine years by American imperialism.

Four occasions Musharraf could have lost power

There were at least four occasions during the last year alone when General Musharraf could have lost power.

General Musharraf must thank the PPP leadership for providing him nearly eight more months in power after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto on December 27, 2007. He could have lost power then, if the PPP leadership had decided to demand his immediate resignation. For five days after the assassination, Pakistan was under siege by the masses. Unfortunately, the PPP leadership decided not to do this and to take part in the general elections.

Earlier, after the restoration of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on July 20, 2007, the top judges were indecisive about the fate of General Musharraf and allowed him to contest the election of president in uniform. He was “elected” president for the second time from a parliament, which was elected for five years only. A parliament elected for five year elected the president for ten years! However, the hesitation of the top judges to stop him doing that when challenged in Supreme Court of Pakistan provided him another chance to remain in power. He used dictatorial powers on November 3, 2007 to suspend all those top judges before the final decision of the Supreme Court.

The outcome of the general elections on February 18, 2008 was totally against general Musharraf. Instead of asking resignation of general Musharraf after the elections, however, the PPP opted to work with him. This gave General Musharraf another chance to remain in power.

More Unpopular than PPP leadership

The PPP leadership did not restore the top judges within a month of coming into power, as it had promised. The restoration of top judges would have given the judges a chance to decide on the hearing of some petitions challenging the election of the president Musharraf.

Hence, a fourth opportunity to topple Musharraf was lost.

After implementing highly unpopular economic policies, the PPP leadership lost popularity at an historic speed. Had they not taken a decision to impeach Musharraf, the General could have decided to remove the PPP-led coalition government. The PPP took this popular decision to change gears and reverse its unpopularity. This has paid off for the time being.

While General Musharraf formally had the dictatorial powers to remove the parliament at any time, he had already lost the social basis for that. He was more unpopular than the leadership of PPP.

The departure of General Musharraf is one of the best news that heard for a long time in Pakistan. It was defeat of the military

generals and a major set back for those political trends always seeking refuge with the military generals. It was very welcome news.

Importance of the lawyers' struggle

General Musharraf lost the power as the direct result of the mass revulsion against him during the last one half year in particular. There have been many important struggles against the military rule during the last nine years of General Musharraf. The peasant struggle for land rights at Okara Military Farms during 2001-2005 set the tone among the most exploited strata of the society. The 10-day national strike by the telecommunication workers against privatization in June 2005 was another manifestation of workers' consciousness against the military dictatorship. The successful revolt of the Sindh masses against the building of controversial Kala Bagh Dam, the three days general strike by Sindh and Baluchistan province against the killings of Nawab Akbar Bhugti were the two other important struggles. However, these revolts did not have the national character and remained isolated in one or other part of Pakistan.

It was the militant lawyer's movement after the removal of Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan on March 9, 2007 that was mainly responsible for the departure of the dictatorship. The 80,000-strong lawyer's movement showed a tremendous energy to continue for over one and half year consistently. The young lawyers played a decisive role in this important movement. Musharraf must be arrested The PPP-led coalition government has earned a lot of respect by taking this latest move to impeach Musharraf.

However, Musharraf should not leave Pakistan unaccountable.

The farewell guard of honor for the dictator even after his resignation showed some glimpse what been agreed under hand. It seems that the dictator Musharraf has been offered a safe passage and a luxurious retirement after his forced resignation. The tradition of granting a safe passage for the military rulers after their departure from power has to be changed. A very popular demand has been to arrest Musharraf to face charges of murder and other crimes. General Musharraf must be arrested. "Military out of politics" must be the main slogan for future. 32 years out of 62 years of independence of Pakistan

have been under the direct military rule. However, no military general yet been tried for the crime of breaking the constitution. The strong social movement in Pakistan at present would not be silenced and satisfied only by the departure of a military dictator.

New wave of class struggle ahead

After the departure of General Musharraf, a new wave of class struggle will explode in Pakistan. The PPP government would have no excuse of not solving the main question of the price hikes. The implementation of neo-liberal agenda will be challenged by all sections of the working class. The PPP-led coalition has no other economic plan except to go the Musharraf way. They want to privatize the remaining public sector institutions. They want to remain partners with the American imperialism in their so-called war on terror. They want to do things that Musharraf could not do openly. The capitalist feudal led coalition government of PPP and PMLN will miserably fail in solving any of the basic problems of the masses.

The governing coalition's honeymoon after the departure of Musharraf dictatorship will last not very long. Mian Nawaz Sharif economic policies are no different from the PPP. Anyhow, the strong open support for the judges and for the accountability of the dictator has earned more respect for PMLN than PPP. The PPP has taken back some of the lost ground but not for long. The implementation of neo-liberal agenda will clear some of the dust from the real face of the PPP. An extreme right-wing party of the rich cannot base itself on the past reform agenda for long time.

The restoration of judges, if done as promised, will earn the PPP some more respect. However, that will also be tested in the economic field by the masses. All the measures against the dictatorship are been welcomed by the masses in hope that it will help to end their miserable life. The expectations from the coalition government are much higher now than the past. However, none of this will be met with success.

The masses will once again be on the move, this time not on political issues but on economic issues. A new era of class struggle will

be a challenge for the forces of the Left and social movements. The religious fundamentalist forces are in the field. Most of them have been seen wrongly as anti imperialist forces. They are also in the field to enhance their political bases. However, they have no solution the problems facing the masses. The left forces have to fight against the pro-imperialist forces and those who are wrongly seen as anti-imperialists. It is a difficult objective condition for the forces of the left, however, what other options are for the left apart from fighting back?

A dictator is gone but not his policies. That is a real challenge that Labour Party Pakistan and other Left forces are facing at present.

On Lawyer's Movement

Congress postponed to join the lawyer's movement

Rallies on 26 March in six cities

*Labour Party Pakistan announces the nationwide
movement against the regime*

22 March 2007

Labour Party Pakistan has postponed its scheduled three day congress, due to be held from 24-26 March at Lahore. This is to join the mass movement against the military regime. The decision was announced by Farooq Tariq, general secretary Labour Party Pakistan, at

a press conference held today 22 March at Lahore Press Club. Azra Shad, chairperson Women Workers Help Line, and Mohammed Yousaf Baluch, chairman National Trade Union Federation Pakistan, also spoke at the press conference.

Farooq Tariq told the press conference that the LPP congress preparations were complete. Over 200 delegates were scheduled to participate in the fourth Congress of LPP. But due to the urgency of the situation, LPP leadership after consultation with the National Committee decided to postpone the congress temporarily.

“LPP will organise a rally on 26 March from Lakshmi Chouck Lahore to Lahore High Court at 3pm, to protest against the militarization of Pakistan. The rally is organized in solidarity with the advocates. Similar rallies will be organized on the same day in Karachi, Peshawar, Gilgit, Moro and Multan by LPP activists” he told the reporters.

The LPP leadership welcomed the decision of the Alliance of Restoration of Democracy ARD to launch a nationwide movement against the regime on 26 March. They told the media that LPP will join the rallies of the ARD wherever possible and will appeal to the working class in Pakistan to join the movement against the high headedness of the military regime.

“We welcome ARD decision not to go along with the religious fundamentalists during the movement. The MMA, the main alliance of the religious forces, has cooperated with the military regime at every crucial time. They will again back down at decisive times” Farooq Tariq told the media.

“We support the movement of the advocates because they have challenged the writ of the regime in a very effective way. We welcome the decisions of the chief justice Iftikhar Choudry in favour of the working class but want to make it clear that we are not in the movement to make one person a hero; this is a movement to overthrow the military regime. We appeal to the trade unions, radical social organizations and progressive political parties to unite and launch a mass movement against the regime. We have not used a different day

than that of ARD as we want to have a united movement”. Farooq Tariq said in the press conference.

Report by
Khaliq Shah

Pakistan: 'A victory for democratic forces'

McILROY Jim
29 March 2007 Lahore

“Today was a victory for democratic forces, not only for the Labour Party Pakistan, but for all the other parties who were able to go onto the streets in support of democratic rights”, LPP general secretary Farooq Tariq told Green Left Weekly’s Jim McIlroy in Lahore on March 26, following a round of demonstrations.

“The LPP organized rallies in 11 cities to express solidarity with the advocates’ [lawyers’] movement for democracy and justice. We had 300 people in Lahore, more than that in Karachi, and hundreds in other towns around Pakistan. Comrades were arrested in Multan before the rally there.

“In Lahore, police tried to stop the march midway on route to the Lahore High Court, but we were still able to reach the main venue. They tried to seize our red flags. Police had harassed us, and attempted to pressure us to cancel our rally, under threat of being arrested. But the LPP comrades were not daunted, were ready to be arrested if necessary.” Tariq explained that the LPP was planning another round of larger rallies to coincide with the nationwide mobilizations on April 3, when suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Choudry faces court. “Today was the beginning of a movement to overthrow the Musharraf military regime. We will work together with the left alliance and the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy [ARD — the alliance of the major opposition parties against the government].

“Today was a defeat for the military regime, which tried to stop the LPP march in Lahore. They threatened us with dire consequences, but we didn’t budge an inch. It was a war of nerves with the police, and we won.”

Noting that the ARD rally in Lahore attracted some 5000 people, Tariq said, “The regime is being weakened by this rising mass movement”. The slogans raised by the LPP at the rallies included “Musharraf, your time is up!”; “You and I have been in hunger because GHQ [General Head Quarters] has looted all the resources”; and “Take back the reference against the chief justice, no restrictions against the judiciary”.

Explaining that the LPP had only three days to prepare the rallies, and had to postpone the party’s national congress, Farooq said, “But the movement is growing. People along the route in Lahore were happy and supportive of our march. And we were warmly welcomed by the crowd of Pakistan People’s Party supporters when we arrived at the High Court. There was also a good speech of welcome to us from the president of the Bar Association. “We want to build this movement as a really mass-based mobilization. A crack in the regime has been forced. Now, the government cannot control the movement of the advocates, joined by the political parties.”

According to Tariq, “Privatization in Pakistan has been the real looting and plundering of the public sector. For example, the state-

owned Habib Bank was privatized in 2004 for US\$370 million. The real assets of the bank, according to its own sources, were US\$9.5 billion! “In an exclusive interview with suspended CJ Choudry in the March 23 Daily Dawn, he said he was going to take notice of this Habib Bank privatization. In other words, he was threatening to expose massive corruption by the regime. This is his real crime in the eyes of the government.”

Tariq said that “We will be very happy if international workers’ organizations can coordinate with this movement and hold demonstrations in front of Pakistan embassies around the world. We call on all our international friends to do what they can to organise protests in front of Pakistani institutions to support our struggle against the Musharraf regime.”

McILROY Jim

From: International News, Green Left Weekly issue #705 4 April 2007.

Anti-Musharraf Protests Will Mount
Sahara Time has recently interviewed LPP Sec Gen Farooq Tariq. Below are the excerpts.
30 May 2007

Farooq Tariq has been pivotal in the formation of the Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) in 1997. Over the past few years, his party has been taking up the issues of peasants and workers. He is also at the centre of the protests against the Musharraf regime after Justice Iftikhar Choudry was removed. Earlier, he was part of the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), but the LPP walked out of the alliance in and of 2001. It is opposed to both military dictatorship and the

growing influence of Islamic parties like MMA. Tariq believes Pakistani middle class and workers are slowly realizing the significance of socialism. The LPP is the fastest growing left party in Pakistan nowadays. In an exclusive interview to Manoj Kumar of Sahara Time(India), Farooq Tariq, LPP general secretary, talks about his party's prospects and the general unrest in Pakistan.

Q: How strong is the undercurrent of democratic protests against Musharraf?

A: The recent strike called by the opposition political parties was the first most successful protest action in seven years of military rule. Pakistan is united against the military dictatorship and its ally MQM. More and more people are joining the protests all over Pakistan. The protest campaign by the lawyer community has won over many from middle classes who were earlier supporting the Musharraf regime. The right-wing religious alliance MMA, the liberal Pakistan People's Party, the conservative Muslim League, the nationalists and the Left, all are against the military rule. The advocates' movement for the independence of judiciary provided them the much needed initiative and now they are all on board.

Q: What is the situation of Tehreek Insaaf? Is Imran making progress?

A: Tehreek Insaaf in general and Imran Khan in particular are very much in the media. They are quite well-known among the middle classes. Their support base has grown over the years. But the politics of Imran Khan are very much linked with the politics of the religious fundamentalists. He is strongly in favor of an alliance with the MMA. The MMA has helped the military regime in very crucial periods during the past seven years. Imran Khan's vote share might go up to five per cent all over Pakistan. He has no strong organisational set-up and support for his ideas. Those from the Left who joined him earlier have left him. But I suppose he is one who is in the forefront of opposing the regime. Till 2002, he was a staunch supporter of the present regime.

Q: What has been the public response to your party?

A: The Labour Party of Pakistan was established in 1997 during a conference of 128 delegates from trade unions and several political trends. It now has a national identity and is recognized as the group that is opposed to the military regime. The LPP is leading movements among the peasants and workers. It has fought sometimes successfully against the privatization process.

Q: Is there ground for Marxist-driven ideological politics in Pakistan?

A: The LPP is a socialist party but not on the footsteps of former communist parties of the USSR and Eastern Europe. It believes in democratic socialism. Pakistan is no fertile ground for Marxist ideology yet, but the class contradictions are on the rise. There are no mass traditions of Left parties in Pakistan. We are working from zero.

Q: People in India and elsewhere are alarmed that Pakistan is sliding into the vicious grip of its own Taliban. Is it so?

A: The religious fundamentalists are on a roll in Pakistan. They are growing everywhere, especially in Punjab. They are seen as anti-imperialist and anti-military. That is a wrong notion. They have collaborated with the military and Americans.

Q: What is the LPP's stand on Kashmir?

A: The LPP stands for the right of self-determination of Kashmiri people on both sides. It is for an independent Kashmir, free from both Pakistani and Indian governments. Kashmir's overwhelming population is for independence.

Here we go again

August 2007

Another round of struggle against military dictatorship will start on 1 of September. The Lahore Bar Association has decided to come out again to demand an immediate end of military dictatorship of General Musharraf. This was announced on 31 August at a seminar at the Awani-Adal main courtroom in Lahore. Imran Khan, President Tehreek Insaaf (Justice Movement), Dr. Mehdi Hasan, a prominent radical professor and I--along with the main leadership of the Lahore Bar Association--addressed the very impressive and motivated lawyers' gathering of more than 300.

Earlier, the Lahore Bar Association had printed a coloured poster declaring "no deal veel," a negative assessment about the ongoing negotiations in Dubai and London between Benazir Bhutto, chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party, and the present military regime. After the reinstatement of Iftikhar Choudry, Chief Justice of

Supreme Court of Pakistan, the Pakistan Peoples Party went into discussions in order to come up with a power-sharing formula. Many lawyers felt betrayed by such a development and decided to go public.

First came a public statement from Munir Malik, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association that he is willing to be arrested on 3 September for leading a demonstration against the regime. Then came the association's assessment. Clearly there is a growing response from the masses, which have expectations that a radical layer of lawyers, having led a successful campaign against the military regime, will help get rid of General Musharraf. The lawyers have responded by launching a fresh campaign against the military regime.

This move to start a second round does not come out of thin air. We have had weeks of continuous discussions with the leadership of the victorious lawyers' movement over the question of militarization and democracy. The radical social organizations have put a lot of pressure on the leadership to go further.

On 31 September, leaders of the Joint Action Committee for People's Rights (JAC), a radical social network of social and political parties including the Labour Party Pakistan, addressed a press conference at Lahore Press Club. The JAC leaders told the press they would fully support lawyers leading a second round against the military dictatorship. I was asked by the JAC leadership to chair the meeting. Also present were Asma Jahangir, Tehseen from the South Asia Partnership, Farzana Mumtaz and Asad Rehman from Aurat Foundation, Timur Rehman from the Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party, Shahtaj Qazalbash convener of the JAC, Neelum Hussan of Seamorgh and Irfan Barkat of Justice and Peace Commission.

The JAC declared: "We will lend our full support to the lawyers' movement and political parties fighting for democracy. We will not accept General Musharraf with or without his uniform; he must quit. We condemn the role of intelligence agencies who are "negotiating with politicians" about a power-sharing formula. We are against Musharraf's policies that have resulted in poverty, unemployment and price hikes to an unprecedented level."

Benazir Bhutto is in discussions with some heads of intelligence agencies, including the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), to negotiate a deal to return to Pakistan. Both sides have claimed progress is being made during the discussions. Benazir Bhutto demanded the dropping of corruption charges against her and other politicians. She said that she would agree to General Musharraf as a presidential candidate if he takes off his military uniform.

General Musharraf is president and chief of the army staff at the same time. He has made it clear that he will contest the election in uniform. Although the date of the presidential has not been set, it is expected later this year. (Election for the presidency takes place in the national and provincial assemblies.)

But the political situation is quickly changing. The success of the lawyers' movement, which started on 9 March when General Musharraf tried to force Pakistan's Chief Justice to resign, has altered the political landscape. The Chief Justice's defiance was initially supported by 80,000 lawyers, and later joined by most of the political parties. Since he was restored by a full bench of Supreme Court on 20 July, the Chief Justice has released prominent political prisoners and allowed Nawaz Sharif, former prime minister deposed by Musharraf in October 1999, to return to Pakistan. These decisions were in opposition to the military regime.

Today there are elements of dual power in Pakistan. On one side General Musharraf remains in power, but on a much weaker base, while the Chief Justice makes day-to-day decisions in opposition to the government. Shoukat Aziz, former employee of Citibank, who was made prime minister in 2003, has to contend with a split in his cabinet, with some ministers voicing their differences publicly. There is great discontent among the middle class and tremendous hatred for the military regime among the working class.

The military regime is unable to control the growing incidents of individual terrorism. There are daily bomb blasts, suicidal attacks and firings on police and military stations. American imperialism is threatening to use its troops inside Pakistan if General Musharraf fails to control these attacks by religious fundamentalists. They are

pressuring him to make a deal with the PPP, which they feel would strengthen public support for the regime.

The deal is not yet finalized but it is facing a great deal of public opposition. The Muslim League Q, a group that split from the Muslim League, opposes the deal. The activists in the Pakistan Peoples Party are confused. They have been struggling for democracy but suddenly stand by and watch their leader make a deal with the military regime. The whole process has been opposed by the majority of ordinary Pakistanis.

Those political parties who fought the military dictatorship are being heard by the masses. Tehreek Insaaf of Imran Khan and the Labour Party Pakistan are making progress among the working people.

LPP is growing fast. Over 500 joined in August 2007 across Pakistan.

Here we go again, until the end of military dictatorship and the system that exploits the working class and society in general.

A Left Voice in Pakistan's Political Crisis
"Against the Current" interview with Farooq Tariq
Nov./Dec. 2007

Why did Musharraf attempt to remove the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court back in March?

Iftikhar Mohammed Choudry, Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan was suspended by General Musharraf on 9 March 2007 on charges of nepotism and corruption. These allegations were not accepted by the 80,000 lawyers, who are very well organized. The lawyers are organized in their bar councils and bar associations with very strong democratic traditions.

The real crime of the Chief Justice is "judicial activism" in favour of the ordinary citizens of Pakistan. He has stopped the privatization of Pakistan Steel Mills Karachi, the largest industrial unit

of Pakistan with over 15,000 workers. It was sold to a group close to the Prime Minister of Pakistan at such a very low price that it surprised everyone. The Chief Justice took strong *sue motto* actions in favour of women who were suffering from very conservative traditions, where women always suffer. He also took notice of bonded labour in the brick kiln and agriculture industries. The Chief Justice also stopped some commercial activities by military generals that threatened environmental catastrophe.

Why was there a massive response to his action, and to Chief Justice Choudry's willingness to defy Musharraf? What is the significance of that response?

The sheer repressive behavior of General Musharraf after the Chief Justice's suspension annoyed everyone. He was put under house arrest, his telephone lines were cut and his children were not allowed to go to school.

This added to the ongoing suffering of the masses caused by the swift implementation of Musharraf's neoliberal agenda. There was a sharp increase in the prices of everyday utilities. Unemployment was on the rise. The implementation of WTO conditions made sure that local industry was shutting down every day. Despite the growth of the economy, poverty was on the increase. Growth had not reached the ordinary masses. It is mainly a growth of the ruling elite and military generals. The difficult objective realities provided the masses an opportunity to join hands with the lawyers and take revenge on those responsible for their poverty.

The Chief Justice's "NO" to the demand of the generals was an unprecedented example. He was called to the army's General Headquarters, where the five generals waiting for him included the president and prime minister. He refused to resign and did not accept his "crimes." It was like Hugo Chavez refusing to resign as president even after he was ousted in April 2002 and was in the military's captivity. The Chief Justice was known as human rights activist. He made it clear that he is not a "political" person. ***But his "no" was one of the most political actions by any of the judges in the history of Pakistan.*** The Pakistani judiciary, in the name of "doctrine of

necessity,” has always provided the required legal cover to the four military dictatorships during the 62 years of so-called independence.

The Chief Justice’s “NO” was an act of defiance. It was an act of bravery from a person no one expected to resist. His defiance of the military rulers had great significance. It gave courage to many, who also joined with him saying no to military rule. This was the beginning of the first nation-wide movement for the restoration of the office of Chief Justice.

Why were you arrested?

I was arrested twice during the movement of restoration of Chief Justice which started on 9 March and ended victoriously on 20 July 2007. This was because the role of Labour Party Pakistan. We were one of the first political parties that realized the potential of a mass movement on this issue.

The LPP decided to participate in the movement from the very first day, printing a colour poster, the first one of the movement with a slogan “*following on the footsteps of advocates, until the end of the dictatorship.*” It was appreciated all over Pakistan and most lawyers associations fly-posted the posters. We participated in demonstrations all over Pakistan alongside the lawyers.

The LPP postponed its scheduled fourth national conference to take part in the movement. On 26 March 2007, LPP organized demonstrations in 11 cities in solidarity with the lawyers. On this occasion, I was personally threatened by the top police officers in Lahore. They asked me to postpone the demonstrations; we refused and went ahead.

I was arrested at the LPP central secretariat in Lahore on 3 May and held four days. They had a one-month detention order but released me earlier after a nationwide campaign began. I was arrested a second time on 4 of June 2007 and remained in jail for 18 days. The three-month detention order was withdrawn after an international campaign for my release started to pick up.

Why did Musharraf decide to militarily attack and destroy the Red Mosque? Why and how did the LPP oppose Musharraf's military campaign?

General Musharraf attacked the Red Mosque in Islamabad after the religious fundamentalists escaped the control of the military regime. The fanatics were helped and financed by many in the military establishment during the last twenty years. The fanatics were out in the streets of Islamabad to forcibly implant the cultural norms of Islam. The targets were women in particular. The Mullahs at the Mosque and students at their Madrassa were demanding an immediate implantation of Sharia in Pakistan. They were becoming an embarrassment for the regime.

The military regime had been part and parcel of the so-called “alliance to curb terrorism” with American imperialism. But at home, the military generals were playing a double game. **“Showing the growing trends of religious fundamentalism would help them and bring more money for them”** was the name of the game. This went on well in the mountainous areas. But the military generals did not expect that the “ghost” they were building in far-off areas would also come home to haunt them as well. The Mullah’s behavior in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, provided the military regime with an excuse to attack them. According to the military, this will show American imperialism that they are serious in curbing growing trends of religious fundamentalism. So they attacked the Red Mosque with full force, killing hundreds of students and fanatics. But many were ordinary Muslims who had no option but to go to a Madrassa, which is free for them.

The Labour Party Pakistan opposed the attack as the state has no right to bomb and kill persons who may be involved in criminal activities. Criminals must be tried by the courts and not by a military operation. We wrote articles condemning the attacks in our weekly paper, *Workers Struggle*.

We do not share the view of many liberals that the only way to fight religious fundamentalists is to kill them. Repression cannot bring peace. It promotes reactions of different kinds. After the attack on Red Mosque, there have been a series of suicidal attacks on military and police personnel nationwide.

What forces in Pakistan support Musharraf at this point?

There is growing opposition to Musharraf regime after the victorious movement to restore the Chief Justice. In fact, the ruling class is split from top to bottom at this time. On 10th September 2007, General Musharraf deported Nawaz Sharif, the former prime minister, back to Saudi Arabia. This action is widely condemned in Pakistan; Musharraf has lost more support from the middle classes.

The overwhelmingly majority of the working class is opposed to the Musharraf regime. He had some support among the middle classes, but this is also fading quickly. Still a major part of the bourgeoisie supports Musharraf and they are enjoying their heydays under the military rule. Hand in hand with multinational companies, they find the rate of profit phenomenal. The neoliberal agenda means a lot of concessions for the ruling elite.

What is the political and economic situation in the Northwest Territory? Is it true, as we read, that the Taliban and al-Qaeda are making real inroads? How close are they to the Pakistan military intelligence?

With the support of the military regime, the MMA, an alliance of religious parties has been in power since 2002 in North West Frontier Province, the province bordering Afghanistan. The MMA provincial government has implemented policies of a neoliberal agenda despite their rhetoric against American imperialism.

There have been many stories of the close relationship of Inter Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) with the religious forces across the province. Over 260 military men were “kidnapped” by religious fanatics in beginning of September 2007 only to be released on 9th September, after an agreement with the military officials. Many believed that the military men in the area refuse to fight with the fundamentalists and gave them up voluntarily.

The economic situation of the province is going from bad to worse. The growing trends of religious fundamentalism in the area mean less industrial activities. The fanatics have banned razors in several districts. They are putting a lot of pressure on the public to adopt an “Islamic” way of life. That means less freedom of expression, even less for women. This area is a safe haven for many religious

fanatics from different nationalities. You can find a real “internationalism” among the fanatics. The Taliban get their moral, political and economic support from this area. The military regime has totally lost control and has no option but to close their eyes and wait for a miracle to end religious fundamentalism.

If Musharraf and Bhutto succeed in coming to an agreement, what will that mean in the coming election?

Both parties have been in negotiations for a long time. But not much progress has been made. It is a real classic example of an unholy alliance between two opposite forces. The Pakistan Peoples Party, although controlled by the feudalists and capitalists, still has some tradition of opposing the military regime. I have been with many PPP activists in jail in recent times. But Benazir Bhutto surprised many by starting talks with Musharraf for a power-sharing formula at a time when the military regime seems quite weak. In fact, the PPP is giving the military regime a new lease on life. The “deal” is opposed by Musharraf’s present political partners, who are a breakaway group of the Muslim League. So the deal is a problem at present. If they succeed, it will mean a serious challenge to the working class of Pakistan. It means that the anti-Musharraf vote can go to the religious parties and conservative Muslim league of Nawaz Sharif. But the PPP, with the help of a repressive military regime, will rig the elections in Bhutto’s favor. This will bring a very bad name to political parties like the PPP.

How is the LPP preparing for the upcoming elections? Do you see this as a political opening?

Labour Party Pakistan is preparing for the elections despite the fact that a general election under a military regime will mean not much for democracy.

The LPP is part of a left alliance called Awami Jamhoori Tehreek (Peoples Democratic Movement). It is an alliance of seven left groups and parties. Our strategy is to take part in the elections from this platform. We are planning to run some candidates from different constituencies. I am also planning to contest the national assembly from my home town, Toba Tek Singh. The LPP is making some inroads

among the trade union and peasant movements. But the left as whole is quite weak in Pakistan although it has increased membership with the lawyers' movement. In fact, I was the only left activist arrested twice during the movement.

The election will not be a real opening for LPP, but it will give us some chance to talk to workers. Elections in a colonial country are a real "business." But we are not businesspeople; we do not invest for return. We have not much to invest in any case. The capitalists and feudalists will invest and buy votes. This can change in a revolutionary situation but unfortunately that is not the case yet despite some victories.

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The remaking of the movement

11 December 2007

There are daily demonstrations against the military dictatorship all over Pakistan. Students, lawyers, journalists and others from the civil society are in the lead this time. It is yet small in numbers but it is growing every day. The numbers are increasing and so is the militancy of the demonstrations, picket lines and rallies.

This is occurring after just two weeks of large scale repression, arrests and detentions of the over 10,000 activists from different political parties and advocates. The majority of those arrested are released but the main leadership of the lawyers' movement is still under detention.

The majority of the judges who refused to take oath under the new constitutional order are under threat of being thrown out of their official residences. But the 24-hour picket lines by activists are a new stage in the movement in Lahore and Islamabad and have made the police task more difficult.

There are many new faces in the movement, mainly young students, lawyers and social activists. This is a new layer that is remaking the movement and it is growing day by day. In Islamabad the police are using baton charges to disperse them on a regular basis.

Journalists, lawyers, students and radical social organizations representatives are uniting in one or another form to organize the movement. They are taking new initiatives. SMS, mobile telephone calls and emails have become the main source of communication for the different groups. Resistance is organized on very short notice.

When a judge of Lahore High Court, Shahid Siddique, was under threat of being evacuated from his residence on 3 December, within a half hour, several dozen activists started a picket line of the house.. Now this has translated into a 24-hour picket line at the front gates of his house. Hundreds of activists have visited the house and heard the judge make very radical statements.

There are also daily protests by the journalists against the restrictions on the media. One of the most popular private television channels, GEO, has still not been allowed on the air. The Sindh High Court dismissed a petition from this channel after six hearings, saying that they cannot hear this case. These are Musharraf's hand-picked judges who are denying justice. So are the judges at Supreme Court, who are giving a go-ahead to this military dictatorship.

The boycott campaign against the holding of general elections under the emergency is growing as well. More and more political parties are boycotting the elections on the basis that it will be rigged at a level never seen before.

The AJT, a left alliance of seven political parties and groups, has also announced their boycott. The Labour Party Pakistan candidates who have submitted their nomination papers are taking them back on the instruction of this left alliance. At an all-parties conference on 5 December at the Lahore Press Club, almost all parties except the Pakistan Peoples Party were in favour of rejecting the elections.

The movement is remaking itself, at the same time there is a higher level of repression by the military regime. Despite the

assurances of the military dictatorship that no more arrests will be made on political grounds, a new wave of arrests has begun in Islamabad. But the repression is generating new militancy among different groups that go into the street.

The Musharraf regime is in a real crisis. Its entire plan for the prolongation of its rule is facing serious difficulties. More and more people are speaking openly against the military regimes. The trade unions in many district have come forward against the military regime and deteriorating social conditions. Several public opinion surveys have described the growing discontent among the ordinary citizens of Pakistan against General Musharraf.

Ordinary people have not yet flocked into the streets. But all the signs are there. The demonstrations are small but very vocal and growing day by day. The Musharraf regime can not last very long despite the fact that American imperialism is trying to rescue him for the time being. It is a weak military dictatorship. Youth are in the forefront this time, a guarantee for success, According to Lenin, "He who has the youth, has the future."

Lawyers' Movement: a year on *8 March 2008*

2008 will be a year of decisive struggle in Pakistan. Over the past year a lawyers' movement rose to confront the Musharraf dictatorship. Its aim is to create an atmosphere where the judiciary can work independently, without being under the influence of any regime, whether military or civil. Only a year old, it has achieved impressive results.

The movement began on 9 March 2007 when Iftikhar Choudry, Chief Justice of Supreme Court, negatively responded to the request from five generals--including General Pervez Musharraf--that he voluntarily resign. Offered several other lucrative posts, he responded with a firm "No," resulting his immediate arrest and termination from the Supreme Court.

Why did the generals want to get rid of Pakistan's chief justice? Simply, his decisions were blocking the growing repression and implementation of General Musharraf's neoliberal agenda:

- After 9/11, thousands of Pakistanis just disappeared; Choudry publicly questioned their disappearance. He tried to force accountability from the country's powerful secret service.
- He issued a decision against the privatization of the country's largest industrial unit, the Pakistan Steel Mill Karachi.
- Iftikhar Choudry was operating like a human right activist, doing his best to address the question of growing human rights violations. He took special notice of anti-women traditions and customs and prohibited the selling and trading of women.

General Musharraf did not foresee the mass reaction to his arrest and termination would cause since there were no other examples of prominent people standing up to his brutal and high-handed actions.

Chief Justice Choudry's "No" was a hallmark in the history of judiciary. Never before had people been willing to risk opposing the status quo. Every previous military coup had been legitimized by the country's top judges. Out of the 62 years of so-called independence, Pakistan has spent 32 years under military rule.

As the private television channels broadcast the news of Choudry's dismissal and arrest, they asked leading lawyers for their opinion. Every single one explained it as an extraordinary action: there was no previous record of such an action against the chief justice. They called on other lawyers to come forward in a massive response.

Year One of the Pakistan lawyers' movement is unprecedented, and there have been several ups and downs. It has witnessed ugly scenes of police and army brutality, but the lawyers never gave up. One of the main characteristics of this marvelous movement is its clear demand, which was accepted by every one: the demand for an independent judiciary. The Musharraf dictatorship is clearly seen as a brutal regime trying to curb the rising consciousness of independent judicial system.

The movement lead by the lawyers can be divided in three phases:

- The beginning phase, ending on 20 July 2007, when an 11-member bench of Supreme Court Pakistan reinstated Iftikhar Choudry.
- The second phase, from 20 July till 3 November, when the Musharraf dictatorship imposed an emergency degree.
- The third phase, from the imposition of the emergency until the general elections on 18 February 2008.

During the first phase, leaders of the lawyers' movement did not directly attack Musharraf. They also asked Choudry not to speak the media. Instead they build an effective base by speaking to Bar Associations across the country.

Iftikhar Choudry toured around the country by road to speak to various bar councils. His caravan was welcomed by hundred of thousands of ordinary people. But he did not speak a single word to the press. He concentrated on making general democratic remarks at the bar council meetings, which were open only to lawyers. Political activists made no fuss about this exclusion but cooperated with the lawyers.

These rallies were the largest mobilizations during the years of the Musharraf dictatorship and signaled the lawyers' total support for Choudry. This method of proceeding meant that he was speaking "under the radar." It did not seem that he was organizing a "political" campaign against the regime. In this manner Choudry was able to speak about the political situation without being "political."

Initially, the leaders of the lawyers' movement were divided over whether they wanted the participation from political parties. Some argued that parties might create problems or take over the movement. Some feared that if they invited the political parties, then the religious fundamentalist parties would gain control and they did not want to see that happen. During the first month, there was a fierce debate among the lawyers' elected bodies over these questions. After coming to the conclusion that they could not win the struggle on their own, they invited all the civil society organizations to participate.

When Choudry's case was scheduled to be heard by the Supreme Court, the lawyers called for a "gherao" at the Court. *"Gherao" is a picket line, a practice used by the industrial working class all over the world. This very popular tactic of picketing was used effectively by the lawyers' movement and made headlines in all the main electronic and print media.* The media popularized the movement to such an extent that the Musharraf dictatorship responded by introducing new electronic laws to curb the growing radicalization of the media.

In its first phase, the lawyers' movement was able to mobilize and unify the 80,000-strong lawyers' community. The Bar Associations across the country have deep democratic traditions, including yearly elections. Those who have been elected don't run normally the following year so that there is a constant development of new leadership. These democratic traditions enabled the lawyers to develop an evolving leadership that is always alive and deserving of respect. Normally, once a decision is taken, all lawyers follow. Those within the lawyers' community who were not supportive of restoring Choudry to his office were socially isolated and, in many cases, their licenses to practice were suspended by the Pakistan Bar Council.

In this first phase, the state tried to suppress the movement by arresting the lawyers, dispersing the demonstrations and rallies by force. But this did not succeed. Every repressive act motivated more militant actions. The lawyers' black coats became respectable dress and many ordinary Pakistanis bought black coats from second-hand shops just to get maximum respect from everyone.

The lawyers organized weekly demonstrations, usually every Thursday. It was mainly the young lawyers who found new hope in the shape of this movement and its weekly actions. Young and particularly female lawyers showed absolute bravery as they fought pitched battles with the police. It was their first political action and they brought new energy to the movement.

The main political parties that fully supported the movement and participated in the weekly actions were the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), Pakistan Tehreek

Insaaf (PTI), Labour Party Pakistan (LPP), Khaksaar Tehreek, National Workers Party (NWP) and Awami Tehreek. Activists of these parties were arrested several times for the crime of participating in the rallies.

Most of the radical non-government organizations and movements also fully supported this movement. Their support gave new meaning to civil society organization. The concept, civil society organization, became well known because of their total support for the movement. In fact, everyone participating in this unique movement earned respect from all sections of society.

The First Victory

The full bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, which was hearing Choudry's case, decided to reinstate the Chief Justice on 20 July 2007. This was a historic victory of a mass movement and was not viewed as "political."

Iftikhar Choudry immediately took office, and became Chief Justice after a nearly four-month interval. Following his reinstatement, he began releasing political prisoners. He ordered the immediate recovery of missing persons; and some were eventually released by intelligence agencies. He stopped the construction of high-rise buildings that violated the building code. He also took notice of corrupt state actors. Iftikhar Choudry now had the full support of the other top judges, as well as those who already had become "people friendly" judges, the lawyers' community and the people of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the regime was angrily waiting for a time to take action against the top judges once again. The Musharraf dictatorship, already unpopular, was weakened by this reinstatement. The power of the judiciary was contesting the power of the military generals and bureaucrats. In that sense, there were some elements of dual power at work within the country.

Unfortunately, when the case of the presidential candidacy of General Musharraf came before the Supreme Court, it hesitated in issuing a decision. The Supreme Court had provisionally allowed him to contest the election, but his candidacy was challenged because the constitution does not allow the same person to be president and chief of

the army at the same time. Additionally, he was elected by a pro-Musharraf parliament that had been seated since 2002 and was overdue for re-election. In fact Musharraf was "elected" with a shameful support of PPP, which opted not to oppose his candidacy and abstained.

Benazir Bhutto, living in exile, was in contact with Musharraf to work out a power-sharing deal. However, the two sides were afraid of the rising power of a movement that could challenge their own political hegemony. Benazir, leader of the PPP, saw an opportunity to come to power once again. Both the American and British governments had lost confidence in General Musharraf's ability to fight effectively as their partner in the so-called "war on terror," and pushed this unholy alliance as the means through which Musharraf would be able to continue to rule. For his part, Musharraf needed to regain time since his attempt to unseat Choudry had failed. So he went, although reluctantly, to the negotiating table with Bhutto.

The Pakistan Peoples Party also had considerable influence among the lawyers' movement. While the main leadership of the lawyers' movement was now calling for Musharraf's resignation, the PPP directed its leaders not to raise this demand. This created confusion and division among the lawyers' community all over Pakistan. The majority wanted to push ahead and end the military dictatorship, but now there was division in their own ranks.

It took two months August and September, of fierce debate and discussion among the lawyers' elected bodies to work out their future course of action. Finally, an absolute majority came out in favor of continuing the movement. It decided to continue its weekly rallies, although, without the presence of the PPP activists did not have the same power as it had earlier.

Meanwhile, after striking a deal with Musharraf, Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan from eight years of exile. The state withdrew all the charges of corruption against her in the name of "national reconciliation." The day of her arrival, 18 October, religious fundamentalists carried out a suicide attack on the caravan welcoming her back. This intervention killed over 150 people.

Musharraf Strikes First

Musharraf could not be sure what would be the Supreme Court's final decision about his eligibility as president and opted to strike first. On 3 November, he suspended the constitution once again and arrested all the top judges. He introduced a new Provisional Constitutional Order and demanded that all of the top judges take a new oath under the PCO. To his surprise, over 60 top judges refused. In the fight against the military dictatorship, Iftikhar Choudry was now joined by two-thirds of his colleagues. All were placed under house arrest but it was difficult for the regime to find judges who would take the PCO oath.

The PCO was the second martial law decree issued by General Musharraf in the name of emergency. There was a new wave of terror with over 25,000 lawyers and political activists arrested and private television channels closed down.

After a month, the arrested advocates were released, and so were most of the political activists. But the constitution was hobbled with repressive amendments giving power to the military to try any civilian in military court. The independent judiciary had been eliminated, the movement suppressed. Having done his homework, General Musharraf then announced a general election for 8 January 2008.

In this repressive situation, the lawyers' movement appealed to all the political parties to boycott the general elections. They argued that by participating they would be legitimizing General Musharraf's dictatorial measures. With the vast majority of the lawyers in favor of boycotting, the political scene was divided into two distinctive trends, those advocating the boycott and those participating in the elections.

Unfortunately the two main parties opted to contest the elections.

With both the pro-election campaign and the boycott movement gaining steam, Benazir Bhutto's assassination on 27 December altered the political scenario. A mass reaction against the assassination brought a wave of sympathy for PPP, which had been campaigning. General Musharraf was isolated to an extent never seen before. Added to that factor was the country's economic collapse.

These factors caused a decisive change in the consciousness of the Pakistan working class. *Their passive negativism toward the regime turned into active opposition.*

Had the PPP leadership opted to boycott the general elections--now postponed until 18 February 2008--and demanded the resignation of General Musharraf, the scenario would have been different. Musharraf would have no choice. But the PPP once again ignored the advice of the lawyers' movement and decided to take part in the general elections.

Those who went to poll on 18 February voted against the pro-Musharraf political parties. But whichever side one was on, over the question of participating in the elections, and whichever tactics employed, everyone was united in their opposition to Musharraf.

We have now entered the next phase of the unfolding struggle.

The question remains: Will those coming to power reinstate the judiciary, a popular demand that would be very difficult to ignore, force Musharraf out, and restore the constitution? Such a step would be the first toward building an independent democratic society where exploitation should be a word of past. The building of a genuine democratic Socialist Pakistan is the only way forward.

Note: This article is published in a booklet, "women and the lawyers' movement" by Women Workers Help Line, a radical women organization, on the eve of 8 March 2008.

**A historic Long March that fell short of
expectations**
*Lawyers' leadership on the road from resistance to
reconciliation*
14 June 2008

We started our Long March from Lahore around 6pm on 12 June 2008. Four vehicles were carrying around 100 Labour Party Pakistan activists. The destination was Islamabad, where leaders of the lawyers' movement announced a picket of parliament. This was to put pressure on the Pakistan Peoples Party government to fulfill their promise to restore the country's top judges.

The judges had refused to take oath under a Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) after General Musharraf announced an emergency on 3 November 2007. Taking such an oath would have meant legalizing Musharraf's dictatorial measures.

After the general elections of 18 February, the Pakistan Peoples Party came to power with the promise to restore the top judges within 30 days. However, they failed to fulfill their promise. Instead, before the judges' reinstatement the PPP government decided to place conditions on the independent judiciary.

We arrived at Islamabad on 14 June at 2am. *Due to the massive outpouring of people journeying to Islamabad, it took us 44 hours to cover a distance of 300 kilometers. That means, on the average, we drove just 7 kilometers an hour.* Along the way there were reception camps, with many thousands of people standing in line in order to greet those marching and to wish them good luck. In many locations the reception camps offered drinks, food and biscuits. We were quite pleased with this gesture.

The mood was euphoric. Everyone shouted slogans against the Musharraf regime and waved to all who passed by. I have never heard so much colourful language against a ruler as then, when many saw this opportunity to express their inner feelings. They all were happy that at last something was happening. They said, "Go and get Musharraf out, we are with you." All the way along the route crowds expressed a definitely all-out anti-Musharraf consciousness.

Imagine people queuing up in thousands, even after midnight! We attended a public meeting at 4am Gujrat, where a few thousand refused to go home until the caravan arrived and addressed them. Gujrat is the city where the leader of the Musharraf-supported Pakistan Muslim League was defeated.

Within the crowd at Gujrat, we saw for the first time the flags of the Pakistan Peoples Party. The PPP leadership had advised its members not to attend the Long March. Likewise, the Peoples Lawyers Forum, a PPP organization for lawyers, had announced a complete boycott of the event. Many PPP leaders were telling jokes about the Long March.

Javed Bhatti, an LPP activist, called me from Hyderabad,, and said that some private television channels were commenting about the Long March's "low turn out." I was surprised by these dirty tactics.

The PPP leadership had used some of its journalist supporters to propagate this lie, which was contrary to the facts on the ground.

However, PPP activists in the hundreds, defied their main leadership to become part of the lawyers' movement. This was a welcome development and speakers at the 4am public rally acknowledged the importance of their participation.

Every few hours, I was using my mobile phone to write a running commentary on the march and posting to Labour Party Pakistan-supported email list "Socialist Pakistan News (SPN)". However, here in Gujrat, my revolutionary tempo had a break. The leaders of Pakistan Bhatta Mazdoor Union at Gujrat offered us a cup of tea. Given the constant shouting, I had almost lost my voice so I was using some hot water to freshen up my throat. With my attention diverted, my mobile disappeared in seconds. Six months of collecting telephone numbers and email addresses were lost! It took few hours before I recovered from this shock.

Around 6am in Jehlum, we held a meeting of all the LPP comrades and discussed our strategy and possible improvement. It was a very good road-side meeting and boosted the active participation of our members.

We entered Rawalpindi around 2pm and saw some LPP flags welcoming the Long March. Here, we also saw the red flags of other Left groups, including the Peoples Rights Movement, the Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party, the Awami Jamhoori Itihad, the Awami Tehreek and the National Workers Party. While the green flags of Jamaat-I- Islami and the Muslim League Nawaz were the major part of the caravan, it was difficult to ignore the red flags. Flags of Imran Khan's Tehreek Insaaf were also seen all along the route.

From Rawalpindi to Islamabad, it took us 12 hours. Alia, an activist of People Rights Movement, inspired many thousands by her creative slogans and speeches. Then we were all out of our vehicles and gathered around the PRM truck, which had loud speakers. All the Reds were there. It was a good unity action by all left groups.

We were the last to reach the parliament area. None of us had rested or had proper hot food for 18 hours and we wanted to eat something before we reached the final destination. With our red flags and shouting slogans, over 100 of us started walking to the parliament from Aab Para Chouck, a distance of two kilometers.

Everywhere there were people waving flags and chanting slogans. As we entered the main area at 2am, we could see over 100,000 gathered. There were thousands of lawyers in their black suits. Some had traveled a long distance and had already erected tents in anticipation of picketing for a few days. *For them, it was a now or never situation.*

We drew near to the main platform as Mian Nawaz Sharif was just starting to speak. He spoke well about the issue of the judges but then he advised the lawyers' leaders to rethink their picket of the parliament. He asked them to be satisfied with what they had accomplished and not to go ahead with the picket.

We immediately realized that the leadership of lawyers' movement had been in discussions with the PMLN. The leadership had not announced publicly what they would do at the end of the Long March, but they definitely left the impression that "It is now or never."

A picket of thousands of lawyers would have spoiled the uneasy alliance of the PPP and PMLN, the two main parties of the capitalists and feudalists. Currently the PMLN is in power in Punjab but left the central government when the PPP did not carry through with its promise to restore the judges. Before the march, the chief minister of Punjab, Mian Shahbaz Sharif, already came out openly against the picketing the parliament.

Aitzaz Ahsan, president Supreme Court Bar Association, spoke and announced the end of Long March. His words sparked an immediate reaction from young lawyers, who wanted to continue. Many had tears in their eyes as they realized the main leadership was unwilling to go further. The leadership moved quickly from resistance to reconciliation. Not many agreed with Aitzaz Ahsan's argument that we did not have the resources to picket.

At this historic gathering, it was a gross tactical mistake to lose the opportunity to exert maximum pressure. It left the crowd in a very bitter mood. Now the movement is divided, with the leadership indicating that it is open to conciliation.

Nonetheless, the Long March was one of the great events against the military dictatorship in Pakistan. It brought hundreds of thousands into the street against militarization. It helped develop new layers of political activists. It was a great manifestation of the working class joining hands with the middle class. Not only will those who participated not forget, but those who welcomed the caravans will remember as well. It put pressure on the parliament but it eased up when it should have been decisive.

We arrived back in Lahore on 14 June evening but those comrades who began on 9 June from Sindh only arrived back home on the evening of 16 June. For them, it was a full week on the road. That was also true for those who began their Long March from Quetta and other cities in Baluchistan.

The State Repression and Resistance

Farooq Tariq Arrested

Information about the first arrest after the suspension of Chief Justice

4 May 2007

General Secretary Labour Party Pakistan, comrade Farooq Tariq was arrested at his Lahore office by a heavy contingent of Punjab police at 1:30 pm on Friday. He has been taken to Killa Gujjar Singh Police Station, Lahore where he has been detained. It may be mentioned that Farooq Tariq and Labour Party Pakistan have been in the forefront of the on-going movement for the restoration of the chief justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry. Farooq Tariq is among the leading activists organizing tomorrow's reception in honour of the chief justice. Farooq Tariq was aware of his possible arrest as a news item had already been published in the daily Jang about a list of persons who may be arrested. When he contacted the police station about mention of his name in this list, the police officers denied this news item. So Farooq was relaxed and was doing his work as usual at the party office. But suddenly a police van arrived at 1:30 pm before his office and men in uniform rushed to arrest him. Labour Party Pakistan thinks the purpose of the arrest is to stop LPP from exercising its democratic right to protest. We condemn his illegal arrest and demand immediate release. LPP's scheduled reception tomorrow for chief justice Pakistan will be held at district courts according to the program. We will keep you update regarding the arrest of Farooq Tariq. Regards, **Khalid Mahmood** Director, Labour Education Foundation

A spontaneous response

5 May 2007

Labor Party Pakistan Karachi held a demonstration in front of Karachi Press Club on May 4, 2007 against the detention of Comrade Farooq Tariq, General Secretary LPP by Punjab polices at his office yesterday.

Protestors condemned the brutal act of Punjab government on the eve of chief justice's Lahore visit. These negative tactics and highhandedness against democratic forces will not stop the pace of struggle against despotic rule. Protesting activists of LPP carried banners and placards with anti-government slogans. And they demanded the immediate release of the Comrade Farooq Tariq.

Comradely Regards, *Zehra Akbar Khan, Karachi LPP*

Messages of Solidarity after the first three days detention at a police station

Statement from India

We strongly protest the arrest of our friend Farooq Tariq of Labour Party Pakistan at his office because of his involvement in the movement for restoration of Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. This act is a suppression of the democratic rights of the people of Pakistan and we stand by the people of Pakistan in their struggle to get rid of military dictatorship and for the establishment of democracy.

We demand that Farooq be released immediately and the people of Pakistan must be allowed the freedom of expression and freedom to hold meetings in a peaceful manner.

Medha Patkar, Sandeep Pandey, Faisal Khan and others of the National Alliance of People's Movements (India)

Detention “suspended”

7 May 2007

ESSF France, along with many other organizations and persons, had sent a message of solidarity protesting against Farooq Tariq’s arrest and calling for his immediate release. The LPP General Secretary was released during the night of the 6-7th of May, 2007. Shortly afterwards, he sent a first message to inform of the “suspension” of his detention, and thanking for the solidarity.

Dear friends from ESSF,

I was released late last night. The police chief told me that he has a three-month detention order and that he is sending me to one of the most notorious jails in Mianwali, around 400 kilometers away from Lahore.

He wanted me to stop agitation against the military regime. I plainly refused and told him that the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has taken my case already. I told him that he should take care of his job as he has committed an illegal act by taking me into custody. We had a heated exchange.

LPP had announced nationwide demos for today. Yours and other letters of protest and messages had started to arrive. The electronic media was broadcasting news of my arrest. An SMS campaign on mobile phones meant that there was a non stop flow of messages of protest.

So the police chief called me again at 12 midnight to tell me that he was suspending my detention order, and that I can go home.

Thanks,

Farooq Tariq

Released
Peter Boyle
11 May 2007

Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) general secretary Farooq Tariq was released from detention in the early hours of May 7. Tariq and more than 1000 others were rounded up the previous Friday in a failed attempt by the government of General Pervez Musharraf to weaken a mass reception for a visit by suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry to Lahore. Chaudhry was suspended for being too independent of the Musharraf regime and too respectful of the rule of law.

Tens of thousands turned out all along the way from Islamabad to Lahore, and what was normally a four-hour drive became a 24-hour cavalcade for democracy.

Tariq told *Green Left Weekly* that Punjab province's police chief had issued a three-month detention order against him. It was to be served in one of the most notorious jails, Mianwali, around 400 kilometres from Lahore.

The police chief "wanted me to stop agitation against the military regime", Tariq said. "I plainly refused and told him that the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has taken up my case." Tariq called for the police chief's resignation, as he had committed an "illegal act by taking me into custody".

After the LPP had announced nationwide demonstrations, a flood of protest letters had been sent and "an SMS campaign that sent non-stop messages of protest", Tariq was released.

"In Lahore alone, around 935 were arrested. Most of them have been released but about 50 are still in jails", said Tariq.

Tariq has pursued a case of illegal arrest against the police and on May 10 a judge issued notices to the three most senior police officers to come to court on May 17 to explain the reasons for Tariq's arrest.

On May 12, thousands are expected to welcome Chaudhry in Karachi when he is scheduled to address the Karachi Bar Association. The Musharraf regime is planning counter-rallies, booking out most public transport to bring public sector employees, who are being forced to join the counter-rallies or risk losing their jobs.

*From: International News, **Green Left Weekly** Australia issue #709 16 May 2007.*

A message from London

Dear comrades

The arrest of our beloved leader and friend Farooq Tariq comes at a time when the true nature of the Musharraf Government has been unveiled. I remember when he came to power both the left and the right were saying that this is not a brutal military regime. But one only has to look at the actions that this government has taken over the past years to believe that this military government is not only brutal but cunning and treacherous as well.

It claims to be fighting religious fundamentalism in the country and is using this as a pretext on more than one occasion to justify its authoritarian rule. Labor Party Pakistan was the first political party that confronted this regime from day one. It was the LPP offices and press that were raided in the early days of the coup. In the daily paper Morning Star in UK, I acting as the overseas organizer of LPP, wrote lengthy articles and features in which we strongly condemned the illusion that most people had in the military government. I suggest that all units and branches of LPP should take out protest meetings at the press clubs across the country and wear black bands around their arms.

The struggle must continue till revolution.

Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza

UK

The Second Arrest

Farooq Tariq Arrested: Latest
5 June 2007

Dear All,

I am working fulltime on Farooq Tariq's case since his fresh arrest by the police on 5 June 2007. The task is delegated to me by the Labour Party Pakistan. My findings and progress is as follows. The police have no detention orders (up till now) for him, so we can say the arrest is very illegal. Yesterday, he was initially detained in Harbancepura police station from 4:00 am to 10:00 pm. Many civil society activists visited him including Joint Action Committee and Pakistan Social Forum's officials. At 10pm yesterday, he was shifted to an unknown place by the police. By a provision of the law, within 24 hours of the arrest police have to produce the arrestee with the statement of allegation or some evidence to the duty session judge. After the arguments by the lawyers and judgment, the judge may send him to jail or retain him with the police for further investigation. Now the limit of 24 hours is crucial, to avoid the provisions of the law the police shifted him to another unknown place before the 24 hours passed.

Police officials are denying providing any information or legal status to anybody regarding Farooq. A habeas corpus petition against the police by the Lahore Bar Association is in process. Today the SHO provided some false statements/allegations verbally before the judge and did not produce Farooq as per notice given by the court. The Court passed fresh orders to Police Superintendent of the region to produce Farooq tomorrow with the allegations or detention orders by the interior ministry. Now the date 7 June will be important in this regard. All, District Bar Associations of Lahore, High court Bar Associations, the media associations, political parties and civil society organizations are in solidarity with us. I hope the state cannot detain Farooq for more days.

In solidarity *Nasir Iqbal* Labour Party Pakistan Lahore

Some More Information

6 June 2007

After less than four weeks Farooq Tariq, General Secretary Labour Party Pakistan, was arrested for a second time in the early hours of Tuesday, 5th June 2007 by a heavy contingent of Punjab Police at his residence in Lahore. He has been detained at Harbancepura Police Station, Lahore. It may be mentioned that Farooq was also arrested to stop his participation in reception for Chief Justice in Lahore on May 4, 2007 and detained for three days. Talking to the media and party members after his arrest at police station Farooq has said that he was arrested without any warrants. He said the state and its illegal tactics cannot force him to bow and vowed to continue struggle against dictatorship.

Meanwhile Raja Saleemulla advocate has filed a habeas corpus petition against the police in the court of Sessions. Judge Rauf Sheikh has issued notice to SHO Harbanispura Police Station to produce Farooq Tariq at 9am Wednesday 6 June. Syed Mohammad Shah, President Lahore Bar Association and senior advocate Ejaz Hussain will appear in court on behalf of the petitioner.

Labour Party Pakistan thinks that the immediate reason for Farooq Tariq's arrest is his proactive role in the lawyers' movement, participation in 4 June press conference against PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) action against the media, as well as the announcement of a Free Media Conference being organized by LPP on 6th June at Lahore Press Club.

A number of political parties, organizations and trade unions have condemned the arrest, and demand the immediate release of Farooq Tariq. Several political workers, leaders and friends have visited Farooq Tariq at the police station to show solidarity.

Khaliq Shah LPP Lahore



Above: 13 March 2007 the first demonstration by LPP against the brutal treatment of lawyers in Lahore, police tried to stop the rally. However, LPP activists were able to bring out the rally.
Below: Demanding the release of the chief justice Supreme Court of Pakistan.





Above: 26 March 2007 A view of LPP rally, a day earlier, I was threatened by senior police officers of dire consequences if this rally goes a head, but we brought out the rally. **Below:** After reaching Lahore High Court, raising slogans against the military dictatorship.





Above: April 2007 LPP activists protesting against curfews on media in Pakistan. **Below:** 1 May 2007 rally organized by National Trade Union Federation in Lahore.





Above: Lahore 14 May 2007 a part of lawyers rally. **Below:** LPP, part of the lawyers rally against the brutal killings of over 50 activists in Karachi by Musharraf supporters.





Above: 4 June 2007 Demonstration by Labour Party Pakistan in front of American Consulate in Lahore on the National Day of America. **Below:** September 07, a demonstration by LPP for the release of political prisoners.





Above: *May 2007* at Depalpur Military Farms where peasants were fired at by rangers, injuring few and killing one.
Below: Speaking at the peasant protest meeting





Above: May 2007 LPP lawyers solidarity conference attracted most of the political parties, trade unions and social organizations in support of the lawyers movements. **Below:** LPP lit Diyas in memory of the martyrs of Karachi at charing cross, Mall Road Lahore, despite police threats.





Above: Qasur August 2007 speaking at a workers meeting to form the power looms workers union. **Below right:** The workers went to Gherao the office of the District Coordination officer. **Below:** Choudry Imtiaz, general secretary LPP Punjab speaking at the meeting after workers went inside the building. Police registered a case against the workers including all the LPP leaders who participated including myself.





Above: August 2007 workers at a mass meeting in front of Rustam Suhrab Cycle Factory in Lahore. **Below:** speaking at the workers rally, the meeting was organised by the union of the factory after their victory in the referendum among he workers.



Pictures taken by mobile phone camera.
September 07, entering the anti terrorist court Lahore along side 10 brick kiln workers who were also charged with terrorist laws. Our crime: attending a lawyers demonstration.



Left: *September 07*, A defiant brick kiln worker at the court hearing

Right: *September 07*, Entering the anti terrorist court Lahore.



Left: After rejection of our bail application, police is bringing us to Camp Jail Lahore.

Right: December 2007, LPP congress a main leader of LPP, Comrade Asim Akhund speaking at LPP congress. He died of a heart attack at the age of 32 in 2008. He was one of the most known young Marxist leader in Sindh.



Above: A view of the LPP third congress held in Lahore.

Below: A part of the seminar, on the second day of LPP congress





Above: Lahore 10 December 2007 On international human rights day, chanting slogans against emergency, Asma Jehangir can also be seen the picture. Below: LPP activists along with the lawyers are protesting against the imposition of emergency.





Above: Activists of Labour Qaumi Movement, a labour organizations in Faisalabad and affiliated with Labour Party Pakistan, are picketing the power loom factory for the arrest of the boss, who had fired on workers injuring several.

Below: April 2008, Murdan, speaking the memorial meeting of Abdullah Quershi.





Abdullah Qureshi, an LPP leader, was one of the first political leader killed in a suicidal attack by the religious fanatics on 9 December 2007 in Swat.



Above: Karachi January 2008 speaking at Salim Raza memorial meetin, he was the general secretary of National Trade Union Federation. On the platform, Yousaf Musti Khan, general secretary National Workers Party and Raza Rubanni, a leader of PPP, then opposition leader at Senate. **Below:** March 2008 A view of Faiz Ahmad Faiz Amn Mela in Lahore. This festival attracted thousands of youth, Faiz revolutionary poetry was recited by famous singers.





Above: 17 April 2008 Peasants at a mass rally demanding land rights at Military Farms Okara organised by Anjman Mozareen Punjab. **Right:** Speaking at this mass rally. **Below:** Peasants women at the rally. They played the leading role in this most militant movement of the peasants in Punjab.



An international campaign launched *Sent to Bahawalpur Jail*

Farooq Tariq has been sent to Bahawalpur Jail. He was arrested on 5 June. His detention is a part of recent wave of repression in which hundreds of political activists have been arrested and cases have been lodged against thousands. The process of arrests/ crack down is still on.

After his arrest, he was kept in Harbanspura Police Station. Just after his illegal arrest Lahore Bar Council put a case against detention. He was then sent to an unknown place to avoid his recovery. Now, he is sent to Bahawalpur jail. Today, the police produced a detention order by the Interior Department Punjab before the Court. The order is for three month detention. Labour Party Pakistan is now going to put a case in the High Court against this detention order and is organizing protests.

Please send your protest letters to:

1-General Pervez Musharraf, President of Pakistan
President House Constitution House Islamabad, Pakistan
Fax: +92 51 922 1422, 4768/ 920 1893 or 1835
Email: <http://www.presidentofpakistan.gov.pk/WTPresidentMessage.aspx>

2-Mr. Shaukat Aziz Prime Minister of Pakistan Prime Minister
Secretariat Constitution Avenue
Islamabad, Pakistan
Email: primeminister@pak.gov.pk

3-Mr Pervez Elahi
Chief Minister Punjab
Chief Minister House
Lahore, Pakistan
<http://www.chpervaizelahi.com/writemsg.asp>

4-Lt General Khalid Maqbool
Governor Punjab
Governor House
Lahore, Pakistan
Fax: +92 42 9200023
Email: governor.sectt@punjab.gov.pk

Detained for 3 months, sent to Bahawalpur Jail

7 June 2007

Lahore: General Secretary Labour Party Pakistan Farooq Tariq who was arrested on 5 June from his residence without warrants, was sent to Bahawalpur Jail on June 7 after the issuance of 3-month detention orders by the home secretary Punjab. Farooq Tariq's detention is a part of recent state crack down on political activists and workers with the backdrop of lawyers and media movement against Musharraf regime.

Throughout the country hundreds of political workers have been arrested and cases have been lodged on thousands others. According to the police reply submitted before the court, Farooq has been arrested under section 16 of Maintenance of Public Order.

Meanwhile, the jail authorities in Bahawalpur refused to allow visitors to see Farooq Tariq as party members and workers applied to see him. It may be mentioned that Bahawalpur is 8-hours' travel from Lahore and the purpose of shifting him to Bahawalpur is based on malafidie and to stop visitors to see him. According to authorities meeting with Farooq can only be arranged after a written permission from the home secretary, which is sheer violation of constitutional and fundamental rights.

Labour Party Pakistan condemns jail authorities attitude and demands them to allow visitors to see Farooq Tariq in jail. In the background of the situation, along with countrywide protests it has also been decided to challenge Farooq Tariq's detention in the Lahore High Court.

Khaliq Shah LPP Lahore

LPP overseas stage a demonstration in London

9 June 2007

The LPP overseas has staged a demonstration in front of the Pakistan High Commission in London demanding the immediate release of LPP leader Farooq Tariq. Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza, the overseas organiser of the LPP said here at a news conference that Farooq Tariq was arrested from his house without any warrant. He said that the present government is on its last breath and that it is only the LPP which has opposed the Musharraf government from day one. Dr Amjad said that similar demonstrations will be organized all around Europe to protest against the illegal arrest of Farooq Tariq and to demand his immediate release.

Protest demo against Farooq Tariq's detention

A Labour Party Pakistan communiqué on June 12

LAHORE: Labour Party Pakistan organized a protest demonstration against the illegal detention of LPP's General Secretary Farooq Tariq in front of Lahore Press Club. Braving high temperatures of 47 degrees centigrade, over 300 protestors gathered at 4:30 pm in the sizzling heat. They were raising slogans against General Pervez Musharraf's regime and demanding immediate release of the LPP leader and all other political prisoners. They were holding posters with Farooq's picture, banners and placards inscribed with slogans against the repressive regime of General Musharraf. The charged crowd chanted anti-Musharraf slogans loudly while the police looked on.

The red party flags were flying all around. Among the most recited slogans include "Go Musharraf go", "Release Farooq Tariq, " "Free Farooq Tariq and political activists", "No to dictatorship", "No role for army in politics" etc.

A large number of LPP workers, representatives of civil society organizations, trade unions and political parties participated in the protest demonstration. At the end of demo, some activists delivered brief speeches. They vowed to continue struggle against Musharraf regime and demanded of the government to withdraw cases and immediately release Farooq Tariq and all other political prisoners.

Prominent among those who spoke on the occasion include Secretary Pakistan Social Forum Irfan Mufti, Convener Lahore High Court lawyers committee for coordination with civil society Kwar Mehmood Khatana, President All Pakistan Teachers Federation Muhammad Azam Butt, General Secretary National Workers Party, Malik Aslam, Chairperson Labour Party Pakistan, Nisar Shah, Prof. Nisar Saffadar advocate, Mahmood Butt General Secretary All Pakistan Bhatta Mazdoor Union, Azra Shad Chairperson Women Workers Help Line, Yousaf Baloch, Moeen Nawaz Pannu of National Trade Union Federation and Eng. Saleemulla of Jamiat Ulamia Pakistan. The protesters peacefully dispersed after the one hour demonstration.

Inhumane treatment by jail authorities

13 June 2007

LAHORE: Farooq Tariq and other political prisoners in Bahawalpur central jail are facing inhumane conditions imposed by the jail authorities. 10 to 12 prisoners have been bundled in every room with severe lack of food, water and latrine facilities in high temperatures ranging from 48 to 50 degrees centigrade.

"Political prisoners are not being treated according to the jail rules" Farooq said, as quoted by Main Saeed, Farooq's elder brother who visited him in jail on Wednesday. Mian Saeed Ahmad and Mian Yaseen Ahmad, two elder brothers of Farooq Tariq, visited him in Bahawalpur jail after been able to get permission from the Home Secretary Punjab. It may be recalled that nobody is allowed to meet Farooq in jail without prior permission of the Home Secretary.

According to Farooq, quoted by Saeed, he was mentally tortured constantly as after his arrest on 5 June. He was driven on unknown roads and places for more than two hours. Despite his repeated queries, police did not speak to him and gave threatening expressions. This was to avoid a court bailiff to recover him from illegal police detention. For two days, he was kept in private places by armed police men in ordinary cloths.

Again on June 9, he was alone taken to Bahawalpur in a truck. During an 10 hour journey, he was not even allowed to make a phone call to his family. The purpose of taking him alone was nothing but to give mental torture. There is evidence that 6 other political prisoners

were also taken from Lahore to Bahawalpur the same day in a separate truck.

After reaching jail, the authorities just dumped him along with other political prisoners in a room. They were denied access to information and other basic needs. As a protest Farooq and other political prisoners went on token hunger strike against this inhuman treatment by the jail authorities. On which, jail authorities showed a bit of relaxation in their attitude.

Meanwhile Labour Party Pakistan has condemned the ill treatment to Farooq Tariq and other political prisoners in jail and appealed to all human rights activists to protest against the severe violations of fundamental human rights in Pakistan. LPP has also challenged the detention of Farooq Tariq in Lahore High Court on Tuesday and renowned lawyer Abid Hassan Manto is going to plead the case on Thursday.

Khaliq Shah

On behalf of LPP

International Campaign launched, list of signatories

A massive response to an international appeal by ESSF France

20 June 2007

Farooq Tariq, general secretary of the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP), was arrested without a warrant on June 5, 2007 at his residence in Lahore. A posteriori, the Ministry of the Interior issued a three-month detention order against him. In order to further isolate him, he was transferred to the prison of Bahawalpur. All visits to him are prohibited, except with the prior agreement of the Punjab Home Secretary.

Several hundred people were arrested on suspicion on June 5th and 6th and many others are subject to judicial procedures. The regime is trying to break by force the democratic mobilizations which followed the suspension on March 9th of the President of the Supreme Court, Judge Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudry. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets to protest against this arbitrary measure. Repression by the regime was already responsible for 41 deaths and many injured in Karachi on May 12th and 13th. President Pervez Musharraf almost decreed a state of emergency and no one knows how far the military regime is ready to go to stamp out the democratic contestation.

He was arrested because he was fully engaged in these mobilizations, in particular in support of the lawyers' movement that

was created after the suspension of Judge Chaudry. He is also known for his solidarity activities on the international level. He contributed to the organization of the World Social Forum of Karachi in 2006. He took an active part in other World Forums, like those in Mumbai (India) and Nairobi (Kenya), as well as European Forums, including the last one in Athens (Greece). He is also an activist of the international anti-war movement.

The situation is all the more worrying because the regime does not hesitate to use intolerable measures against him and other prisoners: psychological pressures, inhuman conditions of detention (over-populated cells in very hot weather, lack of water and sanitary facilities...), prohibition of visits...

We call for the respect of human rights and freedoms in Pakistan.

We demand the immediate release of Farooq Tariq and all those who have been imprisoned for having taken part in the democratic mobilizations.

Latest news: after 9 days of arrest Farooq Tariq, was shifted from Central Jail Bahawalpur to Kot Lakhpat jail Lahore. Still, no visit can be made without prior approval by the Punjab Home Secretary, which proves very difficult to obtain. Meanwhile, a political prisoner from Pakistan Peoples Party in Kot Lakhpat jail, Sarmad Mansoor, died of heart attack Thursday. His death is result of very bad prison conditions and inhuman attitude by the jail authorities. PPP has held the jail authorities responsible for the death.

List of signatures:

1. **Martin Domenge Abeau**, CADTM, Belgique.
2. **Gilbert Achcar**, Professor, SOAS, University of London, Great Britain
3. **Dr. Christine Achinger**, Assistant Professor, Department of German Studies, University of Warwick, UK.
4. **Udi Adiv**, Ph.D, Open University, Israel.
5. **Manuel Aguilar Mora**, Mexico.
6. **AKOA**, Greece.
7. **Yoko Akimoto**, ATTAC Japan.

8. **Carlos Alberto Rodríguez**, Delegado General Luz y Fuerza, Edenor, Argentina.
9. **Chico Alencar**, Député national, État de Rio de Janeiro, Brésil.
10. **Paula Alfaro**, Secretaria Prensa SUTEBA Lomas de Zamora, Argentina.
11. **Armando Aligia**, delegado general comisión interna Centro Atómico Bariloche, Río Negro, Argentina.
12. **Bruce Allen**, Vice-President, Canadian Autoworkers Local 199, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.
13. **Alliance for Workers' Liberty**, UK.
14. **Paul Alliès**, Doyen honoraire de la Faculté de Droit et Economie de Montpellier, France.
15. **All Together**, South Korea.
16. **Yannis Almpanis**, Réseau pour les droits politiques et sociaux, Grèce.
17. **Mercia Andrews**, Alliance of Land and Agrarian Reform Movements, South Africa.
18. **Josep Maria Antentas**, prof. Sociologia, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Catalonia.
19. **Kate Ahrens**, Unison national executive-elect, UK.
20. **"Polo" Araneda**, Comisión Directiva Vecinal Barrio Islas Malvinas, Neuquén, Argentina.
21. **Cinzia Arruzza**, Centro Studi Livio Maitan, Italie.
22. **Brian Ashley**, Amandla Collective, South Africa.
23. **Cathy Austin**, President, Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Local 88, Canada.
24. **Sergio Baena**, Comisión de Reclamos Cuerpo de Delegados TBA Mitre, Argentina.
25. **Colin Barker**, Honorary Lecturer in sociology, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.
26. **Sheila Barsel**, South African Communist Party (Central Committee member).
27. **Tapan Basu**, Radical Politics, Santipur, Nadia, India.
28. **Pierre Beaudet**, Alternatives, Québec.
29. **Daniel Bensaïd**, Professeur, Université de Paris VIII, France.
30. **João Bernardo** (author, professor).
31. **Marco Berlinguer**, Transform! Italia.
32. **Pablo Bernat**, Delegado General Comisión Interna Cognis, Argentina.
33. **Piero Bernocchi**, Confederazione COBAS Italia
34. **Olivier Besancenot**, porte-parole de la LCR (France)

35. **Christian Besmer**, électricien, Langnau, Suisse.
36. **Prof. Dr. Alvaro Bianchi**, Departamento de Ciência Política da Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp-Brasil).
37. **Shimshon Bichler**, member of the Alternative Information Center, Israel.
38. **Beatrice Bleile**, Socialist Alliance, University of New England, Australia.
39. **Bloque Socialista**, Perú.
40. **Councillor Jim Bolland**, West Dunbartonshire Council, Scottish Socialist Party.
41. **Sue Bolton**, Socialist Alliance national trade union coordinator and Democratic Socialist Perspective assistant national secretary, Australia.
42. **Elena Bonavita**, pour « Où sont-ils ? » DDHH Uruguay.
43. **Chiara Bonfiglioli**, étudiante.
44. **Janine Booth**, chair, Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (UK) women's advisory committee, UK.
45. **Nelsa Bou Abdo**, Congresales por la oposición Foetra Bs. As, Argentina.
46. **Saskia Boumans**, Belgique.
47. **Peter Boyle**, National Secretary, Democratic Socialist Perspective, Australia.
48. **Ray Brassier**, Middlesex University, London, Britain.
49. **Johanna Brenner**, professor of sociology Portland State University Portland OR USA.
50. **Fabienne Brifault**, LCR, Paris, France.
51. **David Broder**, Iraq Union Solidarity, UK.
52. **Ali Brown**, Unison national executive-elect, UK.
53. **Sofie Buckland**, National Union of Students national executive, UK.
54. **Ana Bertha Buenrostro**, Mexico.
55. **Gustavo Buster**, Miembro del Consejo Político Federal de Izquierda Unida (Estado español).
56. **Alex Callinicos**, Professor of European Studies at King's College, London, UK.
57. **David Camfield**, Assistant Professor, Labour Studies, University of Manitoba*, Canada.
58. **Salvatore Cannavò**, député Prc-Sinistra Critica, Italie.
59. **Mariangela Casalucci**, Collettivo Bellaciao, Greece.
60. **Graciela Calderón**- Comisión Directiva SUTEBA La Matanza, por la minoría, Argentina.

61. **Viviana Carranza**, Congresales por la oposición Foetra Bs. As, Argentina.
62. **José Castillo**, Comisión Directiva, Asociación Gremial Docente-Ciencias Sociales-UBA, Argentina.
63. **Vincent Charbonnier**, syndicaliste (SNASUB-FSU, Vénissieux), France.
64. **Kunal Chattopadhyay**, Radical Politics, India, and Professor of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India.
65. **François Chesnais**, professeur émérite Université Paris-Nord, France
66. **Choo Chon Kai**, International Bureau, Socialist Party of Malaysia / Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM).
67. **James Claassen, Amandla** Collective, South Africa.
68. **Shaun Cohen**, UK.
69. **Professor Mike Cole**, Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln.
70. **Luke Cooper**, « Revolution » (socialist youth), Britain.
71. **Olivier Cottagnoud**, Président du , Syndicat autonome des postiers, Suisse.
72. **Annick Coupé**, Union syndicale Solidaires, France.
73. **Dr David Cunningham**, Principal Lecturer, University of Westminster, London, Britain.
74. **Pam Currie**, National Secretary, Scottish Socialist Party.
75. **Paul D'Amato**, Managing Editor, International Socialist Review, USA.
76. **Thierry Daviaud**, Minzier, France.
77. **DEA** (International Workers Left), Greece.
78. **Raymond Debord**, éditeur du site « le-militant.org », France.
79. **Filip De Bodt**, conseiller communal LEEF! Herzele, Belgium.
80. **Jean Pierre Debourdeau**, FSU, vice-président d'Attac 21, France
81. **Eric Decarro**, membre de la coordination du Forum social suisse, ex-président du Syndicat suisse des services publics.
82. **Tom Dellargy**, member of Solidarity, Scotland's Socialist Movement.
83. **Judith Dellheim**, Berlin Social Forum, Germany.
84. **Sushovan Dhar**, India.
85. **Herbert Docena**, Focus on the Global South, Philippines.
86. **Liliana Duarte**, Vocal SUTEBA Lomas de Zamora, Argentina.
87. **Mick Duncan**, No Sweat campaign, UK.

88. **Hermann Dworczak** (SOAL -Austrian section of FI ; activist in the Austrian Social Forum/ ASF).
89. **Thomas Eisler**, member of Red Green Alliance national leadership.
90. **Josu Egireun**, ESK, Syndicat interprofessionnel du Pays Basque.
91. **Jenefer Ellingston**, US-National Green Party.
92. **Dr. Wolfram Elsner**, Professor of Economics, University of Bremen, Germany.
93. **Klaus Engert**, Facharzt für Chirurgie Dr. med., Simbach a. Inn, Germany.
94. **Maria Exall**, Communication Workers' Union national executive and vice-chair, Labour Representation Committee, UK.
95. **Marco Feistmann**, Die Bresche, Fédération de la gauche anticapitaliste (FAL/FGA), Zurich, Suisse.
96. **Dr Harry Feldman**, (former Professor of Linguistics, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad), Ankara, Turkey.
97. **Gaspar Fernández**, Delegado Camioneros, Avellaneda, Argentina.
98. **Silvia Fernández**, SUTEBA Delegada EGB 37 Tigre, Argentina.
99. **Padraic Finn**, Secretary, Westminster Council branch of the National Union of Teachers, Britain.
100. **Carlos Freites**- Delegado Ministerio de la Solidaridad ATE, Córdoba, Argentina
101. **Frank Fried**.
102. **Sam Friedman**, AIDS researcher.
103. **Claudio Fourcade**, Secretario de Prensa sindicato trabajadores de la DGL, Argentina.
104. **Gigi Francisco**, International Gender and Trade Network-Asia.
105. **Raymond Fulcher**, Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria, Australia.
106. **Darrel Furlotte**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
107. **Dr. Leo Gabriel** Directeur de l'Institut de Recherches interculturelles et de Cooperation, Vice-President de Südwind – Autriche United Nations-NGO-Committee for Development, Vienna - Austria
108. **Benjamín Gandolfo**, Vicepresidencia FUBA (Federación Universitaria de Bs. As.), Argentina.
109. **Revd Gant Gallup**, M.Div., B.A., director of Casa Ave Maria, Managua, Nicaragua.

110. **Victor Garay**, Comisión Interna Hospital Francés, Sanidad Capital, Argentina.
111. **Iván García**, Centro de Estudiantes de la Facultad de Humanas - Universidad Nacional de San Luis, Argentina.
112. **Luciana Genro**, Deputée nationale, État de Rio Grande do Sul, Brésil.
113. **María Isabel Giordano**, Delegada Hospital Córdoba ATE, Córdoba, Argentina.
114. **Juan Carlos Giordano**, Izquierda Socialista, Argentina.
115. **Yiannis Gioukas**, PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, UK.
116. **Arze Glipo**, Asia-Pacific Network for Food Sovereignty (APNFS), Philippines.
117. **Fernando Gomez**, Consejero estudiantil en la carrera de Historia (UBA).
118. **Dr. Volker Gransow**, FU Berlin - Institut für Soziologie, Germany.
119. **Greek Social Forum** / Forum social grec.
120. **Franco Grisolia**, Confederazione Generale Italiana dei Lavoratori, Italy.
121. **Dorothy-Grace Guerrero**, Focus on the Global South, Thailand.
122. **Shalmali Guttal**, Focus on the Global South, Thailand.
123. **Isabel Guzmán**, Secretaria Gremial SUTEBA General Sarmiento, Argentina.
124. **José Guzmán**, Familiares Cromañón, AVISAR, Argentina.
125. **Chris Harman** (editor International Socialism Journal), Great Britain
126. **Christian Haesemeyer**, Asst. Prof., University of Illinois, USA.
127. **Heloísa Helena**, Présidente du P-SOL, Brésil.
128. **Dave Hill**, Professor, University of Northampton, England.
129. **Pip Hinman**, Action in Solidarity with Asia & the Pacific, Australia.
130. **Michel Husson**, membre du Conseil scientifique d'Attac, France.
131. **Inagaki Yutaka**, ATTAC Japan.
132. **Kostas Isichos**, Athens Labor Center, board member, Greece.
133. **Sacha Ismail**, Workers Liberty, UK.
134. **Iwakawa Yasuhisa**, Translator/interpreter, member of ATTAC and Labornet, Japan.

135. **Mazibuko Jara**, South African Communist Party and Amandla Collective.
136. **Bonn Juego**, « for freedom, justice, and democracy. », Philippines.
137. **Grigoris Kalomoiris**, Federation of Secondary School Teachers, secretary, Greece.
138. **Alekos Kalyvis**, General Confederation of Workers in Greece (GSEE), vice-president.
139. **Philip Kane**, (author and poet).
140. **Goran Kärroman**, metalworker, Sweden.
141. **Beverly Keene**, Coordinadora, Jubileo Sur/Américas, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
142. **Sidney Kgara**, National Education and Health Workers Union (on strike), South Africa.
143. **Pierre Khalfa**, secrétaire national de l'Union syndicale Solidaires, membre du Conseil scientifique d'Attac, France.
144. **Mohammad Arshad Khan**, SSJD - Society for Social Justice and Development, Pakistan.
145. **Andrew Kennedy**, Editorial Board, Socialist Outlook, Britain.
146. **Alain Krivine**, ancien député européen, porte-parole de la LCR, France.
147. **Kokkino**, organisation membre de la Coalition de la Gauche Radicale (formation parlementaire), Grèce.
148. **KOE**, (Communist Organization of Greece).
149. **Kuldeep Kumar**, Journalist, India
150. **Kenji Kunitomi**, JRCL Japan.
151. **Angélica Lagunas**, comisión directiva ATEN Neuquén, por la minoría, Argentina.
152. **Dr. David Laibman**, Editor, Science & Society, New York, USA.
153. Gastón Laigle, Delegado aeronáutico, LAN Argentina (APA), Argentina.
154. **Wim Lankamp**, tradeunionist (ABVAKABO FNV), The Netherlands.
155. **Gustavo La Torre**, Secretario de Derechos Humanos del Centro de Estudiantes de Filosofía y Humanidades de la UNCórdoba, Argentina.
156. **Michael Lavalette**, Preston City Councillor, Respect-the-unity coalition, UK.
157. **Malena Lenta**, Comisión Directiva, Asociación Gremial Docente-Psicología-UBA, Argentina.

158. Magdalena León, Red de Mujeres Transformando la Economía, Ecuador
159. Dr Les Levidow, Open University, UK
160. Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS), México.
161. Pauline Lipman, Professor, University of Illinois-Chicago, USA.
162. Pablo Lopreiato, Congresales por la oposición Foetra Bs. As, Argentina.
163. Michael Löwy, directeur de recherches émérite, CNRS, Paris.
164. Marieme Helie Lucas, fondatrice et ex-coordinatrice internationale du réseau international de solidarité 'Women Living Under Muslim Laws - WLUML', coordinatrice de Siawi (Secularism Is A Women's Issue).
165. Juan Carlos Maceiras, Secretario Gremial SUTEBA Lomas de Zamora, Argentina.
166. Jeff Mackler, National Secretary, Socialist Action, USA.
167. Hamied Mahate, Amandla Collective, South Africa.
168. Christian Mahieux, Secrétaire fédéral SUD-Rail (Solidaires), France.
169. Héctor Maldonado, Congresales por la oposición Foetra Bs. As, Argentina.
170. Jan Malewski, journaliste à Inprecor, France.
171. Sunil Manandhar, President, Nepal Trade Union Federation.
172. Anne Marchand, journaliste, Paris.
173. Soma Marik, Activist, Nari Nirjatan Pratirodh Mancha, and Reader in History, RKSM Vivekananda Vidyabhavan, Kolkata, India.
174. Sotiris Martalis, Federation of Secondary School Teachers, board member.
175. Gregory Martin, PhD, School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University, Australia.
176. Philippe Martin, secrétaire syndical, Syndicat des services publics, Suisse.
177. Diego Martínez, Consejero estudiantil en la carrera de Sociología (UBA), Argentina.
178. Walter Martinez, Comisión Reclamos Transferidos del Banco Provincia de Córdoba, Argentina.
179. Reginald Massey, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, UK.
180. Dianne Matte, Marche mondiale des femmes, Québec.
181. Peter Mayo, Associate Professor, University of Malta.
182. Wangui Mbatia, Kenya Network of Grassroots Organizations(KENGO)/ People's Parliament, Kenya.

183. **Anele Mbi**, Independent Socialist, South Africa.
184. **Campbell McGregor**, Treasurer, Glasgow Branch, Scottish, Palestine Solidarity Campaign.
185. **Jim McIlroy**, Socialist Alliance and Democratic Socialist Perspective, Brisbane, Australia.
186. **Tárzia Medeiros**, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Brasil.
187. **Alessandra Mecozzi**, International Secretary Fiom-Cgil, Italy.
188. **Horiya Mekrelouf**, Présidente du MRAP Marseille, France.
189. **Horacio Menchaca**, Delegado Publicidad (SUP, Bs. As.), Argentina.
190. **Mónica Méndes**- Comisión Directiva CICOP, Argentina.
191. **Tania Mettler**.
192. **Moema Miranda**, coordenadora do Ibase assina o documnto, Brasil.
193. **Olivier Miss**, enseignant de sciences, Perpignan, France.
194. **Reihana Mohideen** Laban ng Masa, Philippines.
195. **Claude Monnier** retraité, France.
196. **Fabiana Morgado**, SUTEBA Delegada EGBA 704 Malv, Argentina.
197. **Piers Mostyn**, barrister, London, England.
198. **Clément Mouhot**, Chercheur CNRS, Université Paris Dauphine.
199. **Khusta Mtsila**, Right to Work Campaign, South Africa.
200. **Anna Paola Munguía**, Mexico.
201. **Luis Román Munguía**, Mexico.
202. **Natalia Munguía**, Mexico.
203. **Ramiro Francisco Munguía Huato**, Mexico.
204. **Román Munguía Huato**, Mexico.
205. **Rafael Nabre**, president, Urban Poor Action Center (UPAC), Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.
206. **Lidy Nacpil**, Jubilee South and Jubilee South-Asia/Pacific Movement for Debt and Development.
207. **Andy Newman**, Race and Equality Officer, GMB Swndon and Wiltshire Branch*, Britain.
208. **Tracy Nguyen**, Socialist Resistance Youth, Britain.
209. **Dick Nichols**, National Coordinator, Socialist Alliance, Australia.
210. **Ingeniero Norberto Rosendo**, Presidente de la Comisión Nacional Salvemos al Tren, CNST, Argentina.
211. **Federico Novofoti**, Vicepresidente del Centro de Estudiantes Filosofía y Letras (UBA), Argentina.
212. **Bertel Nygaard**, university teacher, Aarhus, Denmark.

213. **OKDE Spartakos** (Greek section of 4th International).
214. **OKDE Workers Struggle**, Greece.
215. **Junko Okura**, ATTAC Japan, Japan.
216. **Liliana Olivero**, Legisladora Provincial Córdoba- Izquierda Socialista, Argentina.
217. **Bill Onasch**, webmaster, kclabor.org, USA.
218. **Danielle Oppliger**, Infirmière Spécialiste Clinique, ancienne députée de Genève.
219. **Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign**.
220. **Yiannis Panagopoulos**, General Confederation of Workers in Greece (GSEE), president.
221. **Ian Parker**, Professor of Psychology, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.
222. **Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR)**, España.
223. **Margherita Pascucci**.
224. **John Percy**, National President, Democratic Socialist Party, Australia.
225. **Ezequiel Peresini**, Secretario de Derechos Humanos del Centro de Estudiantes de Psicología de la UNCórdoba, Argentina.
226. **Patrice Perret**, secrétaire de l'Union Solidaires Transports, France.
227. **S. V. Presumey**, secrétaire départemental de la FSU de l'Allier, France.
228. **Adrián Primerano**, Presidente del Centro de Estudiantes de Ciencias Sociales (UBA), Argentina.
229. **P-SOL (Parti Socialisme et Liberté)**, Brésil.
230. **Luc Quintin**, Physiologie (CNRS UMR 5123), France
231. **Arvind Rajagopal**, New York University, USA.
232. **Mimoun Rahmani**, secrétaire général adjoint d'ATTAC Maroc.
233. **José Ramiro Gálvez**, Profesor Universitario, Universidad del Tolima, Colombia.
234. **Patricia Ramos**, Vocal SUTEBA Lomas de Zamora, Argentina.
235. **Prabhat Ranjan**, King's College, London.
236. **La Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC)**.
237. **Sergio Reggazoni**, Suisse.
238. **Edgardo Reynoso**, Comisión de Reclamos Cuerpo de Delegados TBA Sarmiento, Argentina.

239. **Martha E. Richmond**, Director of Environmental Studies, Suffolk University, Newton, MA USA.
240. **Jean-Louis Rimaz**, enseignant, Genève, Suisse.
241. **Pierre Rousset**, Europe solidaire sans frontières (ESSF), France.
242. **Sally Rousset**, chargée de projets, Développement et Civilisations Lebret-Irfed, France.
243. **Henri Saint Jean**, Commission Méditerranée ATTAC, France
244. **Guillermo Sanchez Porta**- Congresal SUTEBA La Matanza, Argentina.
245. **Beena Sarwar**, journalist, Pakistan.
246. **Hector Saucedo-Secretario** Administrativo SUTEBA Lomas de Zamora, Argentina.
247. **Dr Savas Michael-Matsas**, EEK, Athènes, Grèce.
248. **Valérie Schmid**, enseignante au CO Renard, DIP Genève, Suisse.
249. **Jason Schulman**, editorial board, New Politics, USA.
250. **Laura Schwartz**, National union of Students - Women's Committee, UK.
251. **Sukla Sen**, People's Media Initiative, India.
252. **Tanvir Shahzad**, Lahore Cantt., Pakistan.
253. **Ahmed Shawki**, Editor, International Socialist Review, USA.
254. **Subir Sinha**, School of Oriental and African Studies, Britain.
255. **Frank Slegers**, ACOD-CGSP Riziv-Inami (syndicat des services publics), Belgique.
256. **Rubén Sobrero**, Comisión de Reclamos Cuerpo de Delegados TBA Sarmiento, Argentina.
257. **Mariano Soria**, Consejero Directivo en la Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades, UNCórdoba, Argentina.
258. **Mirian Sosa**, Vocal Junta de Calificaciones docentes de UEPC, Córdoba, Argentina.
259. **P.V. Srinivas**, International Relations Department, CPI(ML) Liberation, India.
260. **Albert Stolz**, enseignant, Zürich, Suisse.
261. **Frans-Arne Stylegar**, Reds*, Norway.
262. **Juan Suppa**, Comisión de Reclamos Cuerpo de Delegados TBA Mitre, Argentina.
263. **Bob Sutcliffe**, economist and writer, Spain.
264. **Anders Svensson**, International Secretary, Socialist Party, Sweden.
265. **Synaspismos**, Greece.
266. **Syndicat autonome des Postiers suisses**.

267. **Sindicato del Personal Académico** de la Universidad de Guadalajara (SPAUdeG), Mexico.
268. **Patrick Tamerlan**, Direction Nationale de la LCR, Bureau exécutif de la 4ième Internationale.
269. **Ernie Tate**, Socialist Project, Canada.
270. **Guy Taylor**, Globalise Resistance, Britain.
271. **Tengo Tenela**, SACP, South Africa.
272. **TERAO Terumi**, Professor Emeritus at Nagoya Institute of Technology, Japan.
273. **Eric Toussaint**, président, CADTM, Belgique.
274. **Josette Trat**, sociologue, université de Paris 8, France.
275. **Marc Trement**, CGT Energie Paris, France.
276. **Mercedes Trimarchi**, Consejera estudiantil en la carrera de Comunicación Social (UBA).
277. **Greg Tucker**, RMT (Rail, Maritime, Transport workers union) National Secretary for Train Crew and Shunting Grades, UK.
278. **Dr John Tully**, Lecturer in Politics and International Studies, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.
279. **Franco Turigliatto**, senateur Sinistra Critica, Italie.
280. **Giles Ji Ungpakorn**, Associate Professor, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
281. **Secretaría Académica Universidad Nacional de La Matanza**, Argentina.
282. **Ursula Urech**, Eichbühlstr. Enseignante, Zurich, Suisse.
283. **Roseline Vachetta**, ancienne députée européenne, porte-parole de la LCR, France.
284. **Francisco Valladares García**, Mexico.
285. , Député national, État de São Paulo, Brésil.
286. **Ivan Valente** Virginia Vargas, Articulacion Feminista Marcosur, America Latina.
287. **Cecilia Vazquez**, Comisión Directiva, Asociación Gremial Docente-Medicina-UBA, Argentina.
288. **Alvaro Vázquez Piña**, Mexico.
289. **Aldo Videla**, Comisión Directiva Unión Obrera Gráfica de Córdoba, Argentina.
290. **Bertil Videt**, Director, International Institute for Research and Education, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
291. **Esther Vivas**, « Revolta Global », Catalonia.
292. **Mark Weinberg**, Amandla Collective, South Africa.
293. **Dr Tony Whelan**, London School of Economics, Britain.
294. **Roy Wilkes**.

295. Jo Williams, Project Researcher, Access & Success, Victoria University.
296. Kerryn Williams, Editor Green Left Weekly, Australia.
297. Joe Wilson, student, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, U.K.
298. John J. Witeck, coordinator, Philippine Workers Support Committee, U.S.A.
299. Bob Whitehead, Birmingham Respect, UK.
300. Elizabeth Wrigley-Field, Sociology department, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.
301. Coral Wynter, Socialist Alliance and Democratic Socialist Perspective, Brisbane, Australia.
302. Xekinima, Socialist Internationalist Organization, Greece
303. Vittorio Agnoletto, Member of the European Parliament, GUE/NGL, Italy.
304. Vincenzo Aita, Member of the European Parliament, GUE/NGL, Italy.
305. Petru Anghjulu, Corse.
306. Asada Akira, freelance mathematician, Japan.
307. **Association Sénégalaise pour la Protection de l'Environnement.**
308. Robert Austin, Ph.D, Honorary Fellow, School of Historical Studies University of Melbourne, Australia & Research Associate, & CECATP, Santiago de Chile.
309. Mohamed Awad, Egyptian Greens.
310. Köksal Aydn, President, Health and Social Services Public Employees Trade Union, Turkey.
311. Brigitte Azéma-Peyret, Avocat honoraire au barreau de Bordeaux, France.
312. Jurriaan Bendien, documentalist, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
313. Yigit Bener, author, Turkey.
314. Håkan Blomqvist, Assistant Professor, Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörn University College, Sweden.
315. Alejandro Bodart, dirección nacional del Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores (MST), Argentina.
316. Olivier Bonfond, CADTM, Belgique.
317. Helmut Born, Betriebsratvorsitzender Düsseldorf , Ver.di Landesbezirksvorsatnd Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany
318. Pauline Bradley, Trade Unionist, West Dunbartonshire Unison, Scottish International Committee, Scottish Council, Iraq Union Solidarity Scotland - Convenor.*

319. **Valentina Bressan**, Italia.
320. **André Bric**, Member of the European Parliament, GUE/NGL, Germany.
321. **Kevin M. Brien**, Prof. of Philosophy, Washington Colledge, Chestertown, Maryland, USA.
322. **Geoff Brown**, Secretary, Manchester Trades Union Council, Britain.
323. **Sebastian Budgen**, éditeur, France.
324. **Christine Burer**, syndicaliste services publics, Suisse.
325. **Raúl Camargo**, Espacio Alternativo , Spanish State.
326. **Alexis Carles**, Comité belge de l'AMECE, Belgique.
327. **Claudio Carreño**, Secretario Adjunto de la Unión Ferroviaria, Seccional Victoria, Argentina.
328. **Amabella L. Carumba**, Secretary General, Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM), Philippines.
329. **Giusto Catania**, Member of the European Parliament, GUE/NGL, Italy.
330. **Raffaella Cavallo**, CeVI-EaS, Italia.
331. **Cedetim**, France.
332. **Dr. James D. Cockcroft**, Ph.D., academic and author, USA.
333. **Daniel Gillard** Comité pour les droits humains, Brussels, Belgium.
334. **Comité Venezuela avril**, Brussels, Belgium.
335. **Petros Constantinou, Campaign GENOA 2001**, Greece.
336. **Terry Conway**, editor Socialist Resistance, Britain.
337. **Philippe Corcuff**, Maître de conférences de science politique à l'Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Lyon, France.
338. **Léon Crémieux**, syndicat Sud-Aviation, France
339. **María Damasseno**, presidente de la FUBA -Federación Universitaria de Buenos Aires, Argentina.
340. **Danièle Derand**, France.
341. **Hermann Dierkes**, spokesman of Die Link in the city council of Duisburg, Germany
342. **Cheikh Diop**, Président de l'Association Sénégalaise pour la Protection de l'Environnement, Dakar Sénégal.
343. **Carolina Dome**, vice presidente del Centro de estudiantes de Psicología, UBA, Argentina.
344. **Paul-Emile Dupret**, Lawyer, European Parliament, GUE/NGL, Belgique.
345. **Dupuy Tonik**, France.
346. **Erik Edlund**, student, Lidköping, Sweden.

347. **Michel Eggermont**, Socialist Party (SP), member of Utrecht City Council, The Netherlands.
348. **Fusun Erol**, Vice-President, Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), Turkey.
349. **Dianne Feeley**, Editor, Against The Current, USA.
350. **Marco Feistmann**, mouvement anti-guerre, Suisse.
351. **David Finkel**, Editor, Against The Current, USA.
352. **Judith Fraeys**, Comité belge de l'AMECE, Belgique.
353. **Pedro Fuentes**, Executive Comitte PSOL, Brazil.
354. **Pierre Galand**, Président du Forum Nord Sud, Belgique.
355. **Panos Garganas**, editir, Workers Solidarity, Greece.
356. **Jean-Luc Gautero**, Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis, Faculté des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines, France.
357. **Cristina Gay**, Belgique.
358. **Joel Geier**, Associate Editor, International Socialist Review, Chicago, Illinois, USA
359. **Nikos Giannopoulos**, Comité de coordination du Forum social grec.
360. **Paolo Gilardi**, direction syndicat services publics et mouvement anti-guerre, Suisse.
361. **Hector Grad**, Dept. of Social Anthropology, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain.
362. **Group of Concerned Citizens** (GCC), Malaysia.
363. **Candido Grzybowski**, Directeur Général d'Ibase, Rio de Janeiro, Brésil
364. **Umberto Guidoni**, Member of the European Parliament, GUE/NGL, Italy.
365. **Gencay Gürsoy**, Professor, Turkey.
366. **Charles Hoareau**, Rouges Vifs 13, France.
367. **Tetz Hakoda**, étudiant, Japon.
368. **Hirayama Ryouhei**, Japan.
369. **Doug Holton**, Theatre Practitioner, England.
370. **Haydar Ilker**, Vice-President, Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), Turkey.
371. **Marco Iob**, CeVI-Centro di Volontariato Internazionale, Udine, Italia.
372. **Daniele Ippolito**, Associazione Sinistra Critica, Pisa, Italia.
373. **Zaffar Iqbal**, CRDP, MD, Arizona, USA.
374. **Isogai Jiro**, Japan.
375. **Katsuhiko Ohtani**, Gifu pre. Japan.
376. **Göte Kilden**, Retired union leader, Volvo/Göteborg, Sweden.
377. **Kimura Atsuko**, Japan.

378. **Hamiyet Kiziler**, Vice-President, Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), Turkey.
379. **Loukia Kotronaki**, Comité d'Organisation du 4em Forum social europeen, Grèce.
380. **Hayri Kozanoglu**, Professor, Turkey.
381. **Masis Kürkçügil**, author, Turkey.
382. **Lê Quang Kim** Association belge pour un contrat mondial de l'eau, Belgique.
383. **Francisco Ledesma**, Cuerpo de Delegados del Subte, Argentina.
384. **Russell Lohse**, Assistant Professor, History Department, University of Southern Indiana, USA
385. **Víctor López**.
386. **Lilo Lottermoser**, die Linke., Hamburg, Germany.
387. **Julien Lusson**, Cedetim, France.
388. **Tony Mainolfi**, membre de SolidaritéS, Genève, Suisse.
389. **Eduardo Malach**, presidente del Centro de Estudiantes de Filosofía y Letras, UBA, Argentina.
390. **Helmuth Markov**, Président de la Comission du commerce international du Parlement européen.
391. **Philippe Martin**, secrétaire syndical, Suisse.
392. **Beverley Matali**, Bruxelles, Belgique.
393. **Alphonse Matand**, Président de l'ASEM-DITU, asbl.
394. **Scott MacWilliam**, Australia.
395. **Anne Michel**, syndicaliste services publics et mouvement féministe, Suisse.
396. **Yousfi Mohmed**, membre d'Attac Maroc, coordinateur du centre de Démocratie et Services ouvriers.
397. **Monitoring Sustainability of Globalisation (MSN)**, Malaysia.
398. **Luisa Morgantini**, Vice-Présidente du Parlement Européen.
399. **Roberto Musacchio**, Member of the European Parliament, GUE/NGL, Italy.
400. **Jefferson Moura**, Executive Committee, PSOL, Brazil.
401. **Dimitri Munini**, CeVI-PVS, Udine, Italy.
402. **Yoko Nakamura**, Japan.
403. **Rina Nissim**, Espace Femmes International, Genève, Suisse.
404. **Nizar**, consultant, Pakistan.
405. **Satoshi Omura**, editor, Akashi Shoten, Tokyo, Japan.
406. **Guillermo Pacagnini**, **Secretario de Organización** de la CICOP y de la Mesa Nacional del MIC- Movimiento Intersindical Clasista, Argentina.

407. **Marisol Pajuelo**, Venezuela.
408. **Suzanne Peters**, historienne, enseignante, mouvement anti-guerre, Suisse.
409. **Siro Petruzzella**, Sindacato Unia, Bellinzona, Italia.
410. **Kjell Pettersson**, journalist, Internationalen, Sweden.
411. **Thomas Raeck**, Secrétaire général adjoint du Groupe GUE/NGL Parlement Européen.
412. **Mickael Ramounet**, France.
413. **Luis Guillermo Rangel Rojas**, PRT, México.
414. **Fabrice Rault**, France.
415. **Réseau pour les droits politiques et sociaux**, Europe.
416. **Vilma Ripoll**, dirección nacional del Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores -MST- Argentina.
417. **Roberto Robaina**, Executive Comitte PSOL, Brazil.
418. **Janira Rocha** diretorio Sindicato da Previdência SINDIPREV Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
419. **Serge Roy**, président, Association québécoise pour un contrat mondial de l'eau (AQCME), Québec.
420. **Lucía Sandoval**, Secretaria Gremial de ATUNPA, Asociación de Trabajadores del la Universidad Naciona de la Patagonia, Argentina.
421. **Juan Domingo Sanchez Estop**, traducteur, Bruxelles, Belgique.
422. **Ali Hassan Sayed**, London, journalist on a Pakistani weekly.
423. **SEK**, Socialistiko Ergatiko Komma, Greece.
424. **Néstor Segovia**, Cuerpo de Delegados del Subte, Argentina.
425. **Satomi Seo**, Staff of Nagoya YWCA, Japan.
426. **Yiannis Sifakakis**, Stop the War Coalition, Greece.
427. **Tadashi Settsu**, Japan.
428. **I.K.Shukla**, writer, Los Angeles, USA.
429. **Edilson Silva**, Executive Comitte PSOL, Brazil.
430. **Roger Simmonds**, UK.
431. **Mehmet Soganci**, President, Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, Turkey.
432. **Agostino Soldini**, secrétaire syndical, Suisse.
433. **Pascal Sprungli**, Challex, France.
434. **Eva-Britt Svensson**, Member of the European Parliament, GUE/NGL, Vänster Party, Sweden.
435. **Takuji Soyama**, Japan.
436. **Michel Szempruch**, France.
437. **Olivia Szwarcburt**, Coordination Deputy AMECE - European Parliament.

438. **Alison Thorne**, Coordinator, International Executive Committee, Freedom Socialist Party, USA.
439. **Ismail Hakk Tombul**, President, Confederation of Public Employees Trade Unions, Turkey.
440. **Masako Tsuchiya**, Japan.
441. **Qamar Ullah**, journalist, former President of Punjab Union of Journalists (PUJ) and former President Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ), Pakistan.
442. **Kemal Ulusaler**, President, Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), Turkey.
443. **Agustín Vanella**, consejero superior de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina.
444. **Jérémie Verger**, étudiant en histoire, France.
445. **Patricia Walsh**, diputada electa de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Argentina.
446. **Mathis Weidanz**, Copenhagen, Denmark.
447. **Peter Widén**, metalworker, Eskilstuna, Sweden.
448. **Francis Wurtz**, Membre du Parlement européen, France, et président du groupe de la GUE/NGL.
449. **Yashiro Katsumi**, Japan.
450. **Hüseyin Yesil**, Vice-President, Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, Turkey.
451. **Yukio Gibo**, Okinawa Ryukyu Japan

* For identification purposes only / personal capacity

Many solidarity messages have also been sent independently from this international appeal, including from organizations not mentioned above. This is in particular the case for Swedish Trade Unions, the Socialist Party of Malaysia, the PRD from Indonesia, and the Socialist Party of the Netherlands, under its general secretary signature, Hans Hennening.

Solidarity messages

June 2007

Socialist Party Holland

Dear Farooq,

We were very glad to be informed of your release from prison. It is the first result of the struggle of the Pakistan people and international sympathizers against the unlawful arrests of representatives of democratic and left forces in your country.

We demand freedom for all political prisoners in Pakistan, and that the political rights of free speech, organization and mobilization be respected. Democracy should not be partial or limited, neither in your country, nor in ours.

We wish you wisdom and strength in these circumstances. Being involved in the struggle for social justice and emancipation is as difficult as it is necessary.

Greetings, in solidarity,

Hans van Heijningen

General Secretary, Socialist Party Netherlands

South Asia Forum for Human Rights

Dear Colleagues,

We are happy to learn about the release of Farooq Tariq and other political activists from jail. We salute the indomitable spirit of freedom of the peoples of Pakistan and express our solidarity in your fight against the military dictatorship.

In Solidarity

Tapan Bose

South Asia Forum for Human Rights

Democratic Socialist Perspective Australia

To the brave comrades of the Labour Party Pakistan

Dear Comrades

On behalf of the Democratic Socialist Perspective of Australia I write to offer our solidarity to your General Secretary Farooq Tariq who we hear has been illegally detained by the Punjab police for the second time this year, on June 5.

The DSP condemns this gross attack on democratic rights by the desperate military regime of President/General Pervez Musharraf. Along with the brutal killings in Karachi last month, the detentions of more than a thousand people on the eve of the reception for Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry in Lahore on May 4, 2007, the latest detention of Comrade Farooq Tariq is among the growing number of acts of desperation by a regime under pressure from a rising tide of people's power in Pakistan. But Musharraf's day of reckoning is surely drawing near. The many billions of dollars of assistance for the Musharraf regime from the equally embattled Bush regime in the US won't save him.

Please send us some email addresses and telephone and cell numbers which we can help drown with protest messages about Comrade Farooq Tariq's detention.

In solidarity,

Peter Boyle

Democratic Socialist Perspective National Secretary

peterb@dsp.org.au <http://www.dsp.org.au>

Pakistan Minority Councilors' Alliance

Dear Comrades of Labour Party,

Pakistan Minority Councilors' Alliance (PMCA) strongly condemns the detention of Farooq Tariq and assures you of its full support to continue the struggle for restoration of democracy in Pakistan.

The members of Pakistan Minority Councilors' Alliance in Multan and Bahawalpur will meet Farooq Tariq in jail.

Atif Jamil Pagaan

Convener

Pakistan Minority Councilors' Alliance

Protest letters to General Musharraf

Dear Comrades,

I have sent the following letter to Musharraf, Aziz and Maqbool. The website for Elahi is under construction so I was unable to post to him. The address for Maqbool came back undelivered so I tried to send it to governor.sect@punjab.gov.pk rather than governor.sectt@punjab.gov.pk. I hope this is the correct address.

Linda Waldron

Australia 10 June 2007

Dear Sir

For many years I have admired the peoples, cultures, historical heritage and magnificent landscapes of Pakistan. I have visited your country twice, once in March 2001 and again in October 2004. On both my visits I was impressed by the professional integrity and democratic principles manifested by the Pakistani media and the justice system.

It was with great consternation that I have learned of the detention of Mr. Farooq Tariq, a well-known activist for social justice both within Pakistan and internationally. I understand that the arrest was ordered to prevent Mr Tariq's participation in protests in support of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry. I am further informed that hundreds of other social justice activists have been arrested under similar circumstances.

I find the arrest of Mr. Tariq and the other protestors a gross violation of their civic rights and responsibilities. I believe the mass arrests undermine Pakistan's international reputation as a nation that advocates principles of freedom of political association, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

I call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Farooq Tariq and others arrested for their participation in the campaign to support Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry.

Yours Sincerely

Linda Waldron

Ph. D. Candidate, University of Melbourne

Letter of protest to Musharraf

Dear Comrades,

I have posted the following email to Musharraf and Aziz. The website for Elahi is under construction and the email address for Maqbool returned undelivered.

Please let us know if there is anyone else you wish us to contact.

Comradely,

Ray Fulcher

Australia 10 June 2007

Dear Sir

I am an Australian lawyer who has been involved in the defense of civil rights for Australian citizens. I uphold the democratic principles of the right to peaceful political protest and for citizens to publicly protest the policies and actions of the government of the day. Any government that applies 'preventive detention' against its citizens to stop their peaceful protest against government action or policy loses democratic legitimacy in the eyes of the world.

I therefore condemn unconditionally the arrest and detention of Mr. Farooq Tariq on 5 June 2007. I understand that the arrest was ordered to prevent Mr. Tariq's participation in protests in support of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry.

The original arrest was ordered by the Punjab Home Department with detention for one month. Since then the Home Secretary Punjab has ordered Mr. Tariq's detention for three months and Mr. Tariq has been moved to Bahawalpur Jail.

I also understand that hundreds of other activists have been arrested under similar circumstances.

I call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Farooq Tariq and others arrested for their participation in the campaign to support Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry.

Yours Sincerely

Raymond Fulcher

Solicitor and Barrister, Supreme Court of Victoria

LPP leader reveals ordeal
Over 300 political activists released:
Daily Dawn Lahore 19 June 2007

LAHORE, June 19: More than 300 activists belonging to different opposition parties were released from various prisons on Monday night and Tuesday.

The Punjab home department issued their release orders which were communicated to different prisons on Monday.

The PML-N says the government released about 100 workers from prisons across the province and about 20 from the Kot Lakhpat Jail. Similarly, the People's Party said about 90 of its workers had been set at liberty. The Jamaat-i-Islami said most of its 83 workers had been released, including two from the Camp Jail in Lahore.

The political workers were arrested on June 4 and 5 in the first drive. The second campaign began on June 11 and continued for a day. In between, the Punjab government sent about 750 workers to different prisons in the province. Some of them were released on the orders of the Lahore High Court, Multan Bench, which declared their detention as illegal. Encouraged by the court decision, all the opposition parties moved the LHC against detention of their workers.

The LHC issued notices to the Punjab government and directed the advocate-general's office to submit reasons for detention

along with the police record. The court had adjourned hearings for the third and fourth weeks of June. However, the government chose to release the workers.

PROBE DEMANDED: Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) Secretary General Farooq Tariq has demanded a judicial inquiry into what he said was the unlawful detention of scores of political activists before they were sent to prisons.

Speaking at a news conference after his release from the jail on Tuesday, Mr. Tariq said most of the PPP workers in particular were kept in personal custody of police for two to three days and subjected to torture before the police made entries to the official register about their arrest.

He said he was himself detained outside the police station for three days before the order of his detention was released. Mr. Tariq said he was arrested by the Harbancepura police on June 4 and kept in a small store inside a factory and later shifted to a private place in Harbancepura till June 7 when he was sent to Bahawalpur jail on a three-month detention.

Farooq Tariq said the judicial body should look into the reasons for the confinement of hundreds of political activists from Punjab alone and charges contained in their detention order. He said the charges were general in nature and only said that the detainee's activities were prejudicial to public peace. He said the reasons could stand no legal ground and they were released only when the superior courts started declaring their detention as illegal. The LPP General Secretary said 37 activists were detained in four small rooms in the Bahawalpur jail where even adequate water was not made available. The detainees, he said, were not taken out of the rooms even for a single day in severe hot weather.

As for his four-day stay in the Kot Lakhpat Jail, where he was shifted from Bahawalpur and released on Tuesday, he said the death of PPP activist Sarmad Mansoor was shocking. He said the police arrested Sarmad from a hospital in Gujrat where he was under treatment for heart ailment. He was brought to the Kot Lakhpat Jail and was admitted to its dispensary where there was no arrangement for the treatment of

heart patients. He said all the political prisoners asked the jail authorities in writing that Sarmad be released and Punjab PPP Secretary-General Ghulam Abbas also visited the prison for the purpose, but the government did not yield to the request. This is simply a murder, Mr Tariq said and added that all those responsible should be proceeded against.

Pakistan: fifteen days in jail

21 June 2007

On June 19, Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) general secretary *Farooq Tariq* was released from jail after being detained for 15 days by the Punjab government. His arrest was part of a crackdown on political activists following an escalation in Pakistan's pro-democracy movement after President Pervez Musharraf's decision to suspend Chief Justice Iftikhar Choudry on March 9. Tariq, who is demanding a judicial inquiry into the detentions, will be a guest speaker at the Latin America and Asia Pacific International Solidarity Forum in Melbourne on October 11-14. The following is abridged from a statement issued by Tariq after his release.

It was one of the worst jail experiences I have had during my 30 years of activism. My release was not due to the mercy of the government, but our massive local and international solidarity campaign. Hundreds of protest letters were sent to General Musharraf and dozens of faxes and messages of protest were sent to different provincial authorities.

Most importantly, on June 20 the Lahore High Court was to hear a petition. One of the most prominent lawyers and the former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan, Abid Hassan Minto was to argue my case against the detention. He is also the head of the National Workers Party and the convener of Awami

Jamhoori Tehreek (the People's Democratic Movement, a left alliance of seven political parties including the LPP).

Police came to my house on June 4 at 4am to pick me up. While at the police station in Harbancepura, I repeatedly asked if they had a detention order but was not given a reply. The local police officer kept telling me that I would be free that evening or at the most in three days. That lie was told to more than 600 political prisoners who were rounded up from their houses.

After the Lahore session judge issued notices to the police for my detention, their behaviour towards me changed. After being driven for nearly two hours in a moving police van, I was finally taken to the Bagbanpura police station where I spent the night.

The next day, the police told the session judge that Farooq Tariq had not been arrested and was not with them. I was like a kidnapped person — not by private gangs, but state gangsters. I was taken to the storeroom of a plastic factory belonging to an elected counsellor of the ruling party, the Muslim League, where I was kept for 24 hours under the surveillance of two armed police in plain clothes.

I protested again and again for being held in a private place instead of a police station, but the two armed men told me they were obeying orders by higher authorities. They said senior police officers were very angry because of the court petition.

After being brought back to the police station, I was put behind bars with more than 13 others charged with different criminal activities. On June 6, the police obtained a three-month detention order from the home department of Punjab and so had to tell the session judge that I had already been sent to Bahawalpur Jail.

Bahawalpur is nearly 450 kilometres from Lahore and is infamous for its cruelties and strictness. Most of the prominent political prisoners have been kept in this jail over the years. It was more than 47°C in the police van and the driver was speeding. It was one of the worst journeys I have experienced.

I was sent to Block A, where there were four more political prisoners from the Muslim League (N) who had been there for three

weeks. MLN activist Noshad Hameed immediately shouted “Labour Party has arrived”. We had shared the same jail barrack at Lahore Kot Lakhpat Jail in 2001.

The two of us from Lahore were put in separate cells. I asked the jail authorities to allow us to share one cell, but a jail warden replied: “Two are not allowed to share one cell; they might be involved in homosexual activities.”

Bahawalpur is one of the hottest areas of Pakistan. We had to experience that for the next seven days. I had a small room, a small veranda and something you could call a bathroom. One woollen blanket was thrown inside the cell to put on the floor to sleep.

We were not allowed to have any paper or pens. I had three pairs of my *shalwar qameez*, the traditional dress in Pakistan for summer. No towel or toothpaste or brush. I was like a lion in a cage moving from one corner to another all the time, then sitting in one place, eating what the jail has to offer (something like food). It reminded me of Lahore zoo, where I normally go with my six-year-old son Abdullah to see the lions.

The next evening, 22 more political prisoners arrived from Lahore to share the four cells in Block A. I was very pleased to see more people. Seven of them, all from the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) were pushed into my cell. This ended my solitary confinement, much to my pleasure. At least there was someone to talk to.

We were sent to Bahawalpur from Lahore as punishment, to isolate us from our friends, families and community. This was to teach us a lesson for our opposition to the military dictatorship and to attempt to break our will to keep fighting.

The Musharraf regime was acting like its British colonial masters, who used to send political prisoners to the Andaman Islands while they ruled the Indian sub-continent for over 200 years. The island was known as *Kala Paani* (black waters). Many freedom fighters who were sent there never came back to their homes — most died while serving life-long prison terms. The heat wave went up to 52°C. The electricity always went off, sometimes for 14 hours a day, which also

meant the water would be off. The floor of the cell was always hot. It was only after three days of protest that our defective fan was replaced with a better one and one more fan was installed in the veranda. We paid from our own pockets for the fan. The PPP leaders had some money deposited with the jail authorities when they arrived.

We had to go on hunger strike after four days to demand water. One morning there was absolutely no water coming in. Earlier, there was very little water but we could fill a little plastic bottle in half an hour. The hunger strike paid off. The jail management had to change the pipes and replace the age-old motor.

On the sixth day, my two elder brothers Ahmad Yaseen and Ahmed Saeed were able to visit me in jail after gaining permission from the home department in Lahore. They brought fruit, soft drinks and some clothes, toothpaste and a toothbrush etc. They also deposited some money in my jail account so I could order some basics from the jail shop. This was my first contact with the outside world and they told me that they had heard from the home department that I was going to be shifted to Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore the following day.

LPP comrades from Lodhran, a city 20 kilometers from Bahawalpur, had tried their best to contact me and they were able to send some fruit and sweets to my cell the next morning.

The next evening the police waiting at the jail gate to take me to Lahore tried to handcuff me. I refused and it took them one hour because of my resistance. I told them I am not a criminal and was not going to be treated like a criminal.

After a whole night's travel, we arrived at the Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore and I was put in a very small cell with eight other political prisoners. At least we could stroll on the lawn outside.

A 52-year-old political activist from the PPP, Sarmad Mansoor, had died a day earlier in the same jail after being denied proper medical treatment. It was murder by the government of Punjab with the help of the jail authorities. Mansoor was arrested in a hospital in Gujarat district and was admitted to a jail dispensary with no adequate medical facilities. He died of a heart attack on June 14 and

when I arrived the next morning, all 32 political prisoners from different political parties were on hunger strike, so I joined in as well.

Mansoor's death became a national issue and after that, the government's attitude changed and it started releasing the political prisoners. I was the last to be released on June 19.

While I was coming towards the jail gate, I met an Indian political prisoner, Iqbal, whom I had met in 2001 in the same jail. On his request, I was able to send a Human Rights Commission Pakistan delegation to the jail, which helped release several Indian prisoners.

Outside the jail, dozens of LPP and other activists were waiting to welcome me, after hearing just a few hours earlier that I would be released. "Go Musharraf, go!" was the chant that might even have been heard by people inside the jail. I was brought to the LPP office in a procession and at 5pm I addressed a press conference. Straight from jail back into the thick of political activity!

From: International News, **Green Left Weekly** Australia issue #715 27 June 2007.

Third Arrest

Going underground

I avoided another arrest last night on 23 September 2007. I had just returned home at 11pm from Toba Tek Singh, a five hour drive from Lahore. I am planning to contest general elections for national parliament from Toba Tek Singh, my home city. When the bell rang, I was sure it was police again. My partner Shahnaz asked me who would come at this time of the night. Our children had just gone to sleep, but Mashal (14) our daughter got up as well with the bell ringing constantly.

I asked Shahnaz to check who they are and if police is there do not tell them that I am at home. We had decided that I will not be arrested this time easily. The police would have to work a little harder to catch me. If I am at home and police come, they will have to break the doors to get me out. I will not voluntarily come out. I was sick and tired of police knocking on my door again and again.

Shahnaz went out and she was tricked by the police into opening the door. They did not tell her they were police; instead they said they were friends of Farooq. But when she opened the door, she found dozens of police men in uniform and they asked where I am. Shahnaz who has become used to police arrivals at our doorstep, told them courageously that he is not here and he is in Toba Tek Singh. My daughter Mashal was also with her watching the drama.

They did not insist on entering the house but instead asked for my mobile number, which was given to him. The police officer connected my number and my cell started ringing at home, Mashal immediately felt the danger and ran inside to stop the phone. This could have convinced the police officer that I was at home but he did not force himself inside the door and said thanks to Shahnaz.

Shahnaz closed the door but the police remained there for some time. I was watching from inside the house fearing the police climbing the walls and breaking in. But it seems that the police officer was just doing his duty and not really interested in going any further. It was the same police officer with his team who had arrested me last time on 4 June 2007 from my home.

I then sent SMS to friends and the press informing them that I had just avoided the arrest this time. Police were arresting most of the activists from the opposition parties and this time including the main leadership of the opposition parties. This practice is to avoid more demonstrations against General Musharraf who wants to be re-elected again for the next five years by a parliament which was elected for a five-year term. This parliament elected General Musharraf with the help of the religious fundamentalists in 2002. But this time the religious parties do not want him to be elected and have decided with other political parties to resign from the parliament instead of electing him.

The regime has arrested dozens of activists and leaders of different political parties and is raiding the houses of more activists like me. I do not want to be arrested this time and have decided to remain active but to avoid arrest as well.

Going to jail again and again is no good Comrades and friends have made jokes about me. Whenever I meet a friend, he or she asks me when have you come out (jail) or when are you going in?

My son Abdullah (7) told me this morning that it is now my turn to play "hide and seek" game with police. I remember that when he was only one year old in 2001, the police came to arrest me at my home and at the time both Shahnaz and I were not at home. When Razia, the woman who was taking care of Abdullah told the police that I was not at home, the police men said ok where his son is, we will take

him with us and then Farooq will definitely come to present his arrest, a normal practice by many police in Pakistan. He did not know that my son is only one year old. Razia went inside home and brought Abdullah outside and told the police officer in anger, yes, you can arrest him, he is the son of Farooq. Looking at Abdullah, the police officer was ashamed and said sorry and went away not come again for some time.

When I was living in a rented place in year 2000, my house boss and my office boss were arrested instead of me when police could not find me either at home or the office. We had organized a demonstration against the visit of President Clinton. This was the first protest by any political group in Pakistan against the visit of President Clinton. Even Jamaat-I-Islami chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad declared Clinton as "guest" in Pakistan and refused to protest to please the military dictator General Musharraf.

The police came to the office of LPP in Lahore after the protest demonstration on 20 March 2000 in front of American Consulate. They could not arrest at the time of the demonstration because of heavy presence of the media. The police had sent an unknown person before their raid to identify me at the office. I realized the danger and asked every one in the office to leave immediately. As we were leaving the office, we found police coming in. They had this idea that I am in office so they did not give much attention to us leaving in the dark. Frustrated to see the LPP office locked, they took Nadeem Fazil to Lahore Civil Lines police station instead of me. Nadeem Fazil was the owner of the building, we were housed.

Later they raided my home in Dharampure Lahore. When they found that I am not at home, they took my home boss Hamyoon Rashid living next to my place.

After hearing the news, I went to one friend Anjum Rashid who was editor of Daily Jang for help for the release of my home and office bosses. When he heard, he advised me, "let the buggers with the police" and told me, "at least you do not have to pay the rent anymore".

So a new game has started with police, I will attend the demonstration on 27 September alongside with the advocates in any case and till then will try not to let the police get hold of me.

Be ready for a new possible solidarity campaign please.

Arrested once again!

With a letter from Farooq Tariq

LPP, SHAH Khaliq, SHAH Nisar, TARIQ Farooq

27 September 2007

Dear comrades!

Farooq Tariq, General Secretary Labour Party Pakistan, along with 10 party members, was arrested once again on Thursday (27th Sept 07), from outside Lahore High Court, for the third time in the last three months. He was underground for the last three days as the police were looking for him to arrest.

On Thursday, he surfaced for a while to participate in lawyers' protest rally against General Musharraf. Labour Party fully participated in the rally to mark protest against the filing of nomination papers by General Musharraf for his second presidential term. The moment Farooq tried to board his car after the termination of rally at about 12 noon, a contingent of Punjab police encircled him and arrested him without showing any arrest warrants.

Police also arrested 10 other party members, most of them brick kiln workers, who were peacefully dispersing after the rally. Police drove them all to Old Anarkali Police Station and detained them there.

When party comrades, friends and journalists reached the police station to meet detained comrades they were refused permission to see them. Police also refused to reveal details of the arrests. After

four hours they were allowed to see the arrested comrades, and by then a case had been registered against them under Terrorist Act and 16 MPO.

Meanwhile in the afternoon, members of Labour Party Pakistan held a protest demonstration in front of Lahore Press Club to condemn the arrests and demanded immediate release of the arrested comrades and all political prisoners. According to police, the arrested comrades will be produced before the anti-terrorist court on Friday. Human Rights activist Asma Jehangir, Rabeya Bajwa and Abid Saqi advocate will defend Farooq Tariq and the other arrested party comrades.

Following are the names of the comrades arrested by police:

1. Farooq Tariq
2. Javed Masih
3. Sabir Hussain
4. Waris Masih
5. Mohammad Munir
6. Mohammad Sadiq
7. Mohammad Iqbal
8. Allah Ditta Masih
9. Mohammad Hassan
10. Allah Ditta
11. Qasim Ali

Khaliq Shah
Labour Party Pakistan

Bail application rejected

Lahore: 28 September 07

The Anti Terrorist Court on Friday rejected the petitions of Farooq Tariq and 10 other LPP comrades, challenging the case registered against them under Anti-Terrorist Act (ATA). A team of senior Supreme Court and High Court lawyers, including Rabeya Bajwa advocate, Nisar Butt advocate and Nisar Safdar advocate, led by Asma Jehangir, Chairperson Human Rights Commission of Pakistan appeared before the court to defend Farooq Tariq and the other party comrades.

Asma Jehangir told the court that it is a baseless case against the LPP members, just to terrorize the working class activists to stop them exercising their lawful right to protest. It is a concocted case, therefore they should be released, she argued. But the court did not entertain her argument, and ordered Farooq Tariq and 10 LPP members to Camp Jail Lahore for seven days.

After this order the LPP members present in court raised slogans of Shame Shame and Go Musharraf Go, against General Musharraf and the military junta for illegal cases registered against political workers. Meanwhile, LPP has announced countrywide protests from Saturday for the release of Farooq Tariq and other party comrades.

Khaliq Shah

Solidarity campaign relaunched

ROUSSET Pierre, ESSF

29 September 2007

A solidarity campaign had been organized following the arrest of Farooq Tariq and hundreds of others in May-June this year. In a very short time 451 signatures were collected. The campaign ended when all the detainees were freed. But we knew that the situation in the country remained very tenuous, even though the military regime had been placed on the defensive on a number of occasions by the lawyers' movement and pro-democracy protests.

Our fears were well-founded. Farooq Tariq was re-arrested on 27 September following a demonstration called by, in particular, the lawyers' movement, that has been organized against the presidential elections being held by General Musharraf in highly undemocratic conditions. Farooq had been in hiding for three days, since the police had already tried to detain him at his home in Lahore; but he insisted on being personally present at the demonstration.

A dozen members of the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) were also arrested at the same time. Two days later, on 29 September, it was party president Nisar Shah's turn to be arrested — also following an anti-Musharraf protest.

The situation in Pakistan is currently very unstable. The repression is spreading and the number of people detained has been

growing. Farooq Tariq and his comrades are being held under the Anti-Terrorist Act, which gives the authorities enormous latitude.

As a result, ESSF has relaunched the solidarity campaign that began in May.

For the immediate release of Farooq Tariq and the other prisoners detained after the wave of repression against the democratic movement in Pakistan

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article6363>

Though the language of the appeal now has to be updated, it is essentially the same campaign. The signatures collected in May and June remain valid.

It is very important to make a strong show of international solidarity.

**Against the repression of the democratic movement!
Immediately free the detainees and drop the charges against Farooq Tariq and all those facing repression for their participation in the pro-democracy protests.**

NEW SIGNATURES can be sent to us at the ESSF contact address (see the "Write Us" button on the left hand side of the screen)

HELP US spread the word about this solidarity campaign.

Pierre Rousset

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF)

LAST MINUTE:

Farooq Tariq was released from jail today. BUT...

1. It is only on bail.
 2. He was released on bail by a judge who himself had been victimised by Musharraf (while another judge refused before to do so and sent him to detention). Thus, it is not a change in policy.
 3. He is charged under the Anti-Terrorist Act, which is very grave.
 4. New arrests occur, including of Nisar Shah, president of the LPP.
- The case is not closed and the repression spreads.

We want to maintain the pressure until all charges are dropped and detainees freed.

“Released but struggle continues”:
LPP chairperson Nisar Shah and Salahudin Gandapur
advocate arrested
29 September 2007

This is to inform you that I was released this evening on 29th September 2007 after an anti-terrorist court judge accepted my bail application. The court has granted bail for Rupees 30,000 (\$500) each to all 11 LPP activists but due to lack of time, I was the only one to be released in time after all the papers completed. All others will be hopefully released on Monday.

The judge who accepted my bail application at the anti-terrorist court of Lahore was one of the few judges who had resigned in protest against suspending the chief justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan during this year. He was recently reinstated. When my bail application was moved by Asma Jehangir advocate, chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan along with several other senior advocates, he immediately agreed to the bail. Earlier another judge had rejected my application.

The decision was immediately condemned by all the advocates present. They asked how the police could frame 11 LPP activists who are mainly brick kiln workers with anti-terrorist charges. No media report of the so-called encounter with police where a policeman was injured.

LPP activists raised anti-Musharraf and anti-court decision slogans inside the premises of the court. This was a real act of bravery by LPP activists. No-one has done that before. When the LPP activists

heard from some friendly policemen that orders has been given to arrest all those who are raising slogans, the LPP activists escaped before the police come to arrest them.

I was accused of a physical attack on police officers along with 30 LPP members. Thye police claimed that during the “attack” on police, one police man was unconscious and we had torn his uniform. These were the charges faced by myself and 10 other LPP activists. This was a justification to charge us under Anti-Terrorist Act (ATA), these are charges brought morally against most of the religious fundamentalists. This was first time that I was charged with Terrorist ACT. This was a total lie.

What has happened is on the contrary. As I left the demonstration of the lawyers on the main Mall Road of Lahore on 27th September, I was followed by several police men in plain clothes on motorbikes who intercepted me at a traffic signal. I put up resistance for five minutes but more police forces arrived and I was brought to a nearby police station. Two private TV channel journalists followed the police but they were manhandled by police.

When I was saw the first police report on that evening at the police station, I asked the police officer who was leading my arrest why you have labeled false charges against me. I asked him to bring the police officer who was physically attacked by me and was unconscious, he told me with a cynic smile “This is Pakistan, what else can you expect over here”. He told me sorry, this is not me but the high ups who want strict action taken against you and your comrades. I told them that Pakistan of lies, is your and not mine.

Off course, he was acting on behalf of a military government who was watching the growing influence of LPP among the advocates’ movement and was not ready to sit quietly. Over 200 activists from the LPP were the main contingent of political activists at the advocates’ demonstration on 27th September. Most of them had red flags.

But the joy of release was not there for long while dozens of LPP activists were waiting outside the jail gates. We heard that LPP chairperson Nisar Shah advocate was arrested in Islamabad along with several advocates and activists of Peoples Rights Movement. Dozens of

advocates were brutally handled by police and many were seriously injured in Islamabad.

Another very close supporter of LPP in Karachi, Salahudin Gandapur advocate, member Sind Bar Association was arrested as well during a demonstration in Karachi. 11 social and trade union activists were also arrested in Karachi during a demonstration. LPP Sind has planned several demonstrations tomorrow in several cities including Karachi. Salahudin Gandapur is one of the main leaders of the advocate's movement and he contested elections for national parliament in 2002 as an LPP candidate.

Police has also attacked journalists in Islamabad and in Peshawar. Several have been injured. The military dictatorship of General Musharraf has been weakened by the second round of lawyers' movement and it is now trying to stop it by repression. I along with 11 other LPP activists were the first victims of this repression on 27th September, but it is still going on, and many more have been arrested and injured during and after the anti-Musharraf demonstrations.

The struggle to overthrow this military government will continue through a mass movement of the working class alongside the advocates and other radical strata of society.

Messages of solidarity

29 September 2007

We are publishing below a first set of reactions and protests after the latest arrest of Farooq Tariq and other activists, September 27, 2007. We shall update this page when we receive more information.

An important international defense campaign already occurred last May-June, after a previous arrest of Farooq and hundreds of others. We now are relaunching this international campaign.

For the immediate release of Farooq Tariq and the other prisoners detained after the wave of repression of the democratic movement in Pakistan

New signatures can be sent through ESSF contact address.

Pierre Rousset Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF)

USA

Freedom Socialist Party

4710 University Way NE, Suite 100
Seattle, Washington 98105
Tel: 206-985-4621, Fax: 206-985-8965
www.socialism.com

October 4, 2007

General Pervez Musharraf.
President of Pakistan
Islamabad, Pakistan

General Musharraf:

The Freedom Socialist Party of the United States condemns your government's systematic suppression and criminalization of

dissent as evidenced by the unwarranted arrest and jailing on September 27 of 12 members and leaders of the Labor Party Pakistan. They and other political activists have been victimized and their rights brutally violated by the police, acting on your behalf, because they dared to protest your attempts to hold onto power illegally.

It is not enough that LPP General Secretary Farooq Tariq and 11 other LPP supporters have been released on bail. We demand that the false charges against them of attacking police and violating the Anti-Terrorist Act be dropped immediately and that all other political prisoners be released. This includes freeing LPP supporter and former candidate Salahudin Gandapur, an advocate and member of the Sind Bar Association, and 11 social and trade union activists also arrested in Karachi during recent demonstrations against your regime.

This conduct of your government, including the violent police attacks on journalists in Islamabad and Peshawar, reaffirms our belief that US citizens must exercise our free speech rights to demand that the U.S. withdraw all military, political and economic support to Pakistan until the brutal military dictatorship is completely dismantled.

Sincerely,

Fred Hyde

Freedom Socialist Party, US Section
cc: Lt. General Khalid Maqbool, Governor Punjab
Mr. Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister of Pakistan

Australia

Dear Comrades

In Australia we are campaigning through fax/email letters of protest over the latest detention of Labour Party Pakistan General Secretary Farooq Tariq and 10 other members of the LPP to the Pakistan High Commission in Australia.

It is an outrage that Comrade Farooq Tariq and 10 other LPP members were arrested along with him after participating in a lawyers' protest rally against General Musharraf's bid for a second presidential term on Thursday September 27, 2007 outside Lahore High Court. It is

an even greater outrage that these comrades have now been charged under the Terrorist Act!

Farooq Tariq had been invited as a keynote guest speaker to the Latin America-Asia Pacific International Solidarity Forum to be held in Melbourne on October 11-14, 2007.

There will be guest speakers from all over the world at that conference and they will undoubtedly be adding their voices of protest at the detention of Farooq Tariq.

Regards

Peter Boyle

National Secretary

Democratic Socialist Perspective (DSP) Australia

* * *

Copy of open letter to President Musharraf:

President Pervez Musharraf

c/- Pakistan High Commission to Australia

PO Box 684, Mawson ACT 2607

Dear President Pervez Musharraf

I write on behalf of the Democratic Socialist Perspective in Australia to strongly condemn the latest arrest and detention of Labour Party Pakistan General Secretary Farooq Tariq on Thursday September 27, 2007 outside Lahore High Court, and to demand his immediate release and the release of the 10 other members of his party who were arrested along with him.

Farooq Tariq has been a prominent leader of the ongoing campaign for democracy in Pakistan and this is the third time in last three months that he has been detained.

Farooq Tariq had been invited as a keynote guest speaker to the Latin America-Asia Pacific International Solidarity Forum to be held in Melbourne on October 11-14, 2007. There will be prominent guests from all over the world at that conference and they will undoubtedly be adding their voices of protest at the detention of Farooq Tariq.

Yours sincerely

Peter Boyle

National Secretary Democratic Socialist Perspective

Bangladesh

We strongly condemn the sudden and further arrest of Farooq Tariq, General Secretary of Labor Party Pakistan and his 10 colleagues, from a peaceful rally. It is surprising that the case has been registered against Mr. Farooq under Terrorist Act. We have the fully-fledged solidarity with their demands for democracy. We demand for him and his other colleagues immediate and unconditional release.

Badrul Alam

Convener **Communist Party of Bangladesh (ML)**

Coalition of 8-Left Organizations

Bangladesh Krishok Federation

Dhaka 29.09.07

Dear Comrades of LPP,

We do seriously condemn and protest the arrest of Comrade Nisar Shah and Comrade Farooq Tariq leaders of LPP along with 10 other comrades, by the autocratic regime of Pakistan.

We demand their immediate release.

We will raise and send our protest to the concerned authorities of Pakistan.

Saiful Huq

General Secretary **Worker's Party of Bangladesh**

Sri Lanka

The Left Front /Sama Samaja Party condemns the arrest of Labour Party Pakistan General Secretary and others. This shows clearly that the struggle of workers is most frightening for ruling junta. We demand the immediate release of comrade Farooq and press the Pakistan government to release all political prisoners.

We salute the struggle of the Pakistan people against brutal dictatorship backed by the global capital.

Dr Vickrama Bahu president **Left Front**

Pakistan
Sindh Democratic Forum (SDF)

The entire team of Sindh Democratic Forum (SDF) condemns the arrest of Farooq Tariq and ten other comrades. This is a highly shameful act by the dictatorial regime of Musharraf and his hangers on.

We demand immediate release

In solidarity

Abrar Kazi
M Ibrahim Joyo
AA Qureshi
Mushtaq Merani
Aslam Balouch
Dr nazir Shaikh
Syed S haider
Zulfiqar Halepoto and others

PRIME

This was a great injustice on the part of the government in arresting the political workers throughout Pakistan. There is no path to democracy in such tactics . We are with Mr Farooq Tariq and condemn these tactics which are against rule of law.

Malik Iqbal Hussain

PRIME

National Office 12 Meel kabirwala Punjab Pakistan

Ph0652013937,0652012165

0652460188,0652460182

IEDF

We strongly condemn the illegal arrest of Mr. Farooq Tariq and demand his release immediately.

Irshad Mughal

IEDF

Facing charges of terrorism

March 2008

On 25 March, by the time Yousaf Raza Gilani was taking his oath as prime minister of Pakistan from General Musharraf, I was appearing in an Anti-Terrorist Court in Lahore alongside 11 more LPP comrades. Our trial began on 7 March 2008; over the last 15 days we have appeared in court five times.

Our lawyer was brilliant today. She is Rabia Bajwa, one of the main activists of lawyers' movement. While cross-examining the police witnesses against us, she confronted police officers' lies several times. She exposed them in very clear terms.

For example, she asked one police officer what time he wrote the first police report, he replied, at 11am. Another police officer had told the court earlier that he had arrested us at 10am. She asked another police officer if he knows the names of all those arrested on 27 September, he gave a negative reply. Another only knows two of us.

She asked if the lawyers' demonstration was going on at the same time. They answered yes; then she asked why they had not arrested the lawyers but only the Labour Party Pakistan activists. They had no answer. She asked one of them if we were raising slogans at the time of demonstration; he said yes, we were raising slogans before the police stopped us. In his recorded statement he had written that we started raising slogans only after the police stopped us.

Eleven of us were arrested on 27 September 2007 after our participation in a lawyers' demonstration. The police booked us under terrorist charges, where the maximum sentence is death. They lied when they said we had attacked and injured the police. They claimed we tore their uniforms and that we were armed with sticks.

After our arrest, Asma Jehanghir and Rabia Bajwa, along with 10 more lawyers, appeared on our behalf in the Anti-Terrorist Court. We were released on bail within a few days. The Anti-Terrorist Court has now begun the case and I am sure that we will be cleared of charges at the next hearing on 27 March.

However, the point is that only political activists have to appear in the courts for the crime of being part of the lawyers' movement. The new government must take up this important issue. We have demanded that all these cases registered during the lawyers' movement should be withdrawn unconditionally. The police officers who have acted illegally should face charges, not us.

I personally know Yousaf Raza Gilani, the new prime minister, very well. We both studied at the same university in the 1970s. He was a student of Journalism and I studied Applied Psychology. We lived in the same student hostel; I was elected Hall secretary of Hostel 19 of the University of Punjab Lahore. However, I will not ask any personal favour in withdrawing a case against me and other friends. Our demand is to withdraw all political cases against activists during the last year.

Found Not Guilty

March 2008

An Anti-Terrorist Court in Lahore acquitted 11 of us from the charges of terrorism. In addition to myself, there were 10 brick kiln workers from the Pakistan Bhatta Mazdoor Union and one from the Muslim League Nawaz. All were charged with attacking a police convey last 27 September

On that day, it was alleged that a procession under my leadership came from McLeod Road to join the demonstration of lawyers. Supposedly, when the police told us that under section 144 no more than five people could assemble, we angrily attacked them. Demonstrators from the Labour Party Pakistan supposedly injured some police officers, tearing their uniforms.

That was a complete fabrication, including the police warning. The fact is that on that day over 200 activists from the Labour Party Pakistan joined the lawyers' demonstration. I was not arrested at the scene of the crime but on my way home. Others were arrested as they were returning to their offices. Only the Muslim League Nawaz leader was arrested in a different area. We were charged with seven Anti-terrorist Acts. The maximum sentence is death.

Several days before the demonstration, the police came to my home to arrest me. This was because of our successful mobilization in participating in the movement against the military dictatorship. At the time I avoided the trap and went into hiding. I had announced publicly that I would participate in demonstration of lawyers on 27 September despite threats of being arrested. The police made arrangements to arrest me.

After a day at the police lock up we were moved to the Lahore Camp Jail and released on bail a few days later. Some of the country's

best lawyers, including Asma Jehanghir, chairperson of Pakistan's Human Rights Commission, volunteered to represent us.

While I was in Amsterdam in early March 2008, the police arrived at the LPP's office with a warrant to arrest me; They informed that the trial would begin the following day. Although unable to attend one court hearing, I went to the court directly upon arrival from Lahore airport.

Between 7 March and 28 March 2008, we were in court six times. The brick kiln workers were not from Lahore, but outlying areas. Despite the fact that three had to travel overnight, all made it to the court on time.

The police provided four eyewitnesses--all were from the police department. **Each took an oath on the Koran to speak the truth, and each lied.** I asked two of their witnesses "Why are you telling a lie to the court that we attacked you?" but they responded that they were compelled to do so to save their jobs.

Pointing out that I have been a political activist for thirty years and never before charged with terrorism, our lawyer, Rabia Bajwa, emphasized that this trial was a political case: All defendants participated in the lawyers' demonstration and none confronted the police using violence.

The presiding judge, Muqarab Khan, is known as a regime loyalist so our lawyer was quite worried. I was sure that we would be acquitted but while we were waiting for the decision. I told her, "If the judge announces any punishment at least in this political atmosphere it will not be accepted by any political party." But our fears were misplaced: the judge declared us not guilty and therefore free to go home.

I still face other charges; however the Pakistan People's Party-led government has declared that it will review all cases registered against political activists and advocates.

Nisar Shah refuses to sign the affidavit of obedience

Known political activists, advocates are not released despite the release of 3400 activists

November 2007

The government claimed yesterday that they have released 3400 political prisoners. Earlier they were denying that they had arrested so many. But most of the political leaders and known activists are not yet released.

Labour Party Pakistan chairperson Nisar Shah has refused a government offer to be released conditionally. He was asked to sign an affidavit declaring that he will not be involved in future political agitation. At the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi he was repeatedly offered an immediate release if he agreed. Officials told him that it was just a way to get out of jail. “NOBODY WILL HOLD YOU TO WHAT YOU SIGNED BECAUSE THEY WILL KNOW YOU SIGNED UNDER PRESSURE” The authorities tried to argue.

Some of the political activists and their supporters who were arrested signed such letters and were released immediately. But Nisar Shah, who was arrested on 7th November while leading a lawyers’ demonstration in Islamabad, has refused to sign any such letter of shame.

His younger brother Waheed Shah and Mumtaz Arzoo, Labour Party Pakistan organizer in Rawalpindi, met him on 20 November at the Adiala jail and later told reporters that he is maintaining high morale. Despite being in jail for the last 15 days, he has no regrets. He wants the lawyers to continue the movement until the end of the dictatorship. He has asked all LPP, trade unions, social and left activists to become part of the movement. Nisar Shah said that

he will never bow to the pressure of the military regime, nor ask them for any favours.

He is detained with five other lawyers in cell number two. They have all taken a similar position and refused to cooperate with the regime.

Aitezaz Ahsan, the president of Supreme Court Bar Association. is in the same jail but locked up in the next cell to theirs. He has refused to be admitted to a hospital, another way of isolating leaders from activists. He said "I will not leave the jail while others are here."

In Karachi, trade union leader Farid Awan, Ayub Quresshi, Liaqat Shah, National Workers Party senior vice president Yousaf Masti Khan, Hasil Bezenjo president National Party and other political leaders are still locked up on charges of sedition.

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Life Under Emergency Law & Afterwards

The Days in Underground *Day Two of Underground Life* 5 November 2007

Today is my second day in underground life. On 3 November 2007, when General Musharraf declared emergency and suspended the constitution, I was in Toba Tek Singh, a city around four hours from Lahore. This was to attend a meeting for the preparation of the Labour Party Pakistan fourth national conference. The conference was

scheduled to be held on 9/10/11 November in that city. The poster for the welcome of the delegates was printed and an invitation card to invite supporters to the open session of the conference was ready as well.

The meeting was nearly ending after four hours when I heard the news that emergency had been declared. I decided immediately to travel to Lahore. I was in contact with other party comrades by telephone and every one advised me not to go to my home. This was in the background of my three arrests in three months where I spent 23 days in jails and police stations. Labour Party Pakistan has become a target for the military regime because of active participation in the advocates' movement. Several comrades had been arrested during the movement.

As I arrived in Lahore, I heard that police had raided my house and are looking for me. My partner Shahnaz Iqbal told them that I am not home and will not come home because I know that I will be arrested. It was around 11.30pm when police came to my home. It was a good decision not to go home.

I was immediately given a few mobile phones SIMs from different private telephone companies and was advised not to use my regular mobile number in any case. "You must use a new number to contact comrades every day to avoid been traced" was the advice. The telecommunication system is so advanced that if I use my regular mobile, they will know where I am and I can be immediately arrested.

All the private television channels were off the air. It was only the official television that was broadcasting official propaganda. Even BBC and CNN were off the line as well. We were in the dark and did not know what was coming up. The government was using its dictatorial measures to silence any opposition voice being heard by the people of Pakistan on the news media. It was an unprecedented act of censorship.

After midnight, General Musharraf came on the official television to give the reasons for imposing the emergency, and that usual demagoguery of national interest and Pakistan First. He was trying to say that he has removed the chief justice of Supreme Court of

Pakistan because his decisions have promoted terrorism and suicidal attacks in Pakistan.

This was all nonsense. He had imposed the emergency rules to prolong his period in power, and to avoid any Supreme Court decision that might be against him. It was a dictatorial act by a dictator who had tried to convince the world that he is not a dictator. That he is in a transition period from dictatorship to democracy.

I was awake till 3am trying to listen to some international news on the radio.

The next day was Sunday and I went out to buy the newspapers. I had never been before in the area that I was staying in, and no one knew me. But the newspapers were not there yet even at 8am. I went back home and in the meantime, I turned on my regular mobile telephone, forgetting that I am underground. There was immediately a call from a friend and I replied to him. This was a mistake.

I was told by my friend to change my hiding place immediately, so that is what I did. This was my second place of hiding in the last 12 hours. Here I read all the papers. Then I went to a park, three kilometers away from my place of stay and spoke to some party comrades from my new telephone numbers and discussed the political situation. I called my family as well to check their morale. It was high as ever. My daughter and son asked me not to come home and said that they are ok.

A meeting by Joint Action Committee for Peoples Rights was called at the office of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan to discuss and chart out the strategy to oppose the dictatorial measures. The chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Asma Jehanghir was already detained at her house. When her office called me to ask the comrades to come to the meeting, I told them I would not be there and that if police see me they will immediately arrest me.

Khalid Malik, director Labour Education Foundation and Azra Shad chairperson Women Workers Help Line were among those who arrived in time for this meeting. So were around 70 others. Comrade

Maqsood Mojahid, Khaliq Shah and Bushra Khaliq were a little late for the meeting. As they arrived, they saw police everywhere around the HRCP office. They stopped and contacted those inside via phones to tell them to be ready for the arrests. *This may be the only time when being late paid off. This laziness of the three comrades saved them from being arrested.*

Police went inside and broke the doors. They asked the women to leave and the men to stay for arrests. The women refused. The women included Hina Jilani, Rubina Sahgal, Neelum Hussain, Syeda Deep and Azra Shad. They were all bundled to the nearest police station. This incident showed the intensity of the police brutality and the military regime's determination to silence any opposition voice. It was the first time since the establishment of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan office in 1986, that police entered the building. It was considered to be a safe place and that police would not dare to enter.

I heard within a few minutes from Bushra, secretary Women Workers Help Line of the arrests. She told me to be more careful.

In the evening, I made another mistake on my regular telephone. Bad habits die hard. So there was a call and I spoke to a journalist from a private television channel about the arrests. I immediately realized my mistake and left that place to stay at another one for the evening.

As I arrived at the new place, I received a call around 11.30 pm that police had entered my home and checked for me everywhere. My partner told me the next morning that police came with some intelligence officers in plain clothes. They ordered her to open the door otherwise they would break it in. When police entered my home, it was only my daughter Mashal Farooq (14), son Abdullah Farooq (7) and my partner Shahnaz at home. The police opened every room, cupboards, bathroom, and went to the rooftop. They were desperate to arrest me.

I was upset after hearing the news but did not call home for security reasons. It was hard but I was told by friends to be patient.

Today is Monday. We decided to bring out our weekly paper Workers Struggle in time and today was the last day of the paper production. It was decided that we would not work at the usual office of the paper; police might even come there. So we decided to bring the equipment, computers and printers and so on, to a new place for working together. I also told the comrades, I would come and write the main article for the paper.

There were five of us together working on the paper. I wrote the article and was on a new telephone line to hear about the wholesale arrests of the advocates all over the country. Over seven hundred had been arrested. Police entered the Lahore High Court building for the first time in the history and arrested the advocates after they were severely beaten up. It was writing a new history of police atrocities under a military dictatorship.

Khalid Malik and Azra Shad along with others were charged and sent to the same jail, Kot Lakhpat, where I had spent around ten days in June this year. They are lucky, the weather is not too hot. We discussed some more measures for tomorrow.

We decided to fight back against the military regime and to organize the movement. It was agreed that I will stay underground and will be active in organizing the movement until my arrest on the job. It was agreed that we will not accept the dictatorial measures and will organize the demonstrations and will ask comrades be ready for more arrests.

Here I am sitting in a net café at 6pm to write this and send it from here. I had to travel over 20 kilometers to reach my place for this evening.

Escaped by Seconds
The fourth day of underground life
7 November 2007

On the third day of my underground period, I escaped arrest by seconds. It was all because of my inexperience of living in a society that is full of high tech techniques to find a person.

I called my partner on 6 November morning from a new SIM to send me clothes at the place where I was staying. My family has given me a new car recently to travel in a little more comfort. I had been driving an 800cc Suzuki car for a long time. I am one of five brothers and we have three sisters. All the others decided to acknowledge my political activities by giving me a new Toyota Corolla. The car has a tracker as well. This was a security measure by the car insurance company. We have a car driver Allah Ditta who

brings our two children to school and drops Shahnaz at her office. He came to bring my clothes.

I had to go to a new place in Lahore to work with some other comrades. I did not realize that car had the tracker and asked the driver to drop me at a certain place from where I could take a public transport.

As Allah Ditta was driving, he told me that he had been stopped twice yesterday by police yesterday who asked my whereabouts. I was angry that he had not told me earlier. So I asked him to drive fast and drop me at the first available safe place. In the meantime, a police jeep was in front of us.. We slowed down causing traffic problems in the busy road. While this went on for few seconds, the police jeep tried to come alongside us. I asked Allah Ditta to drive fast and turn into right the next road. He did that. The police jeep could not follow us.

I asked him to drop me immediately. He stopped the car around a kilometer from the place where we had this encounter. As he stopped the car, a police van coming from the opposite direction stopped next to us. Because we had already stopped the car, I jumped out, and while the police were still stopping their van, I rushed myself into a running three wheeler and asked the driver to drive fast. He was surprised and refused to take me further. I got really offend and then all of a sudden, I put my finger on his back posing as revolver. I ordered him in the angriest voice, "drive you bastard or I kill you". Shivering, the three wheeler driver acted accordingly. There was a lot of rush and there were a lot of three wheelers around the place. So the police could not follow me. Reaching in front of the railway station, I asked him to stop and tried to give him Rupees twenty. He was still in shaking position and refused to accept. Laughingly, I told him to accept or I kill you. He had to accept.

Alla Ditta, my driver, told me later that the police van followed him for another three kilometers and then let him go when they could not find me.

In the afternoon, two plain clothes police officers came to the place I was staying for the night and enquired about me. I was not there. They had to leave in disbelief. The police had got hold of the

tracking company to find my whereabouts. Later on the day, they turned up at the place where Alla Ditta came to bring the cloths and picked me up. They were told that No Farooq Tariq is living here and we do not know, what you are talking about.

Five of us were together to work on the movement. We issued press releases from there about our participation in the movement and said that I would avoid arrest and would organize the movement from the underground. We faxed the press releases to all the news media after checking the telephone number that would appear on the fax. It was LPP number but we were not at LPP office.

We bought some more SIMs using anonymous names. I had to arrange a new place to stay. My friends are fantastic. They are all waiting when I call them to stay the night. I am not staying at LPP comrade's houses as they are already under surveillance. I had a good night and a good sleep when I arrived at my friend's place after traveling over one hour on a public bus.

Yesterday, the picture of one of the LPP comrades Rabia Shahzadi was on the front page of some papers in Lahore. She is an advocate and was pictured while throwing stones on the police.

She told me later on the telephone that, at one time, she was the only one fighting with police. She saved herself afterwards in a library when police entered to arrest over 700 advocates from the premises of the Lahore High Court. She was working full time for a short while for Progressive Youth Front, then later went to practice as an advocate.

Rabia Shahzadi went yesterday to different police stations to help the advocates who were in custody despite being printed on front page.

Yesterday, in Islamabad, the advocates' movement was also led by Nisar Shah advocate who is chairperson of LPP. He was in the forefront of the demonstration of advocates in Islamabad alongside other LPP comrades. He is not arrested yet. Although, on 5th November, he just escaped arrest from a demonstration in Rawalpindi.

At Karachi, LPP comrade Shakeel was dragged by police during a demonstration in front of Karachi Press Club on 5th November. This led some press photographers to intervene to save Shakeel. A fight started and that led to the arrest of several press photographers and political activists. It was mainly LPP comrades who had started the sloganeering in front of police while others were inside the press club building.

The police have raided the house of the secretary of LPP Punjab three times during the last two days but he is safe.

The plain clothes police came to the LPP office in Lahore and checked if I am there. They went to Good Books shop and remained there for some time on the pretext of buying books. They tried to ask about the whereabouts of the different comrades pretending that they are LPP supporters and want to join the party. Javed Bhatti, the comrade in charge of the Good Books is an experienced trade union comrade: he immediately realized who they are. He cleverly convinced them to buy Tariq Ali's book "Clash of Fundamentalisms" while offering them comradely hospitality of tea and good political talk. *The comrades told me the story after they left the office, proudly saying that they came to look for you but instead bought a book that may change their minds.*

Today is the morning of the fourth day and I am again writing this from a public net café and will open the mail for a few minutes to send this story and then leave the place.

Thanks to some comrades telling me more about the information technology and how to avoid arrest.

I will try to write every two days all the main happenings of underground life to share with the comrades in Pakistan and internationally

Not arrested yet but facing dangerous situation
Day Seven of Underground Life
10 November 2007

The seventh day passed without my arrest despite several attempts by the police. During the last three days, we were able to hold a meeting of the leading members of Labour Party Pakistan, gave interviews to private television channels and to a private team working for CNN. We were able to fax daily press statements and activity reports of LPP to most of the newspapers in Pakistan.

Unfortunately, Labour Party Pakistan chairperson Nisar Shah, also a lawyer, was arrested in Islamabad on 7 November along with some party activists after he led a demonstration of lawyers despite all the police threats.

Nisar Shah is an advocate in the High Court. He has had practices for 10 years in Karachi. After the devastating earthquake in October 2005, he moved for two years to Kashmir. He originally comes from Kashmir and his village was hard hit by the earthquake: some of his close relatives were among the dead.

He was asked by Labour Relief Campaign, a joint campaign set up by Labour Party Pakistan, Women Workers Help Line, Labour Education Foundation, Progressive Youth Front and National Trade Union Federation, to move back to Kashmir to look after the work of relief and reconstruction. He helped successfully build 100 homes within three months of the earthquake, the first to be completed with the help of Action Aid International and Shirkat Ghah, a radical women's NGO in Pakistan. He is in the process of building the first ever Kashmir labour center at Paniola where a good piece of land was donated by locals for the construction..

He was recently asked by LPP to be in Rawalpindi and Islamabad to help build the social and political movements. He had started working as an advocate in Islamabad to be closer to the advocates' movement. Here, he was arrested after a few days of public rebellion.

During the last three days of my underground life from 7 November till this morning I was able to stay three nights at a friend's house with utmost security measures. I was not on line from the house and did not made a single telephone contact from any number or SIM from the house. I was walking to a market around a kilometer away to make telephone contacts and to open my mail for few minutes.

I would turn on my Blackberry and download all the emails at this place within minutes and then off the air.

Immediately after the first encounter with the police on 6 November, when I was safe, I changed my name on the telephone line. I would call only very close comrades and friends from different SIMS in those days. This helped to secure me for the time being. On 8 November, while I was walking back to my place with my head covered with a cap and to some extent my face with a growing beard, suddenly a police van stopped next to me at a red traffic signal.

The police officer looked at my face with a full glance for a few seconds. I thought he was trying to recognize my face which he might have seen somewhere. I was afraid that he would get out and I planned to run in case he did. In the meantime, my face was just blank and I did not give him any impression of knowing him or of being afraid. The drama was over in 20 seconds and I walked on normally as if nothing had happened. As he moved away, I changed my route immediately and started running in the next street to move away to another street.

The area where I was staying was patrolled by the police all the time for many reasons. It was only twice a day that I left my place and walked to different net cafes for checking and writing emails. My friend's house had all the modern multi-media facilities, but we had agreed that I would not be on line from the house.

We had also chalked out an escape plan in case of police at the house. My dearest friend told me several ways to leave the house from back doors. But I suggested that if the police came from the back as well, I would court arrest without resistance. We also discussed that while escaping from the back door, I would try to leave the room as if no-one was living there.

I must tell you that I carry no bag, no clothes, wherever I go, I borrow clothes for the night from my friends and in the meantime, I get my clothes washed to wear again the next morning.

My friend knew that in many normal cases, whenever police come to a house and do not find the person they want to arrest, they take the house boss, the house maid or any adult apart from the women. My friend still took the risk and did not for a single moment try to make me aware that he was doing something extraordinary for me.

The good news within three days was the changing attitude of Benazir Bhutto to the present military regime. She has tried in exile to make a deal for a power sharing formula with military regime. But while in Pakistan, there was a suicidal attack on her rally leaving over 200 dead. There was a massive negative campaign by the chief minister of Punjab against Benazir Bhutto during the time. Then Musharraf announced the emergency on 3 November without her consent

apparently. Most of the arrested advocates were from her party. It was all too much. During the first three days, arrests were made of any PPP activists but it all changed with Benazir coming out openly against the military regime on emergency.

Her changing attitude was welcomed by us in press releases and I announced in the media that LPP will participate in the long March planned for 13 November by PPP from Lahore to Islamabad. Although we had severe criticism of her policies during the last months, we didn't go for the so-called conspiracies theories about Benazir and Musharraf being friends but hypocritically opposing each other to restore the respect of Benazir as a popular leader and the one who fights for democracy in any case.

Benazir's oppositional statements against the regime have meant arrests of hundreds of PPP activists and their houses raided all over. It meant Musharraf losing friends and the opposition growing.

On 9 November, when we would have been holding our fourth national conference, seven of us traveled hours to meet each other for a meeting at a safe place to chart out our future strategies. We faxed press releases, invited a television team working for several channels including CNN to interview us and film how we are working in underground. They had made contact with a friend to make a film of the activists working underground. They filmed our deserted but functioning office in the center of Lahore and then they came to us. We had to take extraordinary safety measures to bring them safely to the place where we were working. After the filming of our activities within a room and a chat with us and not of the area or the house, we decided to leave the place immediately to avoid any unpleasant incident. But these two were our trusted friends for long time.

Earlier in the day, I went to my home for 15 minutes after my partner Shahnaz told me that my son Abdullah is missing me very much. This was done after making sure that no police either in uniform or in plain clothes were around the place. I was here after seven days even though I had been in the same city. They were all happy and in absolutely high spirits. No complaints and no hard talk. My son asked me to stay home and when I explained what would happen, he still did

not agree. But my daughter Mashal told me it will be ok and that I could leave. Over all seven days, I spoke once a day with my partner on telephone briefly. I changed my clothes and left happily.

I have changed my appearance after I went to a hairdresser on 8th November after the chance meeting with a police officer. I had not much hair anyhow but now it is totally different. It does not make much difference to my appearance but I had to do something, maybe to satisfy myself alone.

There were some pleasant moments on the afternoon of 8th November when BBC and CNN were back to the air in Pakistan for the time being. I saw Lucy Dousset of the BBC broadcasting a live programme from Islamabad. She only comes to a country in a grave situation and her arrival is an indication of the seriousness of the situation. I was happy to see LPP chairperson chanting slogans in Islamabad before his arrest. They tried to interview Asma Jehanghir at her house where she is detained but they could only speak for a few moments before they were whisked away by police. I got a message from Asma yesterday that I must stay in underground in any case and organize the movement.

Happy to see today's papers with LPP news items welcoming the long march of PPP, condemning all the arrests, demanding an immediate release and solidarity with the striking media people. The LPP news printed in daily Waqat today is an appeal to all the trade unions, working class and peasantry to join the advocates' movement. It was the first of such appeals appearing in the main news media after the emergency was imposed. We have to rely on the print media for promoting our ideas rather than the electronic media which is off the air.

I also contacted some of the main trade union leaders to be involved in the campaign. Maybe some positive response will come. Some of the trade union leaders in Karachi have already been arrested. All trade unions, left parties and radical social movements in Karachi on 7th November condemned the imposition of emergency and decided to participate in the movement.

On 9th November, our left alliance Awami Jamhoori Tehreek meeting in Lahore could not agree on a day of action but agreed to mobilize the masses. One of our leading comrades attended the meeting and put forward the idea of a day of united action across Pakistan. Two of the main leaders and members of the central committee of AJT, Yousaf Masti Khan (National Workers Party) and Nisar Shah (Labour Party Pakistan) are already in jail. Police are raiding the houses of many AJT leaders. Bilal Minto, son of Abid Hassan Minto the president of National Workers Party and convener of AJT spent three days in jail before he was released alongside 70 other social activists. He is a teacher at an elite university Lahore University of Management and Sciences (LUMS). The arrest of the three radical teachers alongside with him sparked a movement of students at the university.

According to one press report, over 5000 have been arrested so far. There are not enough places in the jails to accommodate all the political prisoners. Temporary camps have been set up in different jails. Many private houses have been declared as sub jails to put the prisoners. The prisoners are not allowed visits by their relatives. No private food is allowed for these prisoners. As I had been a recent guest at different jails during the last three months, I could imagine very well the plight of these arrested ones. Our hearts are with them. Sacrifices for democracy and socialism will not go in vain. We will get rid of the military dictatorship soon; I am convinced by the recent developments. How? We do not know but we will do it through our mass movement and sacrifices.

***More raids on Labour Party Pakistan activists,
Left wing leaders still in jail
Day 10 of underground life
13 November 2007***

During the last three days the Lahore police have been very busy raiding the homes of LPP activists. The home of Afzal Soaraya, secretary of the Labour Party Punjab has been raided several times and the home of Maqsood Mujahid, a member of the LPP's national committee has also been the target of regular police visits. They have also stopped my vehicle several times while my children were being dropped at school.

Nisar Shah advocate, LPP chairperson, has been charged with the Anti-Terrorist Act among other charges. At present he is being held in Adiala Jail Rawalpindi along with other political prisoners.

Yousaf Masti Khan, senior vice president of the National Workers Party and central committee member of the AJT, a left-wing alliance, along with Hasil Bazinjo secretary of the National Party and several other trade union leaders are kept in the Karachi jail. Arrested at the Karachi Press Club after a demonstration of left-wing and trade union activists, they are facing treason charges.

Asma Jehangir, chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, remains under house detention at her Lahore residence. I informed her about the arrest of Nisar Shah. I got a message from her "OK, will pass this on. Keep underground. No bail this time." She represented me as at the Lahore Anti-Terrorist Court on 28 September 2007 and got me released on bail. Now releasing a person on bail has become more difficult.

It is estimated that over 5000 political activists are behind bars on 13 November, 10 days after the emergency was imposed. Lahore seems a deserted city; many ordinary people are totally against the actions of the military regime. I was told by some friends who were in the markets that there is weak business activity. Many shopkeepers were saying that it is time Musharraf must die, "There is no other alternative way to get rid of him" most were saying with utmost seriousness.

Yesterday I visited my home town, Toba Tek Singh. I was told there was no one left in sympathy with the military regime. Many told me that they respect the judges who refused to take the oath. I could not walk freely but I met some friends and family members.

The LPP is planning my election campaign for the national parliament from this town. I feel that it is a useless activity to take part in the election under an emergency, which is really martial law. The election was announced by General Musharraf on 11 November to pacify international criticism. It is a joke that the election will take place while all the opposition parties are underground or their activists in jail. It is a joke to hold elections in the presence of judges who have taken an oath of faithfulness to the military regime.

General Musharraf has asked his crony Election Commission to prepare for election before 8 of January 2008. They want to hold a

general election at a time when utmost repression is going on. The plan is very simple, "Opposition behind bars and government candidates with full freedom for an election campaign." This is a mockery of the whole democratic process.

Labour Party Pakistan has not yet taken a formal decision to boycott the proposed general elections but we are working to develop a common position in consultation with other left groups and parties. We are holding an emergency meeting of leading comrades in Lahore today, 13 November, and in consultation with others over the telephone before we take a formal decision.

While in Lahore yesterday, Benazir Bhutto went around the city to mobilize the party activists, determined to hold a rally today. General Musharraf placed her under house arrest with hundreds of police deployed around her residence and her phone lines cut. She refused to accept an eight-day detention order so it was pasted on the wall outside her house. This was done to show the world that they act according to procedures. But what about thousands who have been arrested without any warrant or detention order? There are still hundreds behind bars who have not yet been formally charged.

It is a welcome sign that Benazir is changing her political position in favour of democratic forces. I do not agree with Imran Khan, president of Tehreek Insaf (Justice Movement) who is still doubtful of Benazir's intention to oppose the military regime. He will ultimately come to the conclusion that the democratic forces have to unite on one platform to launch a more effective struggle against the military dictator.

General Musharraf seems more isolated. Some trade union leaders have issued press releases opposing General Musharraf's emergency. They include Khurshid Ahmad, president of the Pakistan Workers Confederation; Yousaf Baluch, chairman of the National Trade Union Federation, Choudry Gulzar Ahmad, secretary of the All Pakistan Trade Union Federation. While there is great anger among the working class, workers from different sectors have not yet demonstrated opposition to the regime.

I have learnt to some extent in living underground. I have not made any blunders that could give the state's oppressive machinery a chance to arrest me. I am not staying more than a night at any one friend's house. I am moving about frequently and have taken a new name to use when I to speak to comrades.

On 11 November night, I had a chance meeting with Lal Khan, the leader of Ted Grant's and Alan Woods's group in Pakistan. We had worked together in exile (1978-86) and started our Struggle Group together in The Netherlands. In 1991, we parted ways over the question of building a revolutionary party in Pakistan. Lal Khan's supporters wanted to remain in the Pakistan Peoples Party as entryists in order to build the group. I was in a minority arguing for a new independent political party. It was an unpleasant split in what had been a very committed group. But we had to face reality. While we have started building the Labour Party Pakistan they still remain part of the PPP.

After 16 years, his hair has grown some grey and he no longer has his youthfulness. We had a good, but brief, chat on the present political situation. He was of the view that the regime is very shaky and anything could happen. He recited one of my favorite poems, which I remember him reciting during the period of exile: "Peshawar Qatloo Tum Sapahi Naheen" ("Of you soldiers, you are not professional soldiers but professional killers"). He seemed happy to see me. And I was also, although I recognize we have different opinions on several questions. But we had no moment for regrets that evening. One of my close friends had invited me to share ideas with friends in a safe meeting place.

On 12 November, I wrote an article for our weekly paper, *Mazdoor Jeddjuh* (*Workers Struggle*), and faxed it to the office. The paper is still being printed regularly with our ideas and reports. In the past it has been closed by every successive military regime since it began in 1980, including the present Musharraf regime. Very young activists, mainly women, have taken the responsibility to prepare the paper right in the newspaper's office. These are very brave actions by young women activists.

After writing the article in the early morning, I had to travel four hours from Lahore to go to my home town. It was the second anniversary of my father's death and the family was all together. My brothers and sisters did not ask me to come but I decided to go and see all the family members. They are all supportive and helpful. I traveled back to Lahore last night to attend an important meeting today and share ideas with some comrades. Staying in a small city is quite dangerous and many know me well so I decided to leave the city as soon as possible.

Run For your Life
11 day in underground life
14 November 2007

On 14 November, around 4.45pm, I had just got off a public bus and gone into a net café. The owner told me that the internet speed was very low and there was no use in waiting. I went to another one, not far from the first place, but they had the same problem. I went back to the main road to fetch a bus or take a rickshaw; I had not made up my mind where to go.

A police van came along with several policemen sitting on the front and back seats. I saw them and tried to hide myself. The police constable sitting in the front seat and the driver were the ones who had arrested me from my home on 5 June 2007. I immediately recognized them as I ducked behind a rickshaw.

The constable recognized me as well but it took him a few more seconds to realize that it was me. I had a Peshawari cap on my head and a Punjabi Parna (a sort of long cotton shawl to cover your head and body) on my shoulder. I was also wearing new black sun glasses, not my usual ones.

The cap had just given to me by a comrade at a meeting that morning. As I was leaving the meeting place the comrade told me that my present disguise was insufficient and suggested a Peshawari cap. I said yes but I can not find one. He said there is one at my place and my father used it. He asked his father for permission to give it to me and the old man was quite happy to assist me.

As I went to the back of the rickshaws, I saw the constable asking the others to get out of the police van. Here I had to decide what to do. It took maybe part of a second to decide to run for my life. As I started running, the police constables jumped into their van to pursue me.

I turned to one street and then the next. While running into the first street available from the main road, I saw the police van coming. This was one of my fast running times, not my usual 12 kilometers an hour, but maybe over 20. I turned to the second and then the third streets. But I did not know the area very well. I did not know where to go. People in the street were watching with surprise and I was hoping to see an open door where I could jump inside but none was in sight. It was like a kilometer run.

I stopped for a second and suddenly there was a person saying to me "Hello Farooq, how are you?" I recognized him but his name did not come to my mind. I told him that I needed to get inside a house immediately as the police were after me. He did not hesitate for a second and it seemed like at the third house we went in. He closed the door immediately and asked me to sit in a room. The door of the house closed but it did not lock.

Aslam, (a fake name) had been teaching two children at that house. He had just finished his teaching and was leaving for his home. I knew him from the early '90s. He was an industrial worker and then went to study and completed his master's degree, a rare thing for a

worker to accomplish, and he was currently a regular professor in a college. He used to come to our study circles but I had lost contact with him and did not even remember his name when we met yesterday. He was happy to hide me for a while but worried what might happen if the owner came home. In the meantime, we heard the police van passing by. I was offered a glass of water.

He started teaching the two young students again, telling them that something had been missing from his lesson. We needed a few decisive minutes to pass by. After fifteen minutes, he told me that there was another comrade living in the area. He had built a house recently, and suggested we go there and then I could leave later. Aslam went out to see if police were still around. After being satisfied that they had left, we went to the house. The comrade was there fortunately but did not recognize me in my disguise. As soon as I took off my cap, he was pleased to see me; we had tea and a good chat at his place.

I asked him to arrange a three wheeler to take me to another place. I did not know where to go. Suddenly, I remembered a comrade opening a Tika shop in one part of Lahore and inviting me to be his guest. I decided to check his Tikas. I knew that no one else knew this place as he is a migrant worker just settling in Lahore. As I arrived, he immediately took me inside and at a place fixed for workers of the restaurant. He knew about my underground activities. I called two party comrades to arrange a rented motorbike for me and bring it to the restaurant. I told them the story and we had a good laugh with a very tasty mutton tikka and kababs.

Two years earlier, one of my closest friends from childhood, Mohammed Amjad told me in Amsterdam that I was going to die soon. He was always very straight and blunt with his friends. Amjad was one of the original “gang of four” who started our group, Struggle, in 1980 during our exile period. He opted to stay in Netherlands and was running a Pizzeria restaurant in Amsterdam. He had checked my blood pressure, it was 160 over 110. My weight was around 89 kilograms and my belly was getting out of control. He warned me to take care of my health. “How will the revolution come if you die early, not because God wants it, but because of your carelessness?”

I always respected him. I told him that I would do my best to change my body and albeit eating. He gave me a machine to check my blood pressure while back home, I bought an exercise machine and started running on it, gradually to six kilometers day, sometimes at a speed of 12 kilometers an hour. It changed my life. I would get up early. No dizzy days, I was active like I was in the '70s and '80s. I reduced my weight by seven kilograms and sustained it. Exercise has become part of my life, but with intervals of going to jail or other exceptional circumstances.

It paid off yesterday. Although I am 52 now I was running like a teenager. I was confident that they could not catch me. I was doing my regular exercise maybe for this day alone. I had successfully run for my life.

I am not afraid of being arrested. I have faced police several times and was arrested without running. Most of my arrests were calculated risks. But now my task is to organize the movement rather than going to jail as a defiant act by the LPP. Chairperson LPP, Nisar Shah is already in jail. His arrest photos appeared inside Pakistan and internationally. He was arrested while fighting with police and resisting. He kept the revolutionary traditions and culture of resistance set by LPP and other revolutionaries during the last eight years.

But I do not want to be arrested at the time set by police and the state. Our effort is to set the agenda ourselves. Let us see how far this goes on.

Earlier, on the day at 2pm, while on a bus I had been downloading emails on my blackberry, I got a call from Asharaf Chadar, the police officer in charge of the LPP office. He asked me what was being planned. We had issued a press release about the conference and the possibility of a demonstration inside the Club.

When I told him about the press conference, he told me point blank, "I will arrest every one coming to the demonstration." I had a good personal relationship with this police officer. He was the one who had arrested me from my office on 3 May and kept me at the police station for three days.

He had been injured on 5 November after the lawyers retaliated after a police tear gassing. I asked him if he was recovered and whether he was out of the hospital. I also told him that we do not want the police to beat us and we do not want to stone the police. He said “Yes I do not want that either but I am doing my job and it is not pleasant.” I asked him not to arrest anyone coming for the press conference and I guaranteed that there would not be a LLP demonstration that day. I wanted to make sure that we are in the media on the question of emergency and our strategies.

We agreed on this and I called the comrades to tell them that they can have a safe press conference today but not to go for the demonstration. The bus was running and I stopped my regular mobile and got off at the next bus stop. I could not trust any police officer. It was with this background that I wanted to check to see if everything had gone all right at the press conference and that the police officer kept his word. He did.

There was going to be a press conference at 4pm with the main leadership of the LLP at Lahore Press Club. I had called a comrade at 4.35 to check to see if everything was all right. She told me that there was good press present and no arrest made of people coming to the Club. The press conference was addressed by Abid Hasan Minto, convener of the Left Alliance.

An hour later I left the area in a rickshaw and decided to take no more public transportation. I have now made alternative arrangements for a more secure way to get around inside the city.

Earlier in the morning, some of the leading members of LPP met and had a political discussion on the current situation. It was agreed that the Musharraf dictatorship is becoming more and more isolated. He is been facing a lot of criticism at home and abroad. We agreed under such a repressive situation that the LPP will not take part in the coming elections but will be part of the movement to overthrow the regime. We agreed to welcome Benazir Bhutto’s pleasant U- turn against the military dictatorship and decided to contact PPP for a broader front alongside with left and progressive forces. We also agreed on some actions.

We congratulated the young female activists who produced two editions of our weekly paper, *Workers Struggle*, despite all the threats and intimidation.

After the arrest of Imran Khan and other political leaders during the day I have to be more careful to avoid arrest. The police are tailing all political activists.

Meeting Benazir Bhutto *14 day in underground life*

I got a call at 7pm on 16 November from Asma Jehanghir's office, "You must come tonight at 9pm to her place for an important meeting." The chairperson of the most prestigious social institution, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Asma Jehanghir was just released a day earlier from house detention. I had many second thoughts about going there: "The police must be there and so on." But then I decided to go in any case. I knew there must be something very important, which is why I had only been contacted two hours before the meeting.

While I was approaching Asma's residence, a constable stopped me and asked why I had come. If I been in a car, he might not have asked that question, but I was on a motorbike with my helmet on.

I told him to open up the gate and told him that I had been invited by Asma. He reluctantly opened the gate.

Inside there were all the signs of an important meeting. Private guards, HRCF staff and others were there for security. I was immediately told by Nadeem Anthony, Asma's public relations officer, that Benazir Bhutto was coming to meet with civil society activists.

Inside the meeting room were several close friends. Dr. Mehdi Hasan, a radical professor at a private university, Rabia Bajwa, the woman lawyer who has made headlines with her commitment to the movement, my colleague and journalism teacher from the 1970s, Hussain Naqi, Fareda Shaheed, Gulnar and Mumtaz Khawar of Shirkat Ghah, a radical women's NGO, Neelum Hussain from Seemorg, another women's NGO, journalist Abbas Rashid, Imtiaz Alam of South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA), Samina Rehman and Rashid Rehman, aunt and father of Timur Reham of Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party (CMKP) Afrasayb Khatak of Awami National Party, leaders of Punjab Union of Journalists and several more.

Asma seated us and I was among those sitting in the front row. She distributed a letter that was to be handed over to Benazir Bhutto entitled "road map for democratic transition." There was some discussion on the letter and the nine-point agenda was approved:

- 1- A democratic transition and a free and fair election are not possible under a government headed by General Musharraf. He must resign from all offices forthwith along with the caretaker administration he put in place.
- 2- The country must return to constitutional rule with the immediate lifting of the state of emergency and restoration of fundamental rights as a prerequisite.
- 3- The judiciary must be restored.
- 4- All curbs on the media must end.
- 5- All detainees including judges, lawyers, political activists, students and human rights defenders must be released and charges dropped.
- 6- Amendments made to the 1952 Army Act by Musharraf must be immediately withdrawn.

- 7- An independent and credible Election Commission must be constituted.
- 8- The spread of violence by non-state actors across the country has to be effectively countered by all possible legal means.
- 9- An independent commission must be formed to investigate widespread incidents of disappearances, torture and arbitrary detentions during the Musharraf period.

The letter also contained some analysis of the present situation. We offered additional suggestions about the conditions of the working class and the policies of the present regime but it was explained that we were only focusing on the present situation and do not want to present a long letter. The letter was unanimously accepted as from the civil society organizations and individuals.

Benazir Bhutto arrived and briefly spoke to the media beforehand. I was meeting her for the first time since 1998, when a similar but smaller group of civil society organizations met her in Islamabad. This was before she went into exile over the question of the Shariat Bill that the Nawaz Sharif government wanted to introduce into parliament. At that time we asked her to lend her support against the bill. That had been a good meeting; we also had a brief personal chat as she recognized me from my days of exile.

Benazir Bhutto was now an aging politician with some white hair; she looked tired. The meeting began with Asma explaining its purpose. Benazir Bhutto said she had come to listen rather to speak and wanted to know the opinion of civil society. During her brief remarks, she emphasized the formation of a new political alliance against the military regime. She also spoke about aspects of the 1973 constitution that need to be reviewed.

Benazir Bhutto told us about her contact with the leaders of different political parties and her difficulties in forming an immediate alliance. "I have talked for two hours with Nawaz Sharif, the former prime minister, yesterday and we agreed on many points" she said. She also spoke about her commitment to democracy and Pakistan. She referred to her talks with Musharraf and told us that these were for the purpose of a smooth transition to democracy but that Musharraf did not

abide by his promises; now there was no question of further talks with him.

She read the letter over and indicated that she agreed with most of the points but would send us a detailed reply. She made a categorical statement in favour of the restoration of judiciary: “They have shown a way forward and we must be with them. We cannot leave it to the lawyers but we must have a political movement as well.”

The session lasted nearly an hour and a half with questions, contributions and her reactions. It focused on policies but also on building a united movement.

I welcomed her road back to us, calling it a “detour” but one we liked. I mentioned that we were all unhappy and critical about her talks with the military regime. But we are happy that is over. She smiled on my using the word “detour.”

I told her about the sheer corruption under the present military government, the plight of the working class and peasantry, the price hikes, the land mafia, the Okara struggle of the peasants, the arrests and fight back, and the need for a broader alliance to fight the regime. I said we do not trust Washington and have to build a movement to overthrow this government. I gave her some figures about current prices and remarked that the issues of poverty, unemployment and labour conditions have not been her priorities. I pointed out that she has only reached the middle class, but the working class has to come forward.

They are not there because there is not much in her program for them.

She heard me patiently and said “Yes, I agree with you on the points you raise. The question of bread and butter has to be the main issue.” Several others also referred to these points.

I left as Benazir Bhutto was summing up so that I could meet Naheed Khan, her secretary and a former member of parliament. We knew each other in exile in the early 1980s and she was happy to see me again. While she invited me to the meeting of political parties on 21st November in Karachi, I told her that over 200 activists from the Left Alliance had been arrested, with still more in jail. While I was still talking to her, someone interrupted so that she could rush to Benazir

Bhutto, who was already in the car. The road outside was blocked by police vans there for Benazir Bhutto's security.

It seemed that most of the participants at the meeting had been reading my underground life stories. They asked me to avoid arrest and organize the fight. They joked about some of the narrow escapes I had written about in my stories. Several political activists and lawyers were released on bail yesterday but more arrests were made with some being released on bail. The most pleasant surprise came from the University of Punjab, where for the second day running, thousands of students demonstrated against the behaviour of Islami Jamiat Tulaba (Islamic Association of Students), which is linked to Jamaat-I-Islami. The IJT leadership kidnapped Imran Khan and then handed him over to the police. After 30 years of religious fundamentalist occupation there is rebellion on the campus. We discussed some possible measures for intervening in this movement.

More arrests and repression against journalists in Pakistan

The 18 Day Underground

The best thing that happened during the week was a defiant demonstration of women belonging to Labour Party Pakistan. On 19 November, 14 brave women went to the busiest area of Lahore demanding an immediate end of martial law in Pakistan.

They all were wearing black ribbons on their heads with slogans like No to Martial law, Release political prisoners and Solidarity with advocates and media.

One newspaper Daily Express Lahore reported on 20th November that LPP women waited for over 30 minutes for police but police did not turn up. The paper reported a disruption of the traffic on several roads because of the demonstration.

It was very well planned and every aspect went according to plan. A demonstration in Lahore on any road means an immediate arrest and baton charge.

We had discussed the plan of this demonstration with the title "Women against martial law". It was decided that only those women who are ready to be arrested should be at the demonstration. They would not be arrested peacefully but resistance would be offered to police. There will be no escape plan and no one would run away from the scene. The vehicles will only drop women at the place but will not be there to pick them up. This was to save the comrades who were driving them. No male comrade would accompany them. But we would make sure that the demonstration is well documented. It will be an all women show.

It was also agreed that the demonstration would last for half an hour, if police arrive then there will be resistance till the arrests. But we will not wait for the police after half an hour and would disperse afterwards.

It was discussed and agreed that two comrades will contact the media and will only disclose the place half an hour before the demonstration. We will not send any written invitation to the media. In the media, there is a large infiltration of intelligence agents and we did not want to take the risk that police should be there before our arrival. To our utmost surprise, no-one from the media informed the police and the media was there in large numbers even before the demonstrators arrived.

There was another demonstration of Tehreek Insaf of Imran Khan at the same time not far from this place. The TI had informed the media about their demonstration. A large number of police were there and as they arrived at Regal Chouck on main Mall Road, six of them were immediately arrested. Police did not expect another demonstration on the same time and they had no clue. The result was that it took time for police to arrive at the place.

I waited eagerly at a safe place with another comrade to hear the outcome of the demonstration away from the place of demonstration. I was called by a journalist after 10 minutes of the

demonstration telling me of the women's bravery and that there are intelligence agents here taking photographs of the demonstration, but there are no police yet. He was pleased that many people are stopping and are waving to the demonstrators in happiness. Another journalist told me later that they looked like Palestinian women fighting a repressive regime with utmost bravery.

A comrade in guise of a press photographer told me later that another journalist told him that 30 minutes had passed and the women were still chanting slogans. Are they waiting for police to be arrested? This comrade immediately realized the timing and pointed to the watch hinting to one leading comrade at the demonstration.

Bushra Khaliq and Azra Shad then declared to the press and to the people gathered at the place that we are leaving now, but will be back with more force, we are here to stay and fight, and we will not tolerate the military regime. We are working class women fighting a military regime and we have not much to lose but our chains.

No one was arrested much to our pleasant surprise. It was making a point without any losses. The demonstration has lifted morale for all the comrades. It has given an extraordinary courage to all our male comrades. They will be on the move and you will hear that too. It was the first show of defiance by a left group in Lahore where the level of repression is much greater than other parts of the country. The women led the way.

The same evening we had a meeting of leading comrades to discuss the political developments, the regime's tactics and the responses of other political parties and our future course of action.

Another action of honour has been taken by Awami Thereek, one component of our Left Alliance, the Awami Jamhoori Tehreek AJT (Peoples Democratic Movement). Till 21 November, over 300 activists of Awami Tehreek are being arrested in Sind province. They have a strategy of courting arrest at five district headquarters of Sind on the name of "fill the jails". Every day five activists of AT are presenting for arrest against the imposition of martial law. I had been several times in contact with the leadership of AT to discuss the outcome of the movement.

AT is mainly a Sind based radical organization and is led by Rasul Bukhsh Paleejo. Once in 2005, General Musharraf was asked by a journalist about his favorite politician in Pakistan. He named Rasul Bukhsh Paleejo as his favorite politician. Paleejo spent seven years in jail under General Zia Ul Haq dictatorship in the eighties. At the age of 79, he is still very active.

On 18 November, we also heard the news of the arrest of Akhtar Hussain the former president of Sind High Court and secretary general of National Workers Party, another component of AJT. He was picked up from his house in Karachi early in the morning. Comrade Nasir Mansoor lives nearby. He went to the police station where Akhtar Hussain was kept in custody and enquired about the situation and showed solidarity with him.

During the last four days, since I wrote "meeting Benazir Bhutto", I have been little more open than I did during the early 10 days of the martial law. But there is a terrible feeling of being watched all the times. I always look behind me to see who is coming.

Yesterday morning, I had to fax an article in Urdu to Daily Waqat (Time), a rising new bourgeoisie paper, who asked me to write about the movement of students in University of Punjab for its editorial pages, I went out to a shop to do this. While I was there faxing the seven pages, a police van came and stopped outside. I was terrified inside. The police van had not come for me but they went to lunch in the restaurant next door. But the presence of the police van made me very sensitive.

A lot of thoughts, why have they come, why are they not coming inside to arrest me, who has informed them, what are my mistakes, is it the mobile I am using, is it the motorbike I am traveling on, and so on. *I am becoming more of a psychological case. I am sometimes up to my neck. Being in underground to hide myself is an easy option but that is not what I am supposed to do. I am underground to play a role, to meet the comrades, contact them, talk to media if possible, motivate the contacts and party comrades, network with all our friends inside and outside, reply to emails, write*

*interviews, articles in Urdu and English etc for our weekly Mazdoor
Jeddojuhd and other papers.*

One of my foolish but lovely friends from Netherlands wrote me a mail in Dutch language and expected me to reply in the same language. I read and understood but the ability to write Dutch is no more. I had spent eight years in exile in Netherlands. I do not want to be in exile anymore.

The article on University of Punjab was printed today on 21st November, analyzing the recent revolt of students against the religious fundamentalist students who kidnapped Imran Khan and then handed him over to police. I exposed the fascist nature of these religious fundamentalists and wrote about the future of the movement. The article is already very well read and the purpose served. Daily Waqat has a circulation of over 40,000 at present. It was to make contact with the new leadership of the student uprising and that was done today. I had been a student of this University in the seventies. It was marvelous to see a few thousand students demonstrating against the religious fundamentalist control of the University.

Today, I was invited for an interview with private channel AAJ. This was about the restrictions on the media. Voice of America radio did an interview as well on telephone. I also gave an interview to Geo which is at present off air under the pressure of the military regime. Its transmission was broadcast from Dubai, but under the pressure of the military regime, the Dubai government asked GEO to close their transmission. Geo is the most popular private television channel in Pakistan. People are very angry and are speaking against the military regime.

The Punjab Union of Journalist (PUJ) invited me to a meeting this afternoon held at Lahore Press Club. This is the area where most of the demonstrations are taking place. A lot of police and intelligence agents are always around the building. A journalist comrade smuggled me inside safely. I think no one noticed as I went in. The meeting was to discuss yesterday's beating and arrest of journalists at Karachi.

On 20 November, the police in Karachi arrested over 180 journalists who wanted to take out a protest. They were severely beaten

up. A Karachi LPP leading comrade Sher Baz Khan along with several other comrades was with them. He was beaten up by police with the journalists and now has a fractured hand which will heal in weeks to come.

I refused initially to go to Lahore Press Club building for the meeting but then decided to take the risk. After two hours of meeting inside with food and tea, I had to climb a wall to leave the building by the back door. This escape route from the Press Club was not known to me but was known to most journalists and was known as “thief door”.

While I was still inside the meeting, the news came from Faisalabad that over 20 journalists are arrested and six of them seriously injured, while they were inside the Press Club building. Police used tear gas and a baton charge against the protesting journalists. After Karachi, the same repressive tactics were used in Faisalabad. We condemned the act and spoke to some journalists at Faisalabad to express our solidarity.

While I was at my place of stay for the evening, I got a call to speak at a press conference with Hafeez Khan, Imran Khan’s cousin, at Imran’s home. Imran Khan has been on hunger strike for the last three day at Dera Ghazi Khan Jail, around 14 hours from Lahore. He has not taken any food since and is in very weak health. We offered our full solidarity and promised to raise it everywhere, but I told them that I could not come for security reasons. We also informed the press to attend the press conference.

Public Again after 20 days of underground life

23 November 2007

Since the 23 November I have resumed my normal life. Previously I had avoided arrest by going underground for 20 days, and still managed to remain politically active.

Now most political prisoners have been released and police raids are rare. On 23 November, according to figures provided by the Musharraf dictatorship, there were only 37 political prisoners in different jails; the rest had been released. But the 37 include most of the central leaders of the lawyers' movement.

This is a temporary interval. The dictatorship has got what they wanted: to dispose of the independent judiciary before they announce the general elections and before they rendered a final decision about the legality of General Musharraf's election as president while still in uniform. In order to carry out their plan they had to arrest

over 10,000 political, social and trade union activists along with the rebellious lawyers.

The regime hand-picked judges to put onto the Supreme Court and issue a decision. But in doing so, the dictatorship even had to allow Nawaz Sharif, former prime minister of Pakistan, to return after seven years of exile. The Saudi Arabia kingdom played a mediation role but the details of the deal have yet to surface.

On 27 November, Labour Party Pakistan organized two events for the release of the political prisoners:

- At Karachi, over 60 LPP activists, a majority of whom were women, held a vigil in front of Karachi Press Club, demanding release of political prisoners and in solidarity with journalists who have also been repressed for their reporting. The photo of the vigil was printed in most of the main newspapers throughout Pakistan.
- On the same day in Lahore, over 200 activists held a protest rally at the Lahore Press Club and then at the office of GEO, the private television channel still off air by direct military order.

Surprisingly, there were no arrests at the either event. However in Lahore a large police contingent accompanied the demonstrators.

I could not participate in the Lahore demonstration as I was in Toba Tek Singh, my home town, filing nomination papers in order to contest in the parliamentary election. Although the Awami Jamhoori Tehreek, the left alliance, decided to boycott the elections the LPP wanted to make the boycott more effective by first filing the nomination papers, and having been accepted, then withdrawing.

We had done some homework for my election, including opening an office in one of the city's main areas. We organized several meetings, including one where over 150 women participated. We had also planned to hold the fourth national LPP conference in Toba Tek Singh but had to postpone it a second time.

After imposition of the emergency and replacing the independent judges, the Musharraf dictatorship announced that the general election would be held on 8 January 2008. So under the present repressive conditions the elections are just a farce.

For the national assembly constituency number 93, 12 candidates including myself have submitted papers to contest the elections. They are from Pakistan Peoples Party, Muslim League Nawaz , Muslim league Q, Mutihida Muslis Ammal (an alliance of religious parties), the Labour Party Pakistan and several independent candidates. Along with some of the senior leaders of the Left Alliance, I submitted my papers to the election officer, who is also the district judge. One qualification is that the candidate must be a university graduate, which disqualifies more than 99 percent of the Pakistani population.

While I was in Toba Tek Singh for two days I met with some of the local party activists and friends in order to chart the LPP strategy of boycotting the elections and found overwhelming agreement.

Today, I went to Lahore High Court to meet with some of the leaders of the lawyers' movement, including Sarfraz Cheema, the 32-year-old secretary of the Lahore High Court Bar Association. He spent 17 days in jail and was only released a few days earlier. He told me about his arrest on 5 November, when the police entered their office and destroyed both the computer and fax machine. Over 700 lawyers were arrested that day.

Later in the day, I spoke on the topic of poverty alleviation at a political seminar organized by Action Aid Pakistan in association with the Women Workers Help Line. Other speakers included Dr. Mubashar Hasan, former federal finance minister under Bhutto, Dr. Abdul Hai, Baluchi president of the National Party, Rabia Bajwa, a lawyer, Hasan Nasir, from the Revolutionary Democratic Workers Committee, a part of Left Alliance, and Bushra Khaliq, secretary, Women Workers Help Line. Welcomed by Fikre Zwadie, director of Action Aid Pakistan, all of us spoke out against the imposition of the emergency and for a boycott of the general elections. Dr. Mubashar

Hasan commented that because of the repressive nature of the regime I had been arrested on three separate occasions.

Let me take this occasion to thank all my friends and family in Lahore who helped me in this most difficult period of repression. Without their full-scale help, I would not be out of jail. I also want to thank LPP members and supporters for all the help they lent.

I must thank all those friends and supporters from overseas for reading my mails and some time commenting with encouraging words. They include John Pilger (UK), Pierre Rousset (France), Tariq Ali (UK), Eric Toussaint (Belgium), John Hunt (UK), Phil Frampton (UK), Peter Boyle (Australia), Sue Bolton (Australia), Merrilyn Treasure (Australia), Silla Vriesma (Netherlands), Elisabeth van Hoval (Netherlands), Lidy Nicpal (Philippines), Srilata Sawminathan (India), Roger Silverman (UK), John Reiman (USA), John Throne (USA), Richard Miller (USA), Ahmad Shawki (USA), Roland Ekbohm (Sweden), Jan Hodann (Sweden), Toni Usman (Norway), Farooq Sulehria (Sweden), Asim Ali Shah (UK), Michel Eggermont (Netherlands), Hans Van Heijningen (Netherlands), Joost Kircz (Netherlands), Saqlain Imam (UK), Pam Curry (Scotland), Comrade Shahid (USA), Sandeep Chachra (Thailand), John Samuel (Thailand), Rashid Titumir (Bangladesh), Taimur Rehman (UK), Frank Hazur (India), Kuldeep Kumar (India), Mohan Kumar (Australia), Tarek Fatah (Canada), Alvin Dizon (Philippines), Chetan Patel (UK), Toqeer Ahmad (Canada), Dianne Feeley (USA), Qamarulah (UAE), Linda Waldren and Ray (Australia), Kenji Kunitomi (Japan), Dr. Mark (Russia), Silvana (Italy) and many more I would like to mention, but I realize it is already a long list.

I also would like to thank all who have spread the news to other email lists, addresses and website. I have seen dozens of websites where these letters were posted during my underground time.

Good Books intends to publish the entire letters in a booklet along with the only picture of me taken during this period. It is of me in disguise, taken by close friends when I arrived to spend the night at their place.

I wrote these letters mixing my personal accounts with political points. Over the past week I have met many who read all of them and were happy to get a picture what was happening.

5

The Boycott Tactic

Labour Party Pakistan joins All Parties Democratic Movement

11 December 2007

The LPP announced yesterday that it is formally joining the APDM. The announcement was made by Mehmood Achakzai, APDM convener, on 10 December at a press conference held at Imran Khan's residence in Lahore. Mehmood Achakzai was elected as the new convener after Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) announced their participation in the general elections. The leadership of APDM, including the PMLN, had previously announced the boycott of the general elections. Mehmood Achakzai is the main leader of Pukhtoon Khawa Mili Awami Party, a nationalist party which has a mass base in Baluchistan.

A total of 25 political parties have agreed to reject and boycott the general elections to be held under Musharraf military dictatorship and decided to launch a mass movement to boycott the fraudulent elections. As the LPP's announcement of joining APDM was made, a spontaneous clapping, even by the journalists present, surprised every

one. Nisar Shah, newly elected LPP general secretary, and Farooq Tariq, LPP spokesperson, attended the proceedings of the APDM meeting. On 10 December, a new APDM is born. The APDM was originally established in July 2007 in London, motivated by Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN). It had in its fold the MMA, the religious fundamentalist party's alliance, PMLN, Imran Khan's Tehreek Insaaf and two parties from the AJT, the Left Alliance and all the nationalist parties from Baluchistan and NWFP. At the founding conference, the balance of power within the APDM favoured the religious and right-wing parties.

During the previous two meetings of APDM, it was decided unanimously to boycott general elections under Musharraf. However, on 9 December, the PMLN opted to contest the election as a "gesture of protest" and for the restoration of the judiciary. But the vast majority of political parties associated with APDM decided to continue to build the movement to overthrow the dictatorship and rejected participation in the elections. On 10 December, the majority of the religious parties and the PMLN were excluded from this alliance leaving only one major religious party, the Jamaat-I-Islami, in the APDM. A new radical leadership of APDM has been chosen. Looking at these developments, the LPP decided to join APDM. The balance of power has fundamentally shifted towards the radical nationalist parties. All nationalist parties with a massive vote bank in Baluchistan are in the main leadership of APDM. They include Akbar Bughti' Jamhoori Watan Party, Baluchistan National Movement of Akhtar Mangal, Pukhtoonkhawa Mili Awami Party of Mehmood Achakzai and National Party of Hai Baluch and Hasil Bazinjo. In the background of nationalist exploitation by the successive military dictatorships and civilian governments, it seems necessary that the progressive forces of Pakistan, particularly in Punjab, join these nationalists who have decided to fight the military dictatorship.

The Labour Party Pakistan had initially decided not to participate in the APDM because of the relationship of forces favouring the right wing. With the departure of the majority of religious parties from this broad based alliance against the military dictatorship, there is a decisive shift in favour of radical parties. The LPP is the third party

from the left alliance to join this front. The left Alliance will remain intact and continue to function to rally support for left ideas. The APDM has already announced a national conference on 18 December to be held in Islamabad. All those boycotting the general elections, including the trade unions, civil society organizations, lawyers and students, have been invited to this conference to chart out a plan of action.

Why Labour Party Pakistan joined the APDM

10 December 2007

On 10th December, the Labour Party Pakistan joined the All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM). On the same day, the right-wing Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz left the Alliance. Earlier, three religious parties, including the Jamiat Ulama Islam (JUI) of Fazaul Rehman, had left APDM in order to participate in the general election.

The APDM had decided to boycott the general elections, the only alliance to do so. This was the demand raised by those struggling against the Musharraf regime. They included the lawyers, teachers, students and generally civil society as a whole.

They correctly saw that the participation in these elections would legitimize the Musharraf dictatorship and its repressive measures. The only way to get rid of the dictatorship was to launch a mass movement alongside the present struggle of the militant lawyers' community.

While the so-called liberal and progressive parties like the Pakistan Peoples Party stabbed the lawyers' movement by going into secret and semi-open negotiations with the military dictatorship, the APDM supported a boycott strategy. After an initial detour, the PPP leadership has once again attempted to go along with the military dictatorship. Therefore, it has dropped its promise to support the

restoration of the judges. All the farcical actions of the Musharraf regime have been hailed as a step towards democracy.

The APDM is no longer a right-wing alliance as it was, when it formed in July 2007. At the time, it was dominated by religious fundamentalists, including all of the religious parties in the MMA and with the PMNL forming its central leadership.

The new APDM of December 10 is, in essence, a broad-based bourgeois alliance of radical nationalist, democratic, socialist and religious parties. Its program is a bourgeois democratic one and opposes the military dictatorship. In a neocolonial country totally dominated by imperialist forces and multinational companies, the opposition arises in various forms, and the APDM is such manifestation.

Socialists can not work in isolation, nor only in the realm of pure ideas. When there is severe military repression, socialists need to hear and act along with the most vocal opposition voices. In the present case, that means joining up with the lawyers, journalists and students. Today there is a drive for unity among all those opposing the military regime and this can cohere around the common strategy of boycotting the general election.

The Labour Party Pakistan has been in the forefront of working with the lawyers' movement from day one. It jumped into the movement with both feet. The first demonstration in favour of the lawyers held by any political party was the Labour Party Pakistan-called rally on 13 March.

But history is never totally black or white. It is true that support for the lawyers' movement came from both right and left parties, including Jamaat-I-Islami. We have marched together with different-colored flags. No-one, not even the most "Left" grouping ever objected to Jamaat-I-Islami's participation. Its participation could not change the character of the movement, which was progressive, liberal and secular.

It's true that APDM began with its total domination by right-wing forces. That's why the LPP did not participate, but this is not the case anymore.

Time is running fast with political developments in Pakistan. Now the main leadership in APDM has gone over to the nationalists, and not to the right-wing nationalists but those fighting national exploitation particularly in the Baluchistan, Sindh and Saraiki areas. These parties have been in the forefront of democratic struggle since Musharraf took over in 1999. They have not made any unholy alliances during those years but have successfully fought against the building of the controversial Kalabagh Dam. In fact, most of the missing persons in Pakistan are not religious fundamentalists but are from nationalist parties or from Baluchistan.

In the APDM today there is only one major religious party, the Jamaat-I-Islami. It is well organized, has a large infrastructure but does not dominate the alliance nor attempt to bring an Islamic agenda to the APDM platform.

With a balance of power fundamentally altered in favour of more radical parties and in the absence of any other broad-based platform opposing the regime, the APDM has become a pole of attraction. The main parties of the AJT have joined the APDM. In general, the LPP perspective is to strengthen the role of the left alliance. Joining the APDM has given the LPP and other left parties a chance to reach more closely the layers in the forefront of opposition to the military regime.

The issue of boycott or no boycott has resulted in an increasing split among the religious fundamentalist parties, which is good news. The MMA is split in practice; the struggle against the military regime will split these forces even further.

Joining APDM, our views

December 2007

Some of our very close friends and comrades like Tariq Fateh, Amjad Ayub, Timur Rehman and Qamarullah Choudry have raised doubts and objections to Labour Party Pakistan “joining hands with Jamaat-I-Islami and Tehreek Insaaf of Imran Khan” and also about the tactic of boycotting the general elections of 8 January 2008.

These comrades are all based overseas and that is why it is even more important for us to take their points more seriously. You can always see things better in a more open space than in the thick of the movement.

We welcome the criticism and expect from these friends and others that they keep a close eye on the policies, tactics, strategies and program of Labour Party Pakistan. This will help us in building the party on solid ground and with more clarity in class consciousness.

We would like present our views on this criticism.

Joining the APDM and boycotting the general elections are two different questions but are very much linked. You can not separate one from the other.

The appeal to boycott the general elections was made by the ever-radicalizing lawyers' and students' movement. The general election was called by General Musharraf after imposing emergency, amending the constitution in favor of dictatorial measures, arresting over 10,000 activists, curbing the media, suppressing the judiciary and arresting the top judges.

It was very clear to the most conscious, democratic and progressive sections that the call for general elections is not the road to democracy from dictatorship, but a road of a dictatorship legitimizing its dictatorial measures. It was clear to constitutional experts that the new dictatorial amendments to the constitution cannot simply be undone after the general elections. For that, the political parties need a two-thirds majority in parliament. Unlike the past, it is now up to the political parties in parliament to prove that they have a two-third majority. This was not the case after Zia Ul Haq and even under Musharraf in 2002. The dictator has learned lessons from the past.

From the very first day, the Pakistan Peoples Party of Benazir Bhutto and the Jamiat Ulemai Islam of Fazal Rehman welcomed the general elections called by Musharraf. At the time, they had to say that they would participate in the general election "as a protest." Benazir Bhutto does not feel any shame in changing her policies overnight because it fits with her opportunity to share power with the military dictatorship. She publicly claims that she is in a deal with the military regime.

Later, the Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif (PMLN) and the Awami National Party (ANP) of Asfand Yar Wali agreed to participate. These two were part of the APDM, but had to leave as the alliance stuck to its boycott strategy, and rightly so.

The ANP had been in talks with different sections of American imperialism and has welcomed Bush and Musharraf's military solution to curb the religious fundamentalism in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). It maintains a close relationship with the Karzai regime in Afghanistan. No wonder, the ANP opted to participate! They hope to share power with the regime and help American imperialism's "war on terror." The party is a strong

candidate for governing the NWFP after the elections. Gone is the memory of an earlier era, when the ANP were considered “progressives who were against imperialism.” What a blow to the ideas of Bacha Khan, ANP founder, who fought against British imperialism.

The boycott tactic sharpened contradictions within the MMA, the alliance of religious parties. That alliance has been torn from top to bottom, a fact we all must welcome. Although they all still claim to be part of MMA, there is no more unity among the religious fundamentalist forces as was the case in the past. It was through their unity that they gained public support.

However, with some religious and right-wing parties leaving APDM after 9 December, the nature of the APDM has been altered. It is no longer dominated by one or two religious fundamentalist parties.

The anti-globalization movement would have no problem if Muslims, even religious fundamentalists, join their demonstrations or become part of the organization against war and a neoliberal agenda. The whole problem starts when they control the movement and when they bring their political agenda of Islam into the movement.

The APDM is overwhelmingly dominated by the nationalist parties from Baluchistan and Sindh. These parties have fought against the national exploitation and military operations of General Musharraf and have successfully fought against the building the Kalabagh Dam. In fact, if the Baluchi nationalist parties decided to participate in the election, they would win provincial elections easily.

The APDM is not a religious parties’ alliance, or dominated by them. It is fighting for an end to the military dictatorship in Pakistan; its agenda is not an “Islamic revolution.” By boycotting the general elections, it sided with the most radical elements.

This is not the situation of 1977, where all the right-wing parties united against the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, paving the way for martial law under General Zia Ul Haq. In practice, there is a martial law already in Pakistan.

The situation is more like 1985, when elections were held under General Zia Ul Haq and the Movement of Restoration of

Democracy (MRD) boycotted the general elections. Arguing against the boycott tactics, the PPP leadership says that the 1985 boycott was a mistake and opened the field to other political forces. However, that is an incorrect assessment. Had the MRD taken part in the election, millions would not have welcomed Benazir Bhutto in April 1986. It was Benazir Bhutto who did not build a radical program in 1986 on the basis of the mass mobilization; rather she used it to share power under the influence of a section of military junta during the next two years before she came into power for the first time in 1988.

Those who won the non-parties-based elections in 1985 were not the by-product of just one election boycott but of the whole process of Islamization under Zia. American imperialism pumped in billions of dollars, and religious fundamentalist forces were in collaboration with military dictatorship and American imperialism.

At present in 2007, after eight years of military rule, Benazir Bhutto is once again on the same path. She is taking part in the election not to strengthen the democratic process but to share power with the military junta. Those religious forces participating in the elections want to do the same.

The notion that the elections will mobilize people to be part of a movement against the rigging of the election, and ultimately part of the movement to end military dictatorship, is an incorrect assessment. Those taking part in the elections have no such program for the mass movement. They have betrayed people again and again over the course of the last eight years.

The movement to end military dictatorship can be strengthened by a boycott, not by taking part in elections. That is why Labour Party Pakistan decided to join the APDM on the very day when the ANP, PMLN and Jamiat Ulemai Islam (JUI) departed. We are not strengthening the religious forces; on the contrary, we are paving the way for more splits. We are with the most radical elements of the movement, the lawyers, students and awakening civil society activists. We are where the movement is. There is no slogan of Nizam Mustafa (Islamic System) in this APDM, as was the case in 1977.

These are some thoughts to clarify our position. We welcome all criticism and doubts, and will share our views with friends. We hope that this process of debate continues in a more political and constructive way of helping each other.

**All Parties Democratic Movement and boycott
campaign**
19 December 2007

The All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) announced a nationwide “boycott campaign” at its first convention, held in Islamabad on 18 December. Mehmood Achakzai, APDM convener, chaired the convention, which was attended by activists from all the 22 associated political parties. Different committees were formed and public rallies planned for Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, Pashin, Khuzdar, Hyderabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan.

The convention called on the Pakistani masses to boycott the 8 January elections. There are now two main political camps in Pakistan: those participating in the elections and those advocating that the masses stay away from the polling stations.

As the first speaker, I delivered the motivational speech, which was well received. One of the main leaders of the lawyers’ movement, Wajihuddin, the former judge who did not take the oath under the Provisional Constitutional Ordinance and who ran against Pervez Musharraf, also addressed the convention.

Additional speakers included Abid Hassan Minto, convener, Awami Jamhoori Tehreek, from the Left Alliance, Asghar Khan of Tehreek Istiqlal, Jamaat-I-Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Imran Khan of Tehreek Insaaf, and Gulam Mustafa Khar, a former Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader. Leaders of the major Baluchistan parties informed the convention about the problems of national exploitation that have been carried out by the military dictatorship.

Withdrawing nomination paper from National Assembly Constituency Number 93 Toba Tek Singh

On the appeal of the Pakistan Bar Council not to run in the upcoming fraudulent general election, I withdrew my nomination papers from NA 93 Toba Tek Singh on the 15 December. With red and black flags flying, the rally beforehand was attended by more than 300 lawyers. They heard Abid Hasan Minto, invited by the Toba Bar Council, and then accompanied me to the election office. That same day 12 other lawyers' candidates also withdrew.

Just a day earlier, invited by the local bar council to Layya -- a district six hours' drive from Lahore -- I spoke to an enthusiastic crowd of more than 90 lawyers. Their main chant was "Go Musharraf Go." Afterward, three lawyers active in Labor Party Pakistan (LPP) withdrew their papers.

Spearheaded by the lawyers, and with the participation of left activists and civil society organizations throughout the country, the movement against Musharraf's dictatorship is gaining momentum. Students, too, are joining the movement. Today the *Daily Jang* political correspondent from Quetta reported that all the nationalist parties in Baluchistan are committed to boycotting the election; the election there will not mean much.

LPP General Secretary Nisar Shah and I are part of the APDM steering committee responsible for producing boycott literature and planning the campaign. The day following the convention, I wrote an Urdu leaflet that will be distributed across Pakistan. We plan to distribute a million copies. A second leaflet will be distributed on Eid (21 December) at the Lahore Badshahi Mosque. Lahore activists from the National Workers Party and the LPP are committed to distributing over 100,000 leaflets on Eid Day and the following three days.

**All Parties Democratic Movement boycott
campaign started**
24 December 2007

Thousands of people attended on 24 December, the first national rally held at Pesheen in Baluchistan. Mehmood Achakzai, convener APDM, declared that those contesting the elections are in the camp of General Musharraf, who is eager to legitimize his dictatorial actions through elections. People will boycott and side with the lawyers' movement, which has become a symbol of struggle, he declared.

More such national public meetings are planned at Quetta, Hyderabad, Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad during the next 10 days. The Punjab APDM met here today in Lahore to finalize the arrangements of the public meeting of 5 January to be held at Minar_I-Pakistan. The Karachi meeting will be held on 30 December at Nishter Park.

In Punjab, the APDM decided to set up boycott camps at all divisional headquarters and organize public meetings at all Punjab

cities until 5 January. It has also planned several corner public meetings
in Lahore.

It also decided to participate in all the lawyers' rallies and civil
society organizations whenever it is been called by them. It also
announced that members will join lawyers on 3 January as a day of
action for the boycott campaign.

Labour Party Pakistan is producing its own literature for the
campaign alongside the APDM. Posters, stickers and leaflets are being
printed to be distributed all over Pakistan.

Attending the APDM meeting *January 2008*

The All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) decided to
continue its policy of boycotting the elections and declared that the
murder of Benazir Bhutto proved that even the most popular leaders are
not safe under this military dictatorship. Held in Islamabad on 1
January, the meeting took place at Imran Khan's Tehreek Insaaf central
secretariat.

Chaired by Mehmood Achakzai, president of the
Pushtoonkhawa Mili Awami Party, it was attended by representatives
of Awami Tehreek (Rasul Bukhsh Paleejo), Jamaat-I-Islami (Qazi
Hussain Ahmad), National Workers Party (Abid Hasan Minto), Istiqlal
Party (Manzoor Gilani), Khaksaar Tehreek (Hameedu Din Mashriqi),
Saraiki National Party (Abdul Majeed Kanjoo), Tehreek Itehad
(Hameed Gul), Tehreek Insaaf (Hamid Khan), and myself from the
Labour Party Pakistan. (Because of a late flight from Quetta, Dr Abdul
Hai Baluch of the National Party arrived after the meeting; Imran Khan
of Tehreek Insaaf was unable to attend because of his father's
deteriorating health.)

Those who could not make to the meeting due to different reasons but are part of APDM include: Dr Qadir Magsi of Sind Taraqi Pasand Party, Habib Baluch of Baluchistan National Party, Azhar Jatoi of Sind Hari Tehreek, Gul Mohammed Jakhrani of Sind National Front, Rasul Bukhsh Thebo of Jay Sind Mahaz, Maulana Aziz Ullah Bhio of Sind Sagar Party, Maulana Abaidullah Bhutto of Jamiat Ulamai Sind, Qamar Bhatti of Jai Sind Qaum Parast Party, Ashique Mohammad of Saraiki Inqilab Party, Karim Ullah of Jai Saraiki Tehreek.

The APDM is an alliance of 21 Pakistani political parties. The meeting approved the inclusion of Tehreek Istiqlal of Asghar Khan, thus 22 parties are now members of the APDM.

The meeting began with an invitation to discuss the present situation and future strategy, with suggestions about how to build the APDM as the main opposition to General Musharraf's dictatorship.

Because it was the first meeting after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, everyone who spoke expressed sorrow and solidarity with the PPP and Bhutto family. But almost no one agreed with the PPP leadership's decision to participate in the general election. Under Musharraf, there cannot be an impartial investigation of the assassination, let alone the holding of free and fair elections.

Rasul Bukhsh Paleejo of Awami Tehreek emphasized the need to do away with routine politics and called for adopting revolutionary methods to expand the alliance's influence among the masses. "The elite class restricts itself to demand of democracy, but here we have no wheat flour (Atta) for several days in Hyderabad," he told the meeting. He underscored the need to address the real problems of the working class and ordinary people

Abid Minto of National Workers Party and convener Awami Jamhoori Tehreek (the left alliance) explained the constitutional position that makes it absolutely clear that even if PPP had a majority in the national parliament, it could not undo the dictatorial amendments in the constitution. "Another golden moment for getting rid of the Musharraf dictatorship has been lost because two major political parties have decided to participate in the general elections. It will provide time and space to legitimize the dictatorship," he predicted.

Hameed Gul spoke of a revolutionary situation erupting in near future. “We must get ready to face such a situation. The APDM must organize itself at all levels.”

Qazi Hussain Ahmad spoke of consistent struggle to get rid of the Musharraf dictatorship. “We must stick to our views of boycotting the general elections and launch the movement.”

I mentioned that the massive wave of sympathy and reaction to Benazir Bhutto’s assassination is not just for the PPP but against the Musharraf regime’s neoliberal agenda and its policies of supporting imperialist aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Hamid Khan spoke about the lawyers’ movement and explained how there are difficulties and different trends within it following the death of Benazir Bhutto. However, as a whole, the lawyers’ movement is united in demanding the restoration of the judiciary and an end to the military dictatorship.

Mehmood Achakzai said that we must prepare to march to Islamabad. He criticized Nawaz Sharif’s decision to participate in the next elections. “He has boycotted four times and then retreated.”

Everyone agreed to reaffirm the previous boycott and reschedule the proposed public rallies. (A follow-up meeting worked out the list of cities where major rallies would be held.) The meeting gave full support to the movement of lawyers, media, trade unions, civil society organizations and students and decided to step up solidarity with them. Several speakers congratulated the Baluchistan leadership on organizing three successful public meetings attended by thousands.

Over 100 media persons packed the briefing. Mehmood Achakzai, a member of the National Parliament and one of the most respected Baluchistan leaders, explained the position of the APDM. He summed up the mood of the meeting and explained the need to end the dictatorship.

After the meeting, Abid Hasan Minto, Manzoor Gilani and I had a brief visit with Asghar Khan, whose party just joined the APDM, and then we left for Lahore.

APDM enters Punjab

January 2008

The All Parties Democratic Movement's first public meeting at Gojranwala was a massive success. With over 10,000 participating, the overwhelming mood was to boycott the elections and continue until the overthrow of the Musharraf dictatorship. The public meeting was held at the famous Sheranwala Bagh, where most large public meetings are held.

The main speakers included Mehmood Achakzai, convener APDM, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, president of Jamaat-I-Islami, Imran Khan, president of Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf and me, representing the Labor Party Pakistan (LPP). Several local leaders of parties associated with the APDM also addressed the meeting. After holding successful boycott rallies in Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province, the APDM held its first public meeting in Punjab with a mood of rebellion against the military dictatorship.

The public meeting was held under strict security measures and a thorough search of every participant. This was the first mass public meeting after the 11 December suicidal attack on the police in

Lahore. Dozens of LPP activists carried the party's red flags and gave full-throated chants. They distributed Labour Party Pakistan stickers and leaflets, calling for a boycott of the election as well as for the release of the top judges and immediate restoration of the judiciary.

During my speech, I congratulated the peoples of Baluchistan and NWFP for very successful APDM rallies and said that by organizing this rally under very difficult circumstances, the people of Punjab are not far behind.

*“This is the most dishonest government the people of Pakistan have experienced. It is telling blatant lies all the time. **The Musharraf dictatorship has become the most hated dictatorship in the history of Pakistan. It has to go. It cannot survive for long. If the election takes place, it is not good news for Musharraf: if he rigs the elections, it is bad news, if he does not rig it, it is still not good news. Whatever happens, Musharraf will be a loser.**” The crowd responded with massive applause.*

When I demanded a minimum wage of Rupees 10,000, there was sustained clapping. I also demanded an end to privatization and the neoliberal agenda, and an end to the military operation in Baluchistan, NWFP, Swat and the tribal areas. I demanded an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and an end to the militarization of politics. Imran Khan took up the issue of minimum wages and seconded the proposal I made, pointing out that this is just a minimum, and has to be linked to rising costs. He said that the present fight is between those who want a democratic Pakistan free of exploitation and those who advocate sharing power with a military dictatorship. He said the PPP decision to take part in the general elections was a shameful act. It has given some breathing space to the military dictatorship.

Imran Khan went on to declare full solidarity with the lawyers' movement. He said that we would take part in the election only with an independent judiciary and an election commission. Qazi Hussain Ahmad also took up the issue of minimum wages, saying that we demand a wage equal to 10 grams of gold. He championed a democratic Islamic system, spoke against the rising price hikes and declared that we will continue to struggle to end the dictatorship.

Mehmood Achakzai, convener of the APDM, congratulated the people of Punjab for holding the mass rally. He said a democratic Pakistan with an independent judiciary is not only bad news for the Pakistani military generals but for all those so-called Islamic, undemocratic and repressive states. He pointed out that we do not need a Pakistan that is arresting judges and is consistently ruled by military generals. The meeting ended on a positive note after four hours. The next two mass rallies will be held in Faisalabad on 3 February and at Multan on 4 February.

Zero fervour for elections

5 February 2008

Thirteen days to go and yet there is no election excitement. There are no corner meetings and no large-scale public rallies. The main leadership of those participating in the elections plan no national tours. It could be the most colourless election in the history of Pakistan.

The reason is very simple. General Musharraf wanted it that way. Before announcing the date of the elections, he imposed martial law in the name of emergency. He arrested over 10,000 political activists and lawyers, removed all the top judges, amended the constitution and got himself elected as a “civilian” president. This was all part of the game. He wanted five more years.

General Musharraf’s allies had made all the arrangements to “win” the elections before the date was announced. They wanted a snap election where the opposition would have no time for mobilizing. It would be an election without an independent judiciary, with a dependent election commission, and with all the repression alive in the memories -- ideal circumstances for them to “win”.

Under pressure from American and British imperialism, Musharraf went ahead and made a deal with the Pakistan Peoples Party of late Benazir Bhutto. The deal was to share power *after* the elections. However, all those supporters of military rule, who had enjoyed power during his first eight years of power, were totally opposed. They put up all sort of hurdles.

After the imposition of emergency, the lawyers' movement rightly demanded that political parties boycott this fraudulent election. The majority agreed to this demand including the Muslim League (PMLN) of Nawaz Sharif, the former prime minister.

Benazir Bhutto's unfortunate assassination on 27 December 2007 shocked the whole world. The reaction in Pakistan was unprecedented. Musharraf would have been gone had the PPP leadership demanded Musharraf's immediate resignation.

But the PPP leadership wanted to cash in on the sympathy vote. They demanded no postponement of the elections. The proposed general elections for 8 January were postponed until 18 February 2008 by the Election Commission, enabling Musharraf's supporters to have a breathing space. They were the real victim of the mass reaction after Benazir Bhutto's death.

The aftershock of this mass reaction opened the lid of the economic crisis. There were shortages of everything, from wheat flour to electricity. The claim by Musharraf dictatorship of eight years of uninterrupted economic boom was shattered within few days. The long queues in front of public Utility Stores across Pakistan in order to buy some subsidized items revealed the real situation for the masses. One queue after another is unending.

The Musharraf-supported, misnamed Muslim League Quid Azam, PML (Q) became the PMLQ (Queue).

All this was happening with the background of a sustained movement of the lawyers, actively supported by civil society organizations and students since March 2007. With the announcement of a new date for general elections, the PPP responded with their intention to participate. But this did not deter the movement's demand

for an immediate restoration of the top judges. It was, and is, one of the most popular demands of the day. The movement grew day by day and the top leadership of the lawyers were not released as promised.

The economic shock, even worse than the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, then the boycott appeal of All Parties Democratic Movement and lawyers has resulted in a situation where there is zero election fervour.

Although the PPP will get a massive sympathy vote of all those going to the polls if the elections take place on 18 February, this will not change much. The PPP leadership has already made it clear that it is willing to work with Musharraf and it is opposed to the politics of confrontation. However, it seems that not many will go to the polls.

The new liberalist PPP has nothing to offer to the people of Pakistan. It believes in privatization and is very happy to go along the imperialist policies toward "terrorists." This is not at all a new turn for the PPP. It has gone along with these policies for long time. So is the case of Nawaz Sharif's PMLN. They both are willing to participate in the elections and share one common goal with Musharraf: a continuation of the present economic "reforms." The PPP and PMLN have no different economic plan than that of Musharraf's. Already, it is clear that some tough economic decisions lie ahead for the new government, whether it is the PPP or anyone else.

All those on the Left expecting an election where there is a mobilization of masses where they would have chance to work among them must be very disappointed so far. This is not an ordinary general election. This is a very calculated endeavour, a plan, a plot or a conspiracy on the part of the Musharraf dictatorship to continue over the next five years with the support of those "elected." This election is not resulting in a mobilization of the masses that could be used for the overthrow of the dictatorship afterwards. But there is growing movement that is already against the military dictatorship.

The Pakistan Peoples Party is paying the price of participating in the election, at least among the most active strata of society, the lawyers. The PPP once had the support of over 80% of Bar

Associations of Pakistan. However, the recent results of the Bar Association election showed an opposite trend.

Despite Benazir's sad death, at the Lahore Bar Association internal elections, the PPP-nominated president got less than 400 votes. The Awami Jamhoori Tehreek, (Left Alliance) presidential candidate received 1075 votes, losing by less than 100. The AJT is advocating a boycott of the general election. The brother of "Marxist" PPP former Member of Parliament (Ted Grant group) was defeated badly for Qasur Bar Association president. On the other hand, the Labour Party Pakistan Punjab chairperson received the maximum votes among the slate of ten executive members.

At the Multan High Court Bar Association meeting on 4 February in honour of the APDM leadership, an incident showed the lawyers' anger against those participating in the elections. When the president of the Bar tried to defend the decision of PPP, he was forced to stop his speech. Earlier, in another incident at Lahore University of Management (LUMS), the PPP and PMLN representatives had to face angry students and civil society activists who shouted for a total boycott of the fraudulent elections.

The election campaign so far is limited to newspaper and television advertisements, billboards, stickers, banners and posters. There are no local public meetings. Unlike the past, the corner temporary offices of the candidates receive no visitors and the offices look deserted. The PPP is counting on a sympathy vote and believes that it does not need any mass campaign, unlike the case in the past. Both the PPP and PMLN are already making complaints about massive vote rigging by Musharraf supporters.

The apathy, lack of concern, indifference, lethargy and droopiness among the masses toward this election is a phenomenon that deserves serious examination in detail. How many will go to the polls has to be seen but it is very clear from all the indicators that it will be the most hollow election in the history of Pakistan.

APDM and Baluchistan
Did the boycott strategy weaken the dictatorship?
February 2008

While not appreciating the principled boycott stand of APDM, which took its directive from the Pakistan Bar Council, several comrades have criticized the APDM strategy. They say that it has helped the PMLQ win additional seats in Baluchistan. They are enthralled by the victories of the PPP and PMLN, and thus forget aspects of the rigged election.

The hidden message is that the boycott strategy reinforced the Musharraf dictatorship. But this is nonsense.

These comrades base themselves on the fact that masses voted against the regime and the dictatorship was unable to alter the results. This is a half-truth. Yes, the masses spoke in very clear terms against the military dictatorship. However, there was also unprecedented rigging throughout the whole election process, and more so on Election Day. The fact that PPP and PMLN have reasonable votes does not mean that the elections were free and fair.

According to APDM sources in Baluchistan, on Election Day not more than eight percent went to the polls. Yet the percentage of voters is higher than during the 2002 elections, contrary to the fact that all Baluchi nationalist parties boycotted.

The various Baluchi nationalist parties won 32.62% of the votes in the 2002 general election but were only able to fetch three assembly seats. This happened because several nationalist parties were competing against each other.

From 2002-08, the Baluchi nationalist parties courageously contested army action in Baluchistan: the murder of Akbar Bugti and Bajaj Marri, the disappearance of thousands, the killing of hundreds and displacement of thousands more during military actions, the looting and plundering of Baluchistan national assets. They organized several successful Baluchistan strike actions.

All political indicators showed tremendous growth of nationalist forces. If they had taken part in the 2008 elections, they would have won an absolute majority. However, they took a principled position and demonstrated solidarity with the lawyers' movement.

In 2004 the MMA won 21.7 percent of the vote (6 national assembly seats); the PMLQ won 15.6 percent (2 seats). In the provincial assembly the PMLQ had a total of 26 seats and the MMA had 18 so the PMLQ and MMA formed the provincial government.

Now, after the APDM boycott, what is latest situation? Has the APDM strategy helped the PMLQ win more seats? Let us see the facts.

The PMLQ dropped from 26 to 17 provincial seats while the MMA has only seven. Their percentage for the 2008 elections is not yet known but it is very clear that it will never match what they obtained in 2002.

In fact, the best outcome of the APDM strategy was to break the MMA advance. It is now split from top to bottom. There were already many problems within the MMA coalition, but the turning point came over the question of participating or not in the election.

Had the APDM, with the leadership of nationalist parties, decided not to continue the boycott, it was doubtful that the Jamaat-Islami would maintain its boycott either. Thus the boycott strategy divided the religious fundamentalist forces. Comrades criticizing the LPP strategy ignore this very positive development.

The second positive result is that anti-Musharraf vote did not split from the two main parties. Yet the PMLQ won some seats because the PPP and PMLN ran against each other, each receiving high votes but insufficient to win the seat. These comrades would not criticize PPP and PMLN contesting each other and paving the way for a PMLQ victory.

If the Pakistan Peoples Party, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz, Mutihada Majlas Amal (MMA), Awami Jamhoori Tehreek and Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement (PONAM) had contested the elections on an anti-Musharraf agenda, it would have helped the PMLQ to win even more seats. The reason is very simple. It would have split the anti-Musharraf votes in several alliances, thus may be paving the way for pro-Musharraf forces to take advantages.

The boycott strategy built a tremendous pressure on the military regime and they were unable to rig the elections as they wanted. Thousands attended APDM election rallies in Baluchistan, demanding an immediate end to the military dictatorship.

The boycott strategy has not helped the military dictatorship as these comrades have tried to say but, on the contrary, weakened the military grip over the society. That is why a golden prospect to oust Musharraf dictatorship is posed.

The facts speak for themselves, and prove incorrect the assessment of these comrades.

The balance sheet

April 2008

The All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) boycotted the general elections on the appeal of the Pakistan Bar Council, arguing that “After the 3 November 2007 imposition of emergency, most of the top judges have been suspended and put under house arrest. The measure is mainly to stop the top judges from making a decision on General Musharraf’s election as president. This is also to ensure that the regime gets favourable results from the future general elections.”

The Pakistan Peoples Party was the first party to declare that it would not observe the boycott. Benazir Bhutto had returned to Pakistan and earlier held several rounds of talks with the military dictatorship about power sharing in a new government. Unlike past political tradition, these talks were open and regularly commented upon in the mainstream media.

Nawaz Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) initially joined the boycott camp. But Nawaz Sharif decided to take part in the election, offering the argument that he could not leave the field

open to other major parties, like the PPP and Awami National Party (ANP), which opted to participate.

The argument put forth by the PPP, ANP and PMLN in favor of participating was based on using the elections to get rid of the General Musharraf's military dictatorship. The APDM did not buy the argument but said election fraud would be used to legitimize the dictatorship. It argued that a mass movement alongside the lawyers' movement would rid the country of the dictatorship.

Both camps started their campaign, one arguing to boycott and other saying that the elections would be rigged. Dozens of press conferences and public statements by the PPP and PMLN leadership warned that the Musharraf regime was making plans to rig the elections. Benazir Bhutto constantly repeated this charge. For their part, the APDM, in their massive public rallies, threatened that if the regime stole the election, a mass movement will immediately respond.

Ten days before the elections, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated. With the Musharraf regime unable to provide the necessary security for the PPP's top leader, the massive outpouring crystallized as anti-Musharraf sentiment. Had the PPP leadership demanded Musharraf's immediate resignation, he would have had no option but to go.

However, the day following Benazir's assassination, Amin Fahim, senior vice chairperson of the PPP, announced that there will be no emotional decision about participating in the elections. Three days later, the PPP leadership announced their decision to participate. Their political agenda was to work alongside Musharraf, and share power with him, not to get rid of him. Their decision to go ahead with the election put water on the fire and worked to pacify the mood of rebellion.

Added to the political crisis following Benazir's assassination was an economic crisis. Combining one of the worse shortages of electricity, gas and wheat flour with a massive price hike on all food, and tripling the price of cooking oil, convinced many to oppose General Musharraf.

The APDM boycott appeal was met differently at different places. In Punjab and Sind, it did not have much effect and people went to the poll to defeat Musharraf. The MQM, using its neo-fascist tactics, was able to hold on in Karachi but the rest of Musharraf's supporters were defeated.

In Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), where religious fundamentalists have been in power since the 2002 elections, the boycott campaign was able to break up the MMA alliance of religious fundamentalists. Believed to be work of several intelligence agencies, the alliance initially appeared to some as an anti-imperialist platform, and thus gave false hope to many. But the alliance was shattered under the heat of boycott as the Jamaat-I-Islami (JI) joined the APDM. While the JUI of Fazal Rehman, closely associated with the Musharraf regime, wanted to take part in the elections, the JI was under immense pressure from the lawyers' movement and opted to boycott. The strategy of the religious fundamentalist forces having a united voice proved impossible to maintain.

Some commentators have concluded that the rejection of Musharraf regime in the general election indicates the boycott campaign was useless. Others argued that it paved the way for the victory of the PMLQ, Musharraf's supporters, in Baluchistan. Still others concluded that the boycott campaign aided Musharraf's supporters in the elections. All these arguments have been washed away with the political development unfolding in Pakistan today.

The boycott campaign helped the anti-Musharraf votes to be shared by only three political parties, the PPP, PMLN and ANP. The balance sheet of the boycott campaign reveals the PPP to be the power at the center. It shares power with other parties in all four provinces.

However, in Baluchistan it is forming a government of its own, with a lone opposition member. Yet it was here that the APDM was accused of bringing Musharraf supporters to power! Had the powerful nationalist parties of Baluchistan taken part in the elections, the PPP might have taken one or two seats at the most.

Who helps who is now very clear. The masses supported the PPP, PMLN and ANP against Musharraf and now the PPP leadership is

making alliances with the pro-Musharraf parties like MQM. This shows very clearly the future trend of politics.

Subsequent to the installation of the new government, Ahmad Mukhtar, the foreign minister and PPP leader, told a private television channel on 3 April 2008 that his party will work with Musharraf and announced that, in fact, Musharraf has introduced some good policies to curb the growing incidents of terrorism. By announcing some radical measures, restoring trade unions and student unions, upping the minimum wage to 6000 Rupees (\$100) a month and not saying a single word against Musharraf, the PPP leadership has signaled that “something can be done with Musharraf as well.” Still the government is committed to the same economic policies as General Musharraf. It praises the market economy and privatization, even appointing a privatization minister. Mr. Naveed Qamar, who was a minister of privatization from 1994-96, will take the job once more, this time claiming privatization will be carried out in a “transparent” process.

The PPP leadership is trying its best to save the life of a dying and isolated military dictatorship. But this is being done against the wishes of all who voted in the February elections. While the PPP leadership seems intent in organizing a safe transition for the military generals, officers and the managers of the economy who have played with the lives of millions, the people went to the polls with the slogan “Go Musharraf Go.”

And Musharraf will go. The lawyers’ movement is still strong and the restoration of the judges is the most popular demand. Meanwhile the PPP leadership is creating confusion and disillusionment even within their own ranks. One clear example is in Sind province where the government is composed of the PPP leadership and the MQM, a major party that went hand-in-hand with Musharraf for all eight years. The MQM was responsible for the murder of over 100 PPP and ANP workers on 12 May 2007, when they gave the order to open fire on those welcoming the chief justice. This MQM-PPP alliance will weaken the PPP.

Another central issue is the PPP government’s efforts to implement a neoliberal agenda and go along with American

imperialism and its goals in the region. The reality is that PPP is a feudal-dominated capitalist party that creates an illusion among the masses from time to time that it is a populist party. In the face of reality, illusions do not live long. It is high time to build a party of the working class with the politics of the working class. It is time to oppose those willing to go along with the agenda of American imperialism. It is time to unite the forces of the Left and organize the peasants and workers on a class basis. It is time to put on trial those whose corruption and desire for power have ruined the lives of the majority. It is time to stand for justice.

6

Building The LPP

Solidarity with immigrant workers

On May Day 2007 over two million will take part in protests and will boycott work.

30 April 2007

Labour Party Pakistan general secretary Farooq Tariq addressed a press conference in Lahore on 30 April to express solidarity with the migrant workers' movement in US and other countries.

Here is text of his press conference

We welcome the journalists to this press conference. On 1 May 2007, the migrant community in US has adopted a unique method to express their solidarity with the May Day martyrs of Chicago. Like 2006, May Day 2007 will be organized in solidarity with migrant

workers. After the “great American boycott 2006”, this year also migrant workers will not go to their jobs.

On May Day 2006, over two million workers participated in the Great boycott. On May Day 2007, migrant children will not go to school, those who work in businesses and factories will go to the demonstrations instead of their jobs. This May Day will be “a day without migrant workers”.

There are over 13 million migrant workers in US, almost half of them are without papers. The US administration terms them as illegal; we believe that there is no human being who is illegal.

Since 9/11, the US government has treated migrant workers very badly. Muslims are a special target for them. Their houses are raided and they are deported without justification. They are sent to Guantanamo Bay where they are confined without any legal help. Six planes are sent to Pakistan full of so-called illegal ones. On the name of legalization, new immigration rules are introduced which are a new shape of slavery.

Migrants without papers are asked to go back to their native countries to apply for a visa to return to US. This is sheer nonsense. After 9/11, over 80,000 registered with the US government only to find out that this was a trap to send them back..

The US government has lost the confidence of the migrant community. They are demonstrating alongside the labour movement in over 100 US cities. The main demand is that US imperialism should not intervene in other countries affairs, they should recall their forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, They should not control other countries by the economic dictations of IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organization. Labour Party Pakistan is in total solidarity with these demands and appeals to Pakistani working class to side with the migrant struggling community.

Labour Party Pakistan also demands that 1 May should be celebrated as a national holiday in US. On the eve of May Day, Labour Party Pakistan condemns the racial attitude of the Middle East, European and US government’s policies towards the migrant workers.

LPP demands that they be treated as equal citizens with equal wages and concessions to those of the local community at least. The workers must have a living wage.

The migrant community is worst off in Middle Eastern countries. In Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Dubai, they are treated like slaves. They have no basic human rights. There are no labour laws, and on the name of housing, they are forced to live in labour camps. Out of 800,000 population of Qatar, over 600,000 are migrant workers. They belong to Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Philippines.

In Qatar, a so-called “sponsorship” is used to bring in the workers. Any such labour is treated literally as slave of the sponsors. The workers cannot do anything without permission of the boss. Their passports are normally confiscated on arrival. They cannot go back to their country without permission which is seldom granted. In Qatar, for a 12 to 16 hour working day, the workers get around \$120 to 170 a month. Such workers normally come after they pay a huge amount to the agents. Their lives are mainly spent on paying the debts.

Then many “Double Shahs” come to loot their rest of their income. In Pakistan one “Double Shah” has been arrested recently who was living in Dubai. His main work was to double the amount of any one who deposited it with him. He collected billions of Rupees from many ordinary Pakistanis who deposited their amount with Double Shah in the hope that their money will be doubled in 70 days.

Before the Asian Games in 2006, the construction work was at its peak. This was done despite a tremendous heat wave, resulting in the deaths of 60 Nepalese workers. These workers had no proper safety equipment and worked day and night. The situation is no better for domestic workers, mostly young women, who face physical, emotional and sexual abuse at the hands of sponsors.

The labour situation in Dubai is even worse. Out of four million populations, only 800,000 are locals. Here, wages are not more than \$150 to \$190 a month. Here on average more than 10 workers die every month in construction and other industrial accidents. In United

Arab Emirates UAE, over 600 workers have died in such accidents,
over 90 percent in Dubai alone.

There is no legal protection for the domestic workers. The
migrant workers are considered as temporary workers thus are out of
the reach of labour laws. They face severe racial treatment. They do not
have any equal rights as locals. They are considered third rate citizens.
The so-called Muslim governments of Middle East are carrying out the
worst type of exploitation of the Muslim and workers from other
religions.

We demand an immediate end to this brutal racist treatment of
migrant workers. They must be treated as equals. The labour laws must
be extended to all the migrant workers. Sponsorship schemes should be
abolished and restrictions on migration be ended. Workers must be
considered as equal human beings and be treated humanly.

On May Day, we say

No to anti immigration legislation, and the criminalization of the
immigrant community,

No to militarization of the borders,

No to immigrant detentions and deportations,

Yes to citizenship for undocumented workers,

Yes to speedy family unifications,

Yes to civil rights,

Yes to living wages and labour rights

Release all the detainees at Guantanamo bay, close the detention center

No to occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, American troops go home,



Above: Karachi, National Trade Union Federation May Day 2008 rally. **Below:** A seminar was organised before the start of the rally with all the main leadership of the trade unions in Karachi including myself speaking.





Above: Lahore June 2008 LPP activists at Lahore Mall road protesting against price hike and neo liberal agenda.
Below: Part of the rally in Lahore.



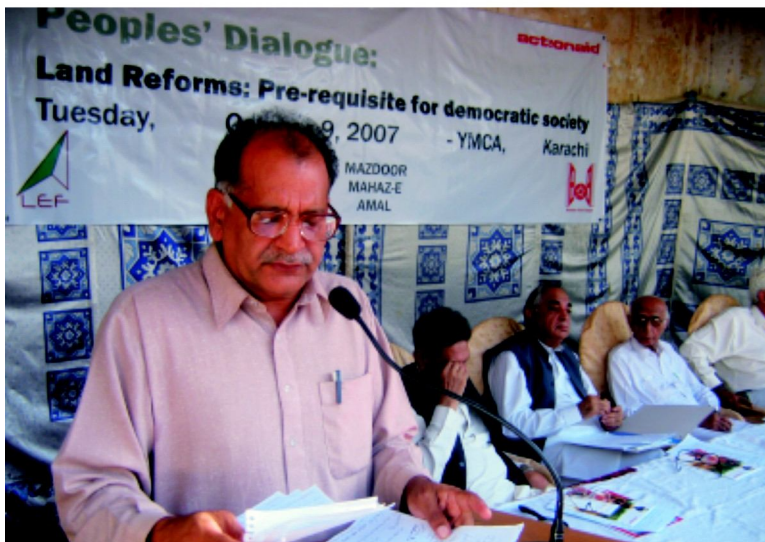


Above: June 2008, taking part in the lawyers long march from Karachi to Islamabad. **Below:** 17 July 2008 speaking at a mass rally of Pakistan telecommunication workers during their strike against privatisation.





Above: September 2007, Speaking at the first Nazir Abbasi Shaheed Socialist School in Karachi. **Below:** A group photo of the participants. **Extreme below:** Speaking at a seminar in Karachi on land reforms organised by Action Aid Pakistan.





Above: June rally was attended by hundreds of working class women, women has played an important role in fighting the Musharraf dictatorship during all eight years of his power period. **Below:** Interesting slogans were raised during the rally.





Above: *During my underground period, a photograph taken by a close friend as I arrived at their place after an escape by seconds, I had to run for my life when police tried to arrest me in this get up. My this get up gave me necessary few seconds to run away as police was confused initially.*



**May Day celebrated across Pakistan,
Thousands participated**
2 May 2007

Labour Party Pakistan and National Trade Union Federation
Pakistan celebrated May Day 2007 across Pakistan. Thousands of
activists participated along with other trade union organizations in
different demonstrations and rallies.

In Karachi, over 1000 attended a Labour Party Pakistan rally
from Regal Chock to Karachi Press Club. Police tried to stop the rally
but the demonstrators resisted and completed their march along the
already announced route. They were carrying hundreds of red flags.

In NWFP, a province governed by the religious fanatics, LPP
was able to organize the largest gathering of the town in Sawat. The
May Day public meeting was attended by over 600 mainly union
activists. Waving red flags in a province controlled by religious

fundamentalists was a great step forward in mobilizing the progressive forces.

In Qasur, a border city in Punjab, over 500 attended the rally organized by several trade unions supported by Labour Party Pakistan. Comrades Maqsood Mujahid and Choudry Imtiaz, national committee members, were the main speakers at the rally. This was the largest rally in the town.

In Lahore, National Trade Union Federation, an organization supported by LPP joined the main rally of Pakistan Workers Confederation. A day earlier, on 30 April, over 1500 packed one of the largest halls of Lahore, the Mehfil Theater. The event was organized by Women Workers Help Line and Labour Education Foundation jointly in connection with May Day. This was the largest indoor gathering in the country organized in relation to May Day.

In Faisalabad, over 500 attended a public meeting and a rally organized jointly by National Workers Party, Labour Party Pakistan and Labour Qaumi Movement.

In Karachi, National Trade Union Federation organized a public meeting in connection with May day attended by over 1200 trade union activists and leaders. They were addressed by leaders of various political parties including Labour Party Pakistan, Peoples Party and National Party.

In Toba Tek Singh, over 300 attended a public meeting and a rally addressed by leaders of National Workers Party and Labour Party Pakistan.

In Moro Sind, over 200 attended a LPP rally that made a round of the city center. A public meeting at Neshero Feroz district in Sind, LPP activists along with bhatta workers criticized the policies of the present government and demanded a living wage of Rupees 10,000 a month.

Similar meetings were organized in Nawab Shah, Mir Pur Khas and Sanghar by Labour Party Pakistan.

In all the meetings and rallies, the speakers expressed full solidarity with lawyers' movement for justice and democracy. They

criticized the policies of IMF, World Bank and WTO and asked workers to rise up against the neoliberal agenda. They spoke against the corruption of the military regime and vowed to fight for a democratic socialist Pakistan. They paid rich tribute to the martyrs of Chicago and criticized the government that has increased the working hours from 8 hours to 12 hours a day.

**Labour Party Pakistan fourth conference
concluded**
10 December 2007

- *New constitutional amendments to bring more internal democracy*
- *Nisar Shah elected as new general secretary*
- *More women comrades elected to National Committee*
- *A staggering \$ 9500 pledged by 126 delegates*
- *Over 450 attended the public seminar by AJT*

The Labour Party Pakistan's two day conference concluded here last night with a big bang. Despite the imposition of emergency, 126 delegates and 35 observers attended the two days moot at the auditorium of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in Lahore. The three sessions discussed the international, national and organizational perspectives with dozens of delegates participating in heated debates.

Delegates from all parts of Pakistan arrived on a short notice of only 8 days. Not all the elected delegates were able to come but all areas were represented in the conference.

The conference started with reading of several solidarity messages received for the occasion. They included messages from Fourth International (France), CPIML (India), Democratic Socialist Perspective DSP (Australia), Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF) France, CATDM (Belgium), Revolutionär Sozialistischer Bund (Germany), Labour Militant Voice (USA), Toni Usman (Norway), Afghan Labour Revolutionary Organisation (Afghanistan), Olof Palme International Center (Sweden), Cuban Communist Party (Cuba), Revolutionary Communist League LCR (France) Japan Revolutionary Communist League (JRCL), Freedom Socialist Party (USA), International Socialist organization (USA), VAK (India), NSSP (Sri Lanka), GFONT (Nepal) and several other individual messages.

The international sessions was mainly focused on Venezuela, the war on terror and its effect on Muslim countries, the imperialist globalization offences and fight back and climate change. Comrade Nasir Mansoor introduced the wide ranging discussion.

Several comrades made criticisms of some of the constitutional changes in Venezuela, but stressed the international impact of the revolution and the need to defend it. Comrades were of the view that it was heavy work in one go and the time was not sufficient to explain the essence of the reforms needed for the socialist transformation of the society. Comrades hailed Hugo Chavez for standing up to all the challenges and accepting the outcome in a democratic manner.

The discussion on national perspectives was mainly focused on the recent movement of advocates, students, social activists and media. It was agreed that the Musharraf regime is a weak dictatorship and has not been able to win support among the masses by his so-called growth in the economy. The emergency was imposed mainly to get rid of independent judiciary before calling the general elections. The delegates unanimously approved the LPP leadership's decision to boycott the fraudulent elections. It vowed to bring the working class

into the mainstream of the movement by mobilizing the trade union movement. Comrade Nisar Shah introduced the discussion on Pakistan and stressed the need to do everything for an end of the dictatorship. He has recently been released after 18 days in prison.

The organizational session saw a very lively discussion on different tactics of party building. It was agreed to help form a new student organization. The constitutional amendment to abolish the entire office bearer to a system of secretaries was approved unanimously. From now on, there will be five secretaries including Educational and Cultural secretary, Labour secretary, Women secretary, Peasant secretary and Youth secretary at national, provincial and district levels. A General secretary will coordinate the work and a Spokesperson of LPP at national level will be elected.

The constitutional amendment that no office bearer at national level be elected for more than two terms (four years) was narrowly accepted with a margin of 7 votes. After a heated debate, the amendment was put to vote and was accepted. The LPP new flag was unanimously accepted by the delegates. 12 designs for the new flag were presented to the delegates and a flag with a single white star in a red flag with Labour Party Pakistan written was unanimously accepted by the delegates.

A finance appeal was launched at the conference raising over 500,000 Rupees (US\$ 9500) in pledges. A women comrade who is leading a shanty town struggle for land rights announced Rupees 30,000 (\$500) surprising every one to their pleasure. This raised the morale of the delegates to pledge a record amount. Never ever was such an amount raised from one single event with only 126 delegates.

The conference elected a 21 person National committee in a secret ballot. 28 comrades contested. Out of seven contesting women comrades, six were elected. There were only two women comrades in the previous 21 person National Committee. Comrade Farooq Tariq topped the list by receiving 98 percent of the votes followed by a women comrade Nazli Javed. The 21 member National committee represents all parts of Pakistan.

In a brief meeting of National Committee, Nisar Shah was elected as new general secretary, Farooq Tariq as national spokesperson, Nazli Javed as Women secretary, Nasir Mansoor Labour secretary, Hakim Khan Bahadur as Peasant secretary, Amir Hussani as Education and Cultural secretary and Asim Akhud as Youth and Student affairs secretary. A seven member National Executive Committee was also elected by NC. Talat Rubab who was elected to national committee was confirmed as editor of *Weekly Mazdoor Jeddajuhd*. It was a unanimous decision to elect representatives for all these different posts.

The public seminar organized by the Awami Jamhoori Tehreek at the same place in the afternoon of 9th December, was attended by over 450 with many youth from different organizations. The speakers included the leaders of advocates' and student movement. Sarfraz Cheema, secretary Lahore High Court Bar Association, Mohammed Shah, president Lahore district Bar Association and Nisar Shah advocate, all three who had spent at least 18 days in jail' addressed the jam packed auditorium. Sunde Hurrain of Student Action Committee told the audience about the arrest of 15 students and advocates defending the home of the Lahore High Court judge who had refused to take oath under new PCO. "We have started a hunger strike camp and will continue till the release of the 15 comrades" Farooq Tariq stressed the need for a mass movement of advocates, students, trade unions, peasants, women's organizations and civil society as a whole to build an alternative to the big parties who are taking part in the elections. This election is a farce and we must not take part in it and must convince the masses to boycott the poll.

There was a lot of enthusiasm in the seminar, making it more like a public protest meeting. A lot of slogans were raised against the military dictatorship.

Workers strike back
Textile workers observe a 24 hour strike at Faisalabad
December 2007

Eighty percent of half a million textile workers in Faisalabad district observed a 24 hour strike on 3 December. The workers were demanding social protection and an end of the emergency in Pakistan. The strike was called by Labour Qaumi Movement (LQM), a textile and power looms' workers organization in the district. This is the first major strike of the textile workers in a decade.

Over 2000 workers assembled at Faisalabad Press Club building despite a blockade of the roads by the police. This was the same place where over 20 journalists were injured by a police baton charge a week before, when they tried to organize a demonstration for freedom of the press.

Today, workers' leaders including Mian Abdul Qayum, Aslam Meraj and Rana Tahir warned the workers of police brutalities and asked if there should be rally to the office of the district mayor. Workers decided unanimously to take part in the rally despite a threat of a baton charge and arrests.

The LQM leaders spoke against the military dictatorship and said the workers will not accept this emergency and will stand by the side of lawyers and journalists. They demanded an immediate end to the emergency and the release of all political prisoners. The meeting inside the Press Club went on for three hours.

Area leaders reported a complete strike at the workplaces with no power loom units functioning. Many were not able to reach the rallying point because of the police blockade.

Workers came to the rally in a very militant mood, but police officers changed their minds after listening to the determined speeches of the worker leaders. Perhaps they did not want to open a new front. The police did not intervene to stop the rally despite the fact that similar rallies by political activists had been brutally suppressed under the new emergency laws. It was an illegal rally with eye-to-eye contact with the police.

The rally took over the office of the mayor of Faisalabad and demanded the labour director come and talk to the LQM leaders. After talking, the director accepted the main demand and told the workers that social security cards would be issued to the workers within one week.

Faisalabad is Pakistan's third largest city, after Karachi and Lahore. It is known as the Manchester of Pakistan because the majority of textile factories are based here. There are over 12500 small power looms in the city. The majority employ contract labour and the bosses have not registered the workers at the social security department. Bosses have to pay no more than US\$2 a month to register a worker. In return, workers can have free health facilities at some hospitals and other concessions.

The textile industry is totally in private hands thus there were no unions at the factory level until the LQM started its work in 2004. The LQM has organized several demonstrations, rallies, hunger strike camps, occupations of labour departments and other militant actions during the last three years. The main LQM leader is a member of Labour Party Pakistan.

The union wrote letters to the Labour Department and to the bosses' association, demanding the social security registration of the industrial unit and its workers. The LQM warned that if their demands were not met, there would be a 24-hour strike.

The strike call for 3 of December was announced in beginning of November 2007, just before the announcement of the emergency on 3 November. Posters and stickers announcing the strike were printed with the help of Labour Education Foundation, a radical labour organization, and were fly-posted all over the city.

The LQM leadership organized a series of internal meetings with the workers to chart strike strategy. They decided that they would not force any unit to close down but would try to convince workers to strike voluntarily. A majority of the strike actions in the past were unsuccessful because of violence by the state or by workers themselves.

During the suppression of journalists and lawyers, the LQM leadership was closely associated with the movement and participated in all the demonstrations. This built solidarity among the workers of the city and enabled them to fight against the General Musharraf's military dictatorship.

Today, after the blockade and the Labour Director's announcement, the rally and strike ended on a positive note. However two workers were injured by bosses' gangsters. Following the rally the LQM leadership is busy registering a police case against the bosses.

The LQM leadership also put up two candidates to contest the general election that is to be held on 8th January. The two will contest as Labour Party Pakistan candidates. Labour Party Pakistan has decided in principle to boycott the general elections and demanded an immediate lifting of emergency and restoration of top judges. The two

candidates have filed the papers and their nomination papers have been accepted by the returning officer. The LPP has not finalized the date by which all of their candidates will take back their nomination papers in order to strengthen the opposition movement for the overthrow of the dictatorship.

***Labour Party Pakistan mourns Benazir's tragic
death
It's a murder of democracy. Musharraf should resign
A tragedy wrought by combination of dictatorship,
fundamentalism, imperialism***

28 December 2007

Lahore, 28 December: The Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) strongly condemns the tragic murder of Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister and chairperson Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

In a joint statement issued here on Friday, LPP spokesperson Farooq Tariq and National Secretary Nisar Shah said: 'It is not merely a murder of an individual but murder of democracy and political culture

in Pakistan'. They said it was the duty of the regime to provide Benazir Bhutto with fool-proof security.

'This is a failure on the part of the regime hence exposing the country to unprecedented danger and chaos. Therefore, we demand the immediate resignation of Pervez Musharraf and his cabinet,' they added.

They said the tragedy that struck Pakistan yesterday was yet another expression of the instability created in the region owing to the US presence in the region. 'Her brutal murder is a tragedy jointly wrought by religious fundamentalists, military dictatorships in Pakistan and the USA', they commented.

They said Al-Qaida had taken upon itself the responsibility for this horrendous crime according to media reports. 'But the Frankenstein of Al-Qaida would not have been ruling the roost in Pakistan had it not been created by the USA and pampered by military dictatorships in Pakistan', they said.

Urging the PPP workers restraint, they said LPP workers were with them in that hour of grief. 'We must turn this anger onto the culprits who plotted this dastardly murder'', they said. They appreciated Pakistan Muslim League (N)'s decision to boycott the elections due on January 8 and APDM decision to suspend the campaign recently launched for the boycott of elections.

Refusing to Break with Feudal Traditions

January 2008

The appointment of Benazir Bhutto's son, 19-year-old Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, as the new chair of Pakistan Peoples Party is an attempt to keep the feudal traditions of politics alive in South Asia. The PPP Central Executive Committee unanimously approved the appointment of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, in its 30 December meeting at Nuedero, Sindh.

According to Benazir Bhutto's will, read out in the meeting, Asif Zardari, her husband, was to be appointed as PPP chair in her absence. However, Asif Zardari suggested his son as the new chair.

19-year old Bilawal Bhutto, a student of Oxford University UK, is the eldest, and only, son of Benazir Bhutto's three children.

Born in Pakistan, he never lived here after he went to school.

Asif Zardari will be the PPP's co-chair. Thus the PPP is effectively again under the Bhutto family's total control.

The PPP leadership has retained the same feudal traditions over the last 40 years of existence. After Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged on 4 July 1979, his wife, Begum Nusrat Bhutto, took over. When Begum Bhutto wanted her son, Murtaza Bhutto, to take over in 1996, she was deposed by Benazir Bhutto, who became the life-long PPP chair. In September 1996, while Benazir Bhutto was still prime minister, Murtaza Bhutto was killed in a police encounter. Benazir Bhutto lost power a month later.

Rejecting the government version of the assassination, the PPP Executive Committee Meeting also decided to take part in the general election of 8 January 2008. This decision was reached despite a massive movement against the General Musharraf's military dictatorship. All over Pakistan, hundreds of thousands have demonstrated against the regime and all the banners and flags of the ruling Muslim League were torn apart. The movement forced the Muslim League (supporting Musharraf) into hiding.

At this moment, had the PPP leadership announced a boycott of the general elections and launched a movement to overthrow the military dictatorship the regime would have been forced to resign. Instead, the PPP leadership played on massive sympathy to build itself through elections to be held under the Musharraf regime. With this decision, the PPP leadership has let slip a precious moment of history, when a powerful mass movement could have gotten rid of the military's intervention.

With the appointment of Bilawal Bhutto, the PPP leadership refused to break with feudal tradition. It has retained the undemocratic

tradition of a few families controlling politics. The hereditary hegemony of politics has been preserved, thus strengthening feudalism.

**Labour Party Pakistan to help rebuild the
labour movement**
10 January 2008

The Labour Party Pakistan has decided to give maximum attention to rebuilding the labour movement. The two-day meeting of the LPP National Committee, held on 8-9 January in Karachi, reviewed

the situation of labour movement involvement from the viewpoint of both the democratic and class struggle.

For 2008, the LPP's top priority will be the trade unions and labour movement as a whole. It was decided to help create new unions where there are none. It will take up the question of trade union rights for every worker and launch a new movement to force the military regime to grant these rights in 28 different public sector institutions. These include clerical staff, health workers, Pakistan International Airlines workers, government printing press, ports, police and military.

The LPP decided to form new unions in areas where there are "yellow" unions (company unions) or no unions at all. It agreed to give maximum attention to the textile sector. Additionally, it agreed to help the public sector workers fight privatization, anti-trade union legislation and retrenchment and campaign for decent wages for all.

The NC meeting held an open political session for leading comrades in Karachi. It was agreed that Pakistan has become a very dangerous place for political activists. The rise of religious fundamentalists is mainly due to the war-mongering policies of Bush and Musharraf. Musharraf's policies are not helping to curb the activities of religious extremists but, on the contrary, fuel the situation. While expressing full solidarity with the PPP on the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, it disagreed with its political and economical priorities that match imperialism's aims.

The meeting reviewed the situation of the movement against the military dictatorship by lawyers, students, trade unions, civil society organizations and political activists. It agreed to boycott the elections and to maximize the boycott campaign and decided to review the LPP joining APDM after the general elections. It also agreed there were now more reasons to reject the fraudulent general elections under Musharraf's dictatorship.

The LPP NC decided to help build the Left unity and to make efforts to bring more groups and parties into Awami Jamhoori Tehreek: "The building of effective left unity is the only alternative to the politics of the capitalist and feudal political parties."

The NC formulated the political agenda of LPP for the year 2008. It agreed to organize study circles at all levels to promote socialist ideology in a concentrated form, holding socialist schools at provincial levels. It also planned team building training for National Committee members by professional consultants. The first such two-day training will be held in Lahore on 2-3 February 2008.

All members except one comrade attended the National Committee meeting. Nazli Javed and Nisar Shah chaired the meeting.

Abdullah Qureshi
Labour Party Pakistan leader killed in suicidal attack
19 January 2008

Comrade Abdullah Qureshi (72) is no longer with us. A member of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) provincial

committee of LPP, he died in a suicidal attack in Swat valley. He was one of the best known senior left leaders of the valley.

At present, a military operation is going on in the valley against religious fundamentalists and the majority of the valley is under the control of the religious fundamentalists. One of the main reasons given by the Musharraf dictatorship for the imposition of emergency on 3 November 2007 was to free the valley from the religious fanatics.

Abdullah Qureshi was the pioneer of left politics in the Swat valley. Born in 1935, he came from a working class background.. He organized the first organization "Swat Rorwali" (Swat goodwill) in early Fifties. The organization spoke out against the Nawab of Swat and he was arrested several times for organizing the people's resistance against the king. He was deported from the valley in the early Sixties and his nationality was revoked. The Nawab had the ultimate powers in the valley. He settled in Gojaranwala in Punjab. He was a close friend of Ajmal Khatak and Sikander Khan Khalil, the leaders of National Awami Party (NAP), the main left party in the Sixties.

In 1968, the Swat valley formally joined Pakistan. Comrade Abdullah Qureshi went back to Swat to organize NAP. He was elected as general secretary of the NAP Swat. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto banned the party in 1974 and Abdullah Qureshi was one of those arrested at the time. He then went on to join Awami National Party (ANP), the new name of the banned party. He was not satisfied with the ideological confusion within the party and wanted more socialism as part of the ANP. Later he joined Pakistan National Party of Bazinjo. He left left politics after the fall of Soviet Union. He was very disappointed by these developments.

He joined the Labour Party Pakistan after it organized the largest May Day rally in 2007. Over 600 had joined the rally and they all came from different small industrial units in the valley. The red flags all over the valley inspired him to take a decision to join the party even at this age.

During the second NWFP provincial conference in June 2007, he was elected as one of the 21 member of NWFP LPP Committee. Within the year, he had organized the party in different parts of the

valley and LPP became the main party of the Left in the valley. Most of the left activists joined the party after his decision to join the party.

Hakim Bahudar, Peasant secretary of the LPP and member of LPP national committee was a close friend of Abdullah Qureshi. He tells us more about Abdullah Qureshi “He had been very much inspired by LPP activities for some time. He was a regular reader of the Weekly Mazdoor Jeddojuhd (Workers Struggle). After his decision to join LPP, the party became very respected and prestigious in the entire valley. He was the symbol of left politics in the valley.”

Abdullah Qureshi was killed in the suicidal attack near the NangoLai area check post. He was passing through the area when the attacker blew himself up resulting in the killing of several other civilians. The incident happened on 9 December 2007. It was the day when the LPP fourth conference was taking place in Lahore. He and other delegates from the valley could not attend because of roadblocks and military operation. Only comrade Hakim Bahadur was able to escape from the valley to attend the conference organized on urgent basis.

The family did not want to disclose the news earlier because of fear of more attacks. They did not want the news to be public. The family fears that it was a targeted attack on him because of his left ideas. The family is investigating this aspect and has asked the LPP NWFP to help in the matter. Now, with the permission of the family, LPP is announcing his death with great pain.

Although comrade Abdullah Qureshi was only in the LPP for 16 months, his whole life was devoted to left ideas. He worked in the most difficult circumstances. He joined LPP while there was an upsurge of religious fundamentalist ideas in the valley. He did not care about his life but more of ideas.

The LPP will hold memorial meetings all over Pakistan for comrade Abdullah Qureshi.

Women Workers take to the roads
*Musharraf must go,
Where are the Missing persons?*
*Over 5000 attend Women Workers Help Line
and Labour Education Foundation 8 March IWD Rallies
8 March 2008*

The 8 March rallies at Murdan, Lahore and Karachi by Women Workers Help Line and Labour Education Foundation attracted over 5000. This was the largest mobilization of women across Pakistan by any other group on International Womens Day, 8 March 2008.

The Women Workers Help Line rally in Lahore took up the issue of missing persons; a score of relatives of missing persons told their unbelievable stories of state repression and disappearances on their loved ones. The rally started from Abbot Road and reached Shimla Pehari Lahore with deafening slogans of “Go Musharraf Go,” “No to military dictatorship, where are the mission persons?” “We want democracy.” “Revolution is the answer to every problem.” “Restore the top judges.”

Earlier, over 2500 attended a seminar by WWHL at Mehfil Theater, which was packed to capacity. They heard the representatives of the lawyers’ movement, missing persons, the Labour Party Pakistan and WWHL.

Special awards given to outstanding women in struggle included Nazli Javed, Riffat Maqsood, Rabia Bajwa, Fardous Butt, Azra Shad and Jamila Begum. Rabia Bajwa and Fardous Butt are the main leaders of the lawyers’ movement. Nazli Javed is secretary women of Labour Party Pakistan. Jamila Begum, Riffat Maqsood and Azra Shad are the main leaders of WWHL.

The Labour Education Foundation (LEF) Karachi rally started from Regal Chouck and ended at Karachi Press Club. Over 2400 participated in the historic rally. It raised slogans against the military dictatorship, for the restoration of judiciary, discrimination laws against women and minorities and for democracy. The two-hour rally was full of banners, posters and many were singing Faiz and other revolutionary poet songs. It was the largest mobilization of working women in the largest city of Pakistan. Organized with the support of Sangi, the rally ended with a great enthusiasm.

Later many hundreds attended a cultural evening with the cooperation of Action Aid Pakistan but many had to go back home because the capacity of the hall did not match the size of the participants.

At Murdan over 60 women participated in the seminar organized by Women Workers Help Line NWFP at the Labour Party Pakistan office. Speakers included Dr. Fahmida Zafar, Fouzia Israr, Naveeda, Farooq Ahmad, Rehana and Saeeda. They spoke against the primitive custom of buying and selling of women and against violence unleashed against women. They spoke about building a women's movement in the province with progressive ideas. "The economic, political and social equal rights for women is the only way forward for the progress of women" they told the seminar participants.

The three events made headlines across all the mainstream electronic and print media in Pakistan.

Workers take over Sugar Mill in Sindh

12 March 2008

Over 1600 workers from Alnoor Sugar Mill Moro, Sindh took over the factory today, 12 March 2008. They occupied all the administration departments and asked the General Manager (GM) to sit

on the floor. The GM is a retired army brigadier. He was then forced to tour around the factory under workers' control.

The occupation ended at 5pm when the local Member of Parliament from the Pakistan Peoples Party assured the workers that their demands would be met within next 48 hours.

Their union is called the Mahnatkash Labour Union Alnoor Sugar Mill. The union was recently registered after an interval of eight years of non-unionization of the factory. There was a terror of this GM at the factory. Most of the workers' concessions were taken under the military rule of General Musharraf. The demands by the union were ignored.

Workers were demanding the reinstatement of 28 workers. They were also demanding better wages, more house rent, wages at least equal to the government-recommended minimum wage and a bonus for all the workers.

It all started at 11am when the union leaders went to meet the GM at his office. The union asked him to accept their demands. He categorically refused. But he had misjudged the mood of the workers' leaders. The union leadership immediately took over the office and asked him to come with them to the union office. He was forced to accept the workers orders. At the union office, the retired army brigadier, who has ruled the factory by terror, was told to sit on the floor. His face was coloured and then some workers ripped his clothes as well.

He was then asked to go around the factory, where workers humiliated him as he had done with them. The GM begged the workers to spare him and said he would accept all the demands. It was a "Gherao" and occupation at the same time.

In the meantime, all the gates of the factory were closed and the local police could not enter the mill to rescue the GM. Private television channels broadcasted the news about the occupation of the mill.

The local MP from the PPP arrived at 4pm and asked the workers to let the GM go. He guaranteed that all the demands would be

met and told the workers that there would be no victimization or police case if they listened to him. On his guarantee, the workers handed over the factory and let the GM go.

This is the first incident of such kind. There is no civil government yet but the workers have come forward to have a go at those who had exploited them during military rule.

The Labour Party Pakistan has a strong group at Moro. Eight years ago, the factory was under the control of Labour Party Pakistan local leadership. They were thrown out of the factory and no LPP activists remain inside. However, the new union is working with the close relationship of local LPP leadership. Today after the occupation, the LPP leadership in Sindh gave full support to the union action.

**Labour Party Pakistan activist kidnapped and
wounded**
*Hospitalized in serious condition, having received two
bullets*
9 April 2008

Religious fundamentalists kidnapped and wounded Shah Khalid, younger brother of an LPP leader of NWFP in Arkot village, Matta Tehsil in Swat area. The incident happened at midnight between 7 and 8 April. The religious fundamentalists group came in police uniform to the house of one LPP leader Zahid Hussain, member provincial committee of LPP in North West Frontier Province.

When they found Zahid not at home, they took Shah Khalid, his younger brother with them. All seven of them were carrying sophisticated weapons including machine guns. After the incident, the community with their rifles followed them but the kidnappers disappeared.

After some time, someone called that Shah Khalid is at Nazar Abbas village, five kilometers away from the kidnapping scene. Twice bullets fired by the gang had hit him. They left him for dead. However, fortunately, he was able to contact his family after they left. Shah Khalid is now been hospitalized at Saïdo Sharif town in Swat in serious condition. Today's newspapers on 9 April, in NWFP carried all the details of the kidnapping and attack on the comrade.

The local police have registered the first investigation report (FIR) against unknown kidnappers.

Zahid Hussain comes from the same area and town where comrade Qureshi, another member of LPP provincial committee, had been killed in December 2007 in a suicidal attack. Zahid is a known left wing activist and had organized several meetings of LPP in the area with red flags flying. That includes a May Day rally in 2007 and a June 2007 public meeting where general secretary Labour Party Pakistan Nisar Ahmad Shah spoke. Over 350 attended this largest left meeting of the area.

The religious fundamentalists are now after our comrades in the area and they want to kill them all. An emergency meeting at Murdan LPP office attended by senior comrades of the area under chair of comrade Farooq Ahmad, condemned the attack and demanded the newly established government of Awami National Party to take serious notice of this incident. They demanded that the police should find the culprits and arrest the responsible persons. The meeting vowed to fight

back by strengthening the LPP in the province. “Red flags will fly despite all the bullets and kidnapping” comrade Farooq Ahmad told the meeting.

LPP general secretary Nisar Ahmad Shah has asked the party to take serious note of this incident and organize nationwide protest meetings against the kidnapping and attempted murder of Shah Khalid.

Peasants’ Conference demands land rights

17 April 2008

On 17 April 2008, the international day of peasants, a massive peasant conference in Okara gave two months to the government of

Pakistan Peoples Party to fulfill the promises made while in opposition. Held at Village 15/4L Military Farms, over 5000 participated in the conference organized by Anjuman Mozareen Punjab (AMP). Peasants came from all the districts while representatives of different peasant and political organizations came from all over Pakistan.

This was the first show of strength by the AMP after the formation of the new government. The peasants' leaders reminded the PPP government of promises of the late Benazir Bhutto, who declared the PPP will give ownership rights to the tenants working at Military Farms. They also brought to the fore the eight-page declaration by the Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), supporting the peasants' right to the land they cultivated for over 100 years.

Both promises were made by the two former prime ministers during the thick of the militant movement by the AMP in 2002-03 against the military efforts to take land from the peasants. The AMP resisted and seven peasants were killed, hundreds injured and over 100 false cases registered against the leaders of the movement. In retaliation, the AMP declared that they have paid enough and will pay no more. They refused to pay the 50% share of the crops that peasants have been paying for over 100 years to the Military Farms administration. Until today, rebellious peasants are successfully resisting and have taken over the land.

The peasants came with red flags flying over their tractors and trolleys and waved red flags in the processions; it was a non-stop demonstration for over two hours. Village after village came out to participate in this historic conference. The slogans were very militant, "We are hungry because the Army generals have looted everything, Ownership or death, Down with military dictatorship and long live peasants-workers unity."

Farooq Tariq, secretary of the Pakistan Peasant Rabita Committee and spokesperson for the Labour Party Pakistan, spoke about the courageous movement of the peasants. "If the right of ownership is not established within two months there will be a long march to Islamabad". He said that if we can fight the military dictatorship then we can also do the same with the civilian government

that does not fulfill their promises. The main conference speaker, Tariq explained the history of the peasants' international day and said the history is littered with the blood of peasants fighting for land rights.

Farooq Tariq said that unfortunately false cases are still registered while the civilian government is in power. He demanded an immediate withdrawal of all the false cases against the peasant leaders registered over the last eight years.

Mehr Abdul Sattar, general secretary AMP, reminded the new government about their promises of land rights and asked to fulfill it. He said we have given sacrifices and many of us have lost lives. However, it will not be in vain. He said that the local administration should stop taking orders from the military generals and start a new round of talks with us about how to proceed. He made it absolute clear that no one in Pakistan can take this land back from us; we will fight until the end. He said that we will organize the international day of peasants every year in Okara.

Asif Khan, chairman of Liberal Forum Pakistan, spoke about the need for a new agenda for the peasant and agriculture. He said we fully support the demands of the peasants for land ownership and also demanded an end to feudalism in Pakistan. "Go for land reform and give the land to the tillers; Pakistan has to grow" was his message.

Asim Sajad Akhtar, convener Peoples Rights Movement (PRM), said that peasants have the right to ownership of the land. "The AMP was the first organization to start the fight against the military dictatorship, now every one is against the military dictatorship. Peasants demand restoration of judges and an end to the military dictatorship" he said.

Nadeen Asharf, vice president of AMP, told the conference that a three-member federal cabinet committee was formed two day earlier to solve this issue. We welcome the formation of the committee and expect that the committee will decide in our favour. Asif Zardari, co-chairperson of the PPP, has asked for all the relevant documents that have been submitted to them through a PPP member of parliament. We will march to Islamabad if our demands are not met, he said.

The four-hour conference ended with great enthusiasm. It was broadcast live by different private television channels and dozens of journalists were present at the conference. To illustrate the interest of the media, a team of senior journalist traveled from Lahore to Okara, a distance of two hours, in order to cover the conference. Radio FM 103 had live broadcast reports on the conference.

Report" a correspondence of Weekly Mazdoor Jeddojuhd

The Labour Party Pakistan Punjab congress

21 April 2008

The LPP Punjab one-day congress, held at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan auditorium, concluded in Lahore on Sunday

20 April evening. Over 120 delegates from 13 different districts attended, with 112 delegates voting in a secret ballot for the new leadership slate.

Choudry Imtiaz Ahmad was elected general secretary, LPP Punjab. He is a leader of the lawyers' movement and had earlier served as chairperson LPP. The congress elected 21 members of LPP Punjab committee, including four women comrades. Riffat Maqsood, received the maximum number of votes while Choudry Imtiaz came in second highest.

Comrade Salim Jhakar, one of the leaders of Anjamaan Mozareen Punjab, a tenant organization fighting for land rights at Military Farms Okara, was named Peasant secretary. Comrade Aslam Meraj, a leader of the textile workers in Faisalabad where he has led several successful struggles of power loom workers was elected Labour secretary.

Riffat Maqsood, a member of the editorial board, *Weekly Mazdoor Jeddouhd*, and a leader of Women Workers Help Line was elected as secretary of women. Mian Anis became Education and Culture secretary while Azmat Jee was elected as Youth secretary.

Comrade Farooq Tariq outlined the political perspectives in the morning session. He said the party must show in practice that it goes hand in hand with the exploited nationalities of Pakistan. There must be an equal share of wealth for Baluchistan and the LPP demands an immediate recovery of all missing persons, who are mainly from Baluchistan. This means organizing demonstrations for the release of Baluchi leaders and activists, including Akhtar Mengal. Government brutality against the resisting nationalities must be condemned. After a lively discussion the participants agreed to build a workers' and peasants' movement to fight the continuation of a neoliberal agenda by the present PPP government.

Organizationally, the Labour Party Pakistan had decided to divide into two independent organizations in the Punjab province. The LPP Saraiki Waseeb congress will be held on 25 April 2008 at Multan.

Report: Khaliq Shah

**Labour Party Pakistan Saraiki Waseeb
Congress**
27 April 2008

The first day of the one day LPP Saraiki Waseeb Congress ended here in Multan on the evening of 25 April. The congress elected a 21-member LPP Saraiki committee. Over 120 activists and supporters attended the congress addressed by prominent political and trade union leaders from the area. Those who addressed the congress include Habib Ullah Shakir advocate, former president of Multan High Court Bar Association, Hamid Asghar Shaheen, president Saraikistan Qaumi Movement, Mansoor Karim, general secretary Pakistan Saraiki Party, Nafees Insari, former MPA Muslim League Nawaz, Dr. Imran Rafiq, general secretary Pakistan Medical Association, Tanvir Shah, president Professor and Lecturers Association Multan (PPLA), Suhail Khan advocate, Pakistan Trade Unions Defense campaign, Zuhra Sajad Zaidi advocate, coordinator NGO Forum South Punjab and member LPP.

Chaired by a panel of three comrades Suhail Javed, Qamar Sherazi and Nadia Nosheen, the congress was attended by delegates from 10 districts of Saraiki Waseeb.

Comrade Farooq Tariq, spokesperson LPP, introduced the discussion on the social, economic and political situation and the Saraiki area. He told the congress that this is an historic moment in our fight against national exploitation. LPP has become the first political party to recognize the issue and decided to divide Punjab into two independent organizations. After Lahore LPP Punjab Congress on 20 April, today's congress will be a trendsetter for other political parties.

Farooq Tariq gave several examples of negligence of the ruling class of Punjab towards this area. He said that most development has taken place in upper Punjab. Saraiki is a nation and so it must be recognized. He demanded that Punjab be divided into two provinces.

Comrade Suhail Javed was elected as General secretary. Other office bearers elected include Malik Azam Peasant secretary, Qamar Sherazi Cultural and Educational secretary, Rana Tahir Labour secretary and comrade Khatak as Youth secretary.

This was the fourth LPP provincial congress this month. The National Committee of Labour Party Pakistan had directed all areas to organize provincial congresses before 1 May 2008. With this congress, four 21 member provincial committees have been elected, while a 21

member National Committee was already elected at the LPP congress
in December 2007.

This new leadership of the LPP includes some of the main
activists of women's, peasants', workers', advocates' and youth
movements that are going on in Pakistan in different areas. By holding
provincial congresses, the LPP has laid down a solid basis for the future
growth of the party and the movements.

Report by: Nusheen

Resistance of the left builds in Pakistan
Pakistan New government – old faces
3 June 2008

Elections in Pakistan last February put an end to the military dictatorship of General Pervez Musharraf - but not, it seems, to its policies. The new coalition government of radical Islamists and bourgeois nationalists maintains close relations with the military, is continuing a neoliberal agenda, and still supports the alliance with US imperialism.

Farooq Tariq of the Labour Party Pakistan told a recent Socialist Resistance Forum in London that this turbulent period had nonetheless opened up possibilities for the left in Pakistan. The socialist Labour Party Pakistan (LPP), with 3000 members across the country, has led high-profile campaigns on land rights, privatisation, women's rights, child labour and other issues affecting workers and the poor.

It boycotted the elections of 18 February because it opposes neoliberalism and any alliance with pro-military parties. Farooq Tariq was asked how much had really changed in Pakistan since the elections.

"This is a new government with old faces," he replied.

"Musharraf had to withdraw martial law and take off his military uniform but he is still in a powerful position as president. The three capitalist parties in the coalition government are the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) of the murdered Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz and the Awami National Party.

"The present so-called democratic government is discrediting itself, happy to bring in the most corrupt people to the top jobs," Farooq Tariq explained. These people collaborate with the generals who continue to dominate all aspects of economic life.

The military still owns 12% of all agricultural land and its other interests include huge holdings in dairy farms, fertilizer factories, banks, construction and insurance. The government is even trying to reinstate the judges who supported the military in last year's movement to bring down Musharraf.

Neoliberalism is alive and well with privatisation the cornerstone of the government's programme. The price of flour has doubled, petrol has increased by 20% and rail fares have shot up by

15%. The PPP has talked of raising the minimum wage but has taken no steps to propose a new law on this to parliament. The majority of workers, meanwhile, are not even receiving the original minimum.

Benazir Bhutto's assassination in December 2007 brought the state to a complete standstill for five days. Such was the chaos and public outrage, said Farooq Tariq, that Bhutto's party could have successfully demanded Musharraf's resignation there and then. "But before her death Benazir had agreed to work with Musharraf".

There has been no let-up in the repression of oppositionists (Farooq Tariq himself has been imprisoned five times in the last year) and thousands of those who disappeared during the military dictatorship - most of them religious fundamentalists - are still missing. Yet because of the massive anti-Musharraf consciousness before the election and the emergence of a young radicalised middle class Farooq Tariq reported 'all left parties are growing'.

The Labour Party Pakistan initiated the peasant movement that started in the Punjab in 2001 after the military tried to take over 68,000 acres for agribusiness. Against the background of a small and weak trade union movement it is trying to nurture a radical trade union formation in Karachi and Lahore.

The party's strongest support comes from the North West Frontier Province and from Baluchistan in the south west where the massive exploitation of gas has been threatening people's land and livelihoods. The LPP has also recruited over 100 new members from Pakistan's militant movement of lawyers.

The anti-Musharraf movement sprang up last year after Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudry defied Musharraf, and after many judges and lawyers who protested at the repression were themselves arrested and beaten. The LPP sees scope for building a mass party of the left. It is calling for new elections under the auspices of an independent electoral commission and with proportional representation. That would give left parties a chance to be represented in parliament, Farooq Tariq explained.

“Right now, he argued, “anything can happen. I don’t think Musharraf can survive but other parties may back the military as they have in the past and there is the possibility of the military retaking power... That’s why we have to strengthen the mass movement and build an alternative.”

Online 3 June 2008

- <http://socialistresistance.org/>

Trade Unions under attack in Pakistan
We have no option but to fight back
19 May 2008

Trade union activists in several cities are facing arrest, torture and kidnapping by the bosses and state agencies. Workers are fighting back against these attacks with utmost sacrifice. The announcement by the Pakistan Peoples Party government lifting restrictions on trade union activity has brought a new wave of unionization in many private industries.

The bosses are not used to it. They have made tremendous profits under General Perez Musharraf's eight years of dictatorship. Although he is still "president" there is some breathing space. Wherever workers have tried to form new unions, bosses have tried their best to intimidate the union activists with false charges, arrests, torture and kidnapping. The Pakistan People Party government has yet to respond to these abuses by the bosses.

Along with several trade union leaders, I addressed a press conference on 18 May at the Lahore Press Club to put the spotlight on these abuses. Malik Tahir of New Khan Metro Bus Workers and Staff Haqooq Union Lahore was kidnapped and tortured on 16 May in Lahore by the bosses [did the bosses do it? Were they representatives of the bosses known to Tahir? Unclear.] of the private bus company.

He showed several wounds on his body to the media.

His crime? Apparently it was attending a press conference and demonstration of the union condemning the sacking of 80 New Khan Bus Company drivers and conductors. After the union was registered on 6 May 2008 by the Labour Department, over 80 members of the union were terminated, including its leadership.

The union is the first formed in the bus company. A Muslim League Member of Parliament Mr. Umer Hayat Rokri owns the company. He was a member of the Musharraf-supported PMLQ. After 18 February, he changed his political affiliation and joined the PML (Nawaz Sharif's group). Lahore has no public bus service and his bus company, operating several hundred buses, dominates Lahore transportation.

All workers at New Khan Bus Company are on contract. Drivers are paid a maximum of Rupees 5500 (\$90) and conductors Rupees 2500 (\$48) a month plus a commission system of 2.5 percent of

the daily income. The majority of the drivers and conductors earn less than \$50 a month. But they also are subject to fines and the company has a record number of accidents. Drivers must complete an entire route three times a day and this is an impossibility to accomplish in eight hours. Because of this pressure, there are a high number of accidents. The company takes care of the buses but not the employees.

They have to take care of themselves.

Because no one has permanent employment, no worker has a social security card. The company does not abide by labour laws and employed a group of gangsters at the depots. They beat the drivers and conductors for any small mistake. Under the Musharraf dictatorship, this behaviour has been overlooked by the Labour Department.

Some workers decided to fight back against this brutal behaviour even at the cost of their jobs. Workers organized secret meetings following the general elections. Finally they decided to form the union. They contacted LPP office and the first union poster was printed by Pakistan Trade Unions Resource Center run by the Labour Education Foundation in Lahore. When workers went to fly-post the poster at different bus depots, several were beaten by the gangsters and later were handed over to police. The police registered false cases against the leaders, arresting three. Two were released on bail; one is still in jail.

This all was going on while I was visiting UK from 8 May to 15 May. On my first day at the LPP office on 17 May, I interviewed Malik Tahir who had been brutally beaten up the previous night. Textile union leaders from Qasur and Faisalabad also reported attacks on their members as well.

At Faisalabad, five workers have been in jail for the last eight days. The police, carrying out instructions from the textile bosses [what proof?] have registered a false case against them. They all belong to Labour Qaumi Movement, an organization fighting for textile workers' rights in Faisalabad. The LQM mobilized over 2000 workers in protest.

At Qasur similar incidents have happened and the boss who [is responsible for] kidnapping and torturing on union activists is still not

arrested despite a massive demonstration by the union in the city, and
filing a case against him.

As a first step, the LLP called all labour leaders to tell their
stories to the media. There were more journalists than expected. Almost
all the private television channels were there and most of the print
media as well. It was a well-crowded press conference. We do not
know how many will actually print or broadcast our news, but we had a
friendly encounter with the journalists.

At the press conferences we announced that on 22 May, the
Labour Party Pakistan will picket (Gherao) the New Khan Metro Bus
Company in Lahore if the bosses are not arrested for kidnapping and
workers rehired. The following day the LQM would block Faisalabad,
Pakistan's third largest city.

Workers have shown their real commitment to form unions.
However the PPP government has yet to fulfill their promises of a free
and fair atmosphere where workers can freely organize. We appeal to
the PPP government to take notice of the situation or we will have no
option but to organize demonstrations, rallies and strike for the defense
of our basic democratic right to form the trade unions.

**Thousands demonstrate against neoliberal
agenda and price hikes in Pakistan**
6 June 2008

Over 3000 activists and supporters of the Labour Party Pakistan took part in a rally at Lahore 6 June against the ongoing neoliberal policies of the present Pakistan Peoples Party government. They chanted slogans against the price hikes and US imperialism, and demanded an immediate end to policies dictated by imperialist companies and financial institutions.

Similar demonstrations took place in 30 other cities including Islamabad, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, Hyderabad, Multan, Moro, Dault Pur and Layya. Labour Party Pakistan organized the demonstrations and rallies with the support of trade unions, social movements and peasant organizations. On a day of national action against price hikes, they also demanded an immediate restoration of the top judges and the resignation of General Pervez Musharraf.

- The Peshawar demonstration was broadcast live by private television channel ARY World. Over 400 participated in that demonstration including more than 100 women.
- In Karachi over 250 activists demonstrated at Regal Chouck. They raised slogans against US imperialism and its policies towards colonial countries.
- In Islamabad over 150 demonstrated at Aab Para Chouck against the price hikes and demanded a living wage of at least 12,000 Rupees. They also demanded action against those bosses who are attacking workers forming trade unions in different parts of the country.
- In Lahore over 1000 women participated, with the main leadership of Women Workers Help Line (WWHL), a working-class women's organization, in the lead. The main Mall Road was blocked for over two hours as the rally passed along this busy and prestigious road. Thousands on both sides of the road cheered the demonstrators. Mall Road was red with waving red flags.

This demonstration against price hikes was the largest so far organized by any political party in Pakistan. Demonstrators raised slogans in favour of socialism, declaring that socialism is the only answer to the problems facing the working class.

“Capitalism has failed in solving the basic problems of the masses; it is a message of constant price hikes and unemployment. We have to change the system and develop a party that could prepare a socialist revolution,” declared Farooq Tariq while addressing the public rally at Lahore. He went on to say, “We demand a minimum wage of 12,000 Rupees with the introduction of unemployment benefits for all adult unemployed; we want an end of privatization, and cancellation of foreign debts. Reduce the military expenditure and spend it on the people.” He also demanded action against the owner of the New Khan private bus company who has sacked 80 workers for forming the first trade union at the company.

Several leaders of the lawyers’ movement and trade union leaders, including Moeen Nawaz Punno, Muhammed Yousaf Baluch, Bushra Khaliq, Azra Shad and Mehmood Butt addressed the rally. All the main print and electronic media covered the event. Activists of Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party participated.

The Labour Party Pakistan will participate in the long march planned by the lawyers’ movement starting from Sukhar in Sindh on June 10. The LPP also plans further demonstrations opposing the price hikes.

Report: Khaliq Shah

Resisting religious fundamentalism in NWFP
Labour Party Pakistan unprecedented growth
15 July 2008

At a public meeting at Jhar Dhand in Charsada district of North West Frontier Province on 13 July, over 200 gathered to hear the leaders of Labour Party Pakistan. Speakers lashed out at the growing trends of religious fundamentalism and told the gathering that religion must be separated from the state. The speakers also criticized the performance of the Pakistan Peoples Party government's first 100 days in power.

Speaking on the occasion, Farooq Tariq, spokesperson Labour Party Pakistan said, "The policies announced during the first 100 days of the PPP-led coalition have made the lives of the ordinary people miserable. The Awami National Party government in the province has failed to bring peace and has supported the attacks of American imperialism in the area". He said that people are hungrier and more uncertain during this present set up. The price hikes are uncontrolled and the PPP government is implementing all the conditions of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization.

Farooq Tariq told this gathering, the fourth one in the last two months in the district, that we will resist if an all out American attack starts in the tribal areas of Pakistan. We must bring an alternative voice against the growing influence of religious fundamentalism and imperialism.

Several other speakers included Farooq Ahmad, Maqsood Mujahid, members National Executive Committee LPP, Farman Ali Khan, secretary LPP NWFP, Muqarab Khan, secretary LPP Charsad district. There were also representatives of trade unions and peasant organizations of the district at the meeting who also spoke of class struggle to be the only answer to the politics of the rich.

This is an area where Asfand Yar Wali Kahn head of Awami National Party is elected to parliament. He had lost this traditional seat of nationalists earlier in the elections of 2002 to a religious fundamentalist. However, there is growing discontent about the inability of the nationalists to bring peace and end poverty in the

province. It is widely criticized for its associations with American imperialism.

By organizing these public meetings, LPP is in a process of replacing the religious fundamentalists as an opposition voice. Almost all the left activists have joined LPP in this area. After this public meeting, 400 membership forms were distributed and the local LPP activists were sure that they would achieve this target of membership within a month.

The membership target of LPP in 8 district of NWPF is set at 2000 till the end of August. At present, there are less than 500 memberships. LPP is making inroads at a fast speed among the former left activists, peasant movement activists and youth.

An important aspect of LPP growth in the province is the emergence of Women Workers Help Line as an effective voice of women in the province. WWHL has mobilized hundreds of women in the district dominated by religious fundamentalism. The women have demonstrated on 8 March and 1st May 2008, an unprecedented activity by women on these dates. The women are also becoming members of LPP in growing numbers.

The leadership of LPP in the district is establishing LPP in all the districts of NWFP.

Report: Ali Yasir

**Labour Party Pakistan Lahore Congress elects
new leadership**
28 July 2008

LPP Lahore's fourth congress concluded here on 27 July with the election of a very youthful leadership of 21 members. It agreed to augment up the class struggle in Lahore and decided to help the movements of different trade unions and social movements. The congress, held at Human Rights Commission auditorium, was presided over by a three-member presidium Riffat Maqsood, Rukhsana Naaz and Moeen Nawaz Punno.

Rana Mohammed Aslam, elected as General secretary LPP Lahore, is a well-known left activist. Also elected were Ammar Jaan, Youth secretary, Ghulam Dasghir, Peasant secretary, Abdul Rauf, Labour secretary, Javed Bhatti, Cultural and Educational secretary and Rukhsana Naaz Women secretary.

98 delegates representing 554 membership attended the congress. There were three sessions organized at the congress, Pakistan political perspectives, organizational priorities and elections for the new leadership.

There was lively discussion at the first political session. 14 comrades participated in the discussion that was introduced by me. It discussed in detail the question of the neoliberal agenda and its devastating effects on the economy and the lives of the working class. Rising religious fundamentalism, suicidal attacks and other acts of individual and state terrorism also came under discussion and comrades agreed to build a class alternative to the politics of religion.

The organizational session discussed the weakness and qualities of LPP work in Lahore. It decided to hold more study circles on a regular basis to bring the ideas of socialism to the attention of those joining LPP. It agreed to motivate the membership that is not active and set a target of 500 active and paid memberships by the end of the year 2008.

Comrades took a note of its involvement in all class struggles and its leadership of some of them in the city however that is not reflected in the increase of the membership. It also decided to help form new trade unions. It vowed to organize the home-based women workers in a union.

The congress held a secret ballot to elect a new list of 21 members of the LPP Lahore Committee. The 21 members elected at the congress included seven women comrades. They come from all parts of Lahore.

7

Discussing Politics

Call for greater left unity in Pakistan

October 2007

There has never been a better time in the history of Pakistan for greater left unity than the present. There is a great urge among all the left and progressive forces to unite on one platform.

Traditionally the Pakistan Peoples Party was seen as a party that would fight against militarization and for democracy. Under Benazir Bhutto, the PPP had become a party of compromises and conciliation with the present military. Bhutto has already finalized a power-sharing deal with the present military regime, one of the most hated among ordinary people. Price hikes, unemployment, class polarization, uncertainty over the future and rising incidents of mass killings have become the hallmarks of the Musharraf regime.

Benazir Bhutto tried to regain the support she lost during the process of dealing with Musharraf by a show of mass power in Karachi, but these have been disrupted by the suicidal attacks of religious fundamentalists. According to one report, the Benazir reception at Karachi was one of the most expensive political events in the history of Pakistan, costing over 3 billion Rupees.

Many were under the illusion that the PPP would embrace left-wing ideas. Those illusions have been shattered. This is a rare opportunity for the left to win over those disillusioned and disappointed with the PPP's character. It is a chance to win them over through adopting flexible tactics and new organizational measures. This is the way to unity.

The disunity among the fundamentalists

As for the religious fundamentalists in the Mutehida Majlas Amal, they have never been as disunited as today. In fact there is an open war going on. Even if they are able to continue as the MMA, they have lost precious time in fighting amongst themselves over the best way to oppose the Musharraf regime. It was difficult for many of them to adjust to present-day realities that the state is not the same as it once was. Under imperialist pressure, state officials want to disassociate themselves from religious fundamentalism. The religious fundamentalists are on the offensive and they want to show the masses that they are the country's anti-imperialist force. But it is the anti-imperialism of fools.

During the last few years the left has lost the initiative to the religious fundamentalists, who have more funds and resources at their disposal. So this is the right time to regain the initiative by unifying the human and material resources at the left's disposal, proposing a unity of the left in order to take on an effective anti-imperialist struggle.

Fundamentalists' Suicidal Attacks: a challenge to the left

The suicidal attack on Benazir Bhutto's rally in Karachi on 18th October was a warning note to all the democratic forces, particularly the left. It is an attack on civil liberties, as well as the right of association and assembly. This attack is to terrify people struggling

to get rid of militarism and religious fundamentalism. Such attacks are the result of a calculated game of eliminating opponents.

As such it is a fascist tactic and we must condemn it in the strongest terms. We cannot let a few individuals on a suicidal mission dictate their terms and conditions. We have a duty to organize and demonstrate without fear of suicidal attacks. We have no other way apart from uniting ourselves to fight for our right to assembly.

The state has failed to protect even those who compromised with the regime. How can it protect us, who are totally against the military regime? The only self -defense is unity among ourselves, the only way to fight is with our solidarity.

Many processes of left unity

At present there are many processes of left unity going on in Pakistan.

- There is Awami Jamhoori Tehreek, an alliance of seven left groups and parties. But it has not gone very far.
- The Awami Jamhoori Forum is taking the initiative to call for more left unity meetings all over Punjab. One such meeting was in Rawalpindi on 20th October. It attracted over 75 left and progressive activists. They formed a district committee to continuing to discuss the process in detail later.
- Likewise, the Awami Jamhoori Tehreek (AJT) Rawalpindi called this meeting under the initiative of the Awami Jamhoori Forum (AJF). Subsequently the AJF produced a leaflet explaining the need for greater left unity. The AJT Punjab has called a left unity meeting in Lahore to discuss the process and plan for future actions. The meeting will take place at National Workers Party office at Mcloud Road Lahore.
- The Tabqati Group under the leadership of Lal Khan (Ted Grant group) in association with PILER Karachi has called for a left unity meeting on 7th November in Karachi. The Labour Party Pakistan is taking part in this meeting as well.

- Meraj Mohammed Khan, in association with the Inqilabi Jamhoori Committee (Taj Marri), has issued a call for a new left party in Pakistan. He is campaigning in Sind for such an initiative. Both Meraj Mohammed Khan and the Inqilabi Committee are already part of the AJT.
- The Labour Party Pakistan is holding its fourth national conference in Toba Tek Singh on 9-11 of November. At its public rally on 10th November most of the left leaders will be invited to speak at its public rally and participate in the conference.

We call on all the radical social activists, trade unionists, political activists and leaders of the lawyers' movement leaders to take part in this process of greater left unity.

The General Elections strategy

The left needs to take part in the general elections held early next year. The LPP is advocating a policy of participation in the elections from as many seats as possible. What we need is to put forward an alternative candidate in each constituency. We must not be forced to vote for a candidate who is in alliance with the military regime, or is from a religious fundamentalist party. Today there is a great anti-Musharraf consciousness. We must be able to offer candidates who can attract this consciousness. We must fight against the discriminatory rule of the Election Commission, which allows only graduates to run as candidates. We want to challenge this rule, eliminate it, and help our working-class comrades stand in the elections.

What we need is a percentage of the vote and not just one or two leading contestants on behalf of the whole left. We must strive for a reasonable percentage of national votes. But this is only possible when we have a national strategy and the maximum number of left candidates across Pakistan.

We need a common political and economic agenda for such left unity. In our meetings we can discuss the problem and come forward with proposals which at least would be agreeable to a majority.

Unity is strength and Workers of the World Unite.

The left leads the way against the military dictatorship in Pakistan

November 2007

During the first 12 days of the emergency over 200 activists and leaders from different left parties have been arrested. The parties belonging to Awami Jamhori Tehreek (AJT, Peoples Democratic Movement), an alliance of seven left parties and groups, are in the forefront of the movement to overthrow the military regime in Pakistan. These include members of the Awami Tehreek (Peoples Movement), National Workers Party and Labour Party Pakistan.

Over 140 activists of the Awami Tehreek have been arrested during the last four days in almost all the districts of Sindh. Their leader, Rasul Buksh Paleejo, is underground and police have been hunting for him. His house and offices have been repeatedly raided. The AT has launched a movement of seeking arrest in every district of Sindh

Lawyer Akhtar Hussain, who is general secretary of the National Workers Party, Yousaf Masti Khan, its senior vice president, and lawyer Nisar Shah, chairperson of the Labour Party Pakistan are

also among the 200 arrested. Bilal Minto, son of Abid Hassan Minto, convener of the AJT and president National Workers Party was one of the first social activists arrested at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan meeting on 4th November. LPP national committee member Azra Shad and Khalid Malik of the Labour Education Foundation were also arrested.

This is not first time that the left has taken a lead in the struggle against militarization and imperialism. It has been always in the front lines of the movement against the military dictatorships.

During last three days of "Anti Emergency Movement" launched by Awami Tahreek (Peoples Movement), more than 140 party workers have presented themselves for arrest,. repeating the history of the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), AT has been holding hundreds of protest demos, sit-ins and rallies in different districts, cities and towns of Sindh

- 1- Lifting of the Emergency & Provisional Constitutional Ordinance
- 2- Release and restoration of rights for the judiciary, lawyers, journalists & activists.
- 3- Freedom of the media

An Interview with Farooq Tariq

A View from the Pakistani Left

By RON JACOBS,

Counter Punch

November 10 / 11, 2007

In recent days, the already tenuous political situation in Pakistan has made a turn toward the worse. Musharraf's government clamped down first on the judiciary and other opponents in the government in the first days after his declaration of martial law. More recently, those same forces have prevented even the liberal bourgeois opposition represented by Benazir Bhutto from gathering and arrested several thousand members of the opposition. In addition, Musharraf has gone on record as stating that many of those arrested face capital charges. One element of the secular opposition to Musharraf is the Labour Party Pakistan, a democratic socialist organization launched in 1997 by various elements of the Pakistani left. What follows is an exchange conducted over the past couple of days (November 9-10, 2007) between myself and Farooq

Tariq, Secretary General of the Party. (Thanks to Tariq Ali for putting me in contact with Mr. Tariq.-Ron)

Ron: Hello. To begin, can you please identify yourself and generally describe your politics and the politics of the Pakistan Labour Party? Also, how many members and supporters do you estimate the Labour Party has?

Farooq: I am Farooq Tariq, Secretary General, Labour Party Pakistan (LPP). I am an activist since my student days at Punjab University back in mid 1970s. I became active as a left activist, and the left was strong on campuses in those days. Our main rivals were religious fundamentalists. When Zia imposed the military dictatorship, I went into exile and spent some eight years in Holland and England. There we built Struggle Group that got active in Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party. In 1986, I moved back to Pakistan as the situation improved here and Struggle Group had the opportunity to be active on Pakistani soil itself. After Benazir's first stint in power, Struggle Group with the perspective that PPP would now only serve the ruling classes, left PPP and began campaigning for an independent workers' party. After building a good trade union base, Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) was launched in 1997. LPP wants a democratic socialist Pakistan and is a Socialist organization that draws inspiration from, among others, Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky.

We have a membership of over 3,000. One of the eight big trade union federations (NTUF) in Pakistan is LPP's sympathetic body. The NTUF (National Trade Union Federation) represents over hundred thousand industrial workers. We run an Urdu weekly (www.jeddojuhd.com), the only left weekly published in Pakistan. Our women members set up Women Workers Help Line (WWHL) that has a membership of almost two thousand. Our youth front has some modest success in last two years while our student base remains almost non-existent.

Ron: What city are you writing from? Have there been protesters in the streets in that city?

Farooq: I am underground since the imposition of Emergency. Mostly, I have been in Lahore and certain towns in northern Punjab.

Ron: What is the make up of the protesters in Pakistan right now? The US newspapers describe the majority of the protesters as being lawyers and NGO activists. Is this so? What are the demands of the protests?

Farooq: Initially, it was advocates (lawyers), left and human rights activists. But the situation has changed in last three days as Benazir Bhutto has declared her opposition. Yesterday, PPP workers fought pitched battles with police in Rawalpindi. PPP claims that 5000 of its workers were arrested across Pakistan. Also, the government has arrested members of Justice Party of former cricket star Imran Khan and Muslim League of exiled Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. However, Islamist parties are either not joining the movement or being targeted by the regime. Their opposition to the regime remains restricted to press statements.

Ron: Do you foresee the protests continuing and perhaps growing in size?

Farooq: There is the potential. Big possibility. This past summer, it took some time before masses took to roads. Masses hesitate at first but when they see a leadership fighting, they will most likely join it. One reason is also media black out. TV channels are off air while print media is censored. Many don't know what's happening. Often, expat Pakistanis are more informed than we here.

Ron: What security forces are arresting the opposition? Is it the Army, the ISI, or other police?

Farooq: It is police. But there have been reports that known arrested activists have been handed over to ISI.

Ron: What role does Benazir Bhutto play in Pakistani politics? Does the Labour Party consider her role a positive one? Do they support her at all? What do you make of her arrest?

Farooq: The good news in the last three days is the changing attitude of Benazir Bhutto towards the present military regime. While in exile, she made a deal to share power with military regime. This deal was

brokered by USA. Her return on October 18 was also a US-backed move. But while in Pakistan, there was suicidal attack on her rally leaving over 200 dead. There was a mass negative campaign by the chief minister of Punjab against her. Then Musharraf imposed the Emergency on 3rd November without her consent apparently. Most of the advocates arrested after Emergency were from her party. It was all too much. This built up pressure. In first three days, PPP activists were not arrested but it all changed with Benazir coming out openly against the military regime on Emergency.

Her changing attitude was welcomed by LPP in press. I, on LPP's behalf, announced in the media that LPP would join the Long March planned for 13th November by PPP from Lahore to Islamabad. However we were very critical of the policies she pursued in last few months, that is to say her power sharing formula with Musharraf regime and her soft spot for the regime.

Her recent dealings have also given currency to conspiracy theories. Many say that her opposition is just fake and all is done in collaboration with the regime in order to restore Benazir's image as a militant leader. LPP doesn't agree with such so-called conspiracies theories about Benazir and Musharraf being friends. Benazir's opposition to the regime has meant arrests of thousands of PPP activists and their houses raided all across Pakistan.

Ron: I understand the situation constantly changes, but do you believe the elections will be held in February 2008? If they are, do you think they will be free and fair? Why or why not?

Farooq: In view of the unfolding movement, and international pressure, yes we can hope for that. But fair and free elections are out of question. Democracy movement will have to fight a long war before we are able to have a democracy strong enough to ensure a free election.

Ron: What, in your opinion, is the cause of the unrest in Pakistan? How much of a role do religious extremists play? How much of a role does the Army play? How is this martial law similar to previous episodes of martial law in Pakistani history?

Farooq: In the first place, it is the mass impoverishment of masses under Musharraf regime. The struggle for bread and butter has become even harder. Utility bills, price hikes and joblessness are the biggest issues. This is the root cause of unrest. Also, military has become a military-industrial complex that is acting like a mafia. There is resentment against that. Then you have US presence in the region leading to instability. Musharraf's pro-US policies are universally unpopular.

Musharraf's military rule is unlike Zia's dictatorship in its mask. Musharraf claims enlightenment and moderation. Zia Islamised Pakistan. But both these dictatorships, like earlier military regimes have been pro-US.

On the internal front, all have been repressive when faced with opposition. Every time military takes over, the military increases its industrial base, thus leading to more corruption.

Ron: What do you think will be the result of the Emergency rule? How long do you think it will be in place?

Farooq: General Musharraf would not have thought of the political scenario that has emerged since the imposition of Emergency on 3rd November. His hopes for normalcy have been dashed despite a vicious repression against the advocates and political activists. More unpleasant surprises will come in the future for the military regime that was used to a rather stable political control until now.

After advocates, now students are emerging on the political opposition to the military regime. Demonstrations took place on 7th November 2007 in certain public and private universities in the main cities of Pakistan. "Student power rises from slumber" was the headline of daily The News International on 8th November.

The media organizations of the bosses and employees are also joining the mass movement after unprecedented repression against the electronic and print media by the regime.

It was a black Monday on 5th November for the stock exchanges in Pakistan. The stock exchange crash resulted in a net loss of four billion dollars in one day, unprecedented in last 17 years.

His imperialist backers like US, UK and European Union have been forced to condemn Emergency at least in word for the first time since 9/11. Any gross violation of human rights in Pakistan since 9/11, was always an internal matter for US imperialism. Even Australian imperialism is condemning the sorry state of affairs of Pakistan and terming Musharraf "a dictator" for the first time, a fact Pakistani people knew for eight years. LPP perspective is that such an isolated regime can not last long. The opposition movement is on and is growing.

Ron: Is there any other information or thoughts you wish to provide the readers?

Farooq: The opposition to military regime will be strengthened by the active solidarity of our friends and comrades outside Pakistan. The pickets of the Pakistan embassies all over the world will be one the most effective ways of opposition. It is time to show international solidarity.

Ron: Thanks you for your time.

Farooq: Thanks a lot for letting LPP express itself on an important left site like Counterpunch.

Ron Jacobs is author of The Way the Wind Blew: a history of the Weather Underground, which is just republished by Verso. Jacobs' essay on Big Bill Broonzy is featured in CounterPunch's collection on music, art and sex, Serpents in the Garden. His first novel, Short Order Frame Up, is published by Mainstay Press. He can be reached at: rjacobs3625@charter.net

“Pakistan is not a heaven for left ideas”

DEN HOND Chris

5 March 2008

The elections of 18 February in Pakistan were a severe sanction of General Musharraf. Farooq Tariq is spokesperson for the Labour Party Pakistan. He was put into prison several times last year and he explains to us the difficulties of implementing left politics in a country of 160 million of inhabitants, surrounded by Afghanistan, Iran, India and China.

Farooq Tariq: The Labour Party Pakistan has been part of the advocates' movement in Pakistan, which started last year. This movement started to support the chief justice who was asked by General Musharraf, the military dictator of Pakistan, to resign from the supreme court. The chief justice had become an obstacle to the implementation of the neoliberal agenda. He canceled some privatisation deals, he made a lot of decisions in favour of poor women, who were active in solving some conflicts in the communities. He acted

as a human rights activist. So he became very popular among ordinary people of Pakistan.

The Labour Party Pakistan, which is one of the main left wing parties in Pakistan, became part of the advocates' movement to support the chief justice. Once, the police asked me to cancel a rally we organized in support of the advocates' movement, I refused. They tried to prevent the rally, we crossed the police barriers. We pushed them back. It was big news in Pakistan. After this demonstration, Labour Party became more known. We all had our red flags and the majority of us were women, fighting women. We have a very good base amongst working class women in Lahore. We learnt this kind of demonstration from the peasant movement. During its campaign in 2001 for land rights, we discussed how to demonstrate and we concluded: if men go in the front, the military will just kill them, but if women and children go and demonstrate, they will hesitate to shoot.

In June, I was arrested and put in jail while it was 52 degrees (centigrade). I remained in jail for 18 days in a small cell alone without any visits. I was totally isolated from the party. In September, I was arrested again. I was charged under the anti-terrorist act. The sentence was death. I was released after four days on bail. I am still on bail on that case.

Musharraf has been defeated

After the elections of 18th of February 2008, the situation is a bit better, because Musharraf has been defeated decisively by the people of Pakistan in the polls. During these elections, the Pakistan Peoples Party of the assassinated Benazir Bhutto got nearly 36 percent of the votes. Second was the Pakistan Muslim League, the party of the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He is the one who was prime minister and was overthrown by General Musharraf in 1999. Some fundamentalist parties, that obtained 15 percent in the elections of 2002, lost badly. They only obtained 3 percent of the votes. The overall vote was against supporters of Musharraf

Many people have illusions in the Peoples Party of Bhutto, because of the important reforms in the 1970s. It nationalized nearly 35 percent of industry and gave a lot of money for social development.

That was a golden era for the working class in Pakistan. But it's just a bourgeois party, which has collaborated with the military government and with US imperialism. Benazir Bhutto was speaking the language of Bush, saying: "I will help the war on terror in Pakistan" That means more bombing, more repression and more killings. ***"Most of the leaders of the Labour Party have gone to jail because of their democratic struggle."***

The Labour Party Pakistan, that we founded in 1997, has become a nationally-known small party. Many activists in the social organizations and trade unions are members of our party. We have nearly 3000 members all over Pakistan.

Pakistan is not a haven for left ideas. It's a theocratic state, totally dominated by religious ideas. 99 percent of the population is Muslim. We don't talk big tall slogans of revolution saying that only socialism will solve everything. We are a socialist party, but we are involved in day to day struggles of the people. We take on issues and fight on them. We take up issues of land rights. We have founded the Anti- Privatization Alliance of Pakistan. We take up issues such as women's rights, human rights, against child labour and we make a campaign around that.

We always bring together different groups, different trends and we are organizing networking. Most of the leaders of the Labour Party have gone to jail because of their democratic struggle. So our opposition to General Musharraf has earned us good respect, which is now translated into more members, more contacts, more financial support. We are sometimes invited by private TV groups to have a debate. Journalists take our comments by phone. We are becoming popular, but we are not yet in the parliament. Maybe we could have been this time, but we boycotted the elections. But in local elections, more than 100 councillors from the LPP are elected all over of Pakistan.

The strategic position of Pakistan is important for US imperialism because Afghanistan is next door and they have installed the unpopular regime of Karzai over there. Karzai is facing a lot of problems from the Taliban which controls nearly two thirds of

Afghanistan. They forgot any lessons of democracy and support here a
military dictatorship.

They had the illusion that by doing this, General Musharraf
would stop the rise of religious fundamentalism. But we say that
religious fundamentalism can only be defeated by political means, not
by repression. Bush is talking against religious fundamentalism, but his
policies are promoting this fundamentalism. It should also demand that
the North Americans must leave Afghanistan. NATO must leave
Afghanistan. That's the center of gravity. If they are there, there will be
no solution.

** Rouge interview with Farooq Tariq. Published by International
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*Watch the video of the interview with Farooq Tariq at:
<http://snipurl.com/21ve9>*

** Chris Den Hond is a member of the SAP-LCR, Belgian section of
the Fourth International. He is a freelance journalist and film maker.*

Rise against imperialism and religious fundamentalism

30 July 2008

The leaders of the Awami Jamhoori Tehreek (Peoples Democratic Movement) have urged the working class of Pakistan to rise up against imperialism and religious fundamentalism. Addressing a joint press conference at Lahore Press Club on 30 July, Abid Hasan Minto, Rasool Bukhsh Paleejo and Farooq Tariq said that we would oppose any imperialist military intervention in Pakistan.. They condemned the build up of NATO forces at Pakistan's borders.

Disclosing the decisions of AJT after a day long meeting on 29 July in Rawalpindi, the left leaders told the press that the religious extremists are providing an excuse for imperialist forces to intervene in Pakistan. They condemned the burning of girls' schools, the killing of innocent people and suicidal attacks particularly in tribal areas. "The religious fundamentalism has nothing to offer to the working class of Pakistan. We are totally opposed to the fascist tactics used by religious extremists" the left leaders told the print and electronic media at the press conference.

Awami Jamhoori Tehreek leaders condemned the present government tactics of negotiating with the religious fundamentalists and agreeing on “Shariat laws” being imposed in some areas by force. “Shariat Laws” are totally in contradiction with the constitution of Pakistan. Every one in Pakistan must have a democratic right to form groups and parties according to their own ideas and should not be forced to accept the dictates of the extremist groups. The left alliance leaders demanded that the government encourage civil society actors in the tribal areas to combat the onslaught of religious extremism and the fight against the threat of imperialist attack. Only a mass movement in Pakistan can stop the threat of an imperialist attack and the growing influence of religious fundamentalism.

Answering a question, they told the media that All Parties Democratic Movement is not a religious alliance. Its initial programme is to fight against militarization, imperialism and for a just democratic Pakistan. The left is fighting the ideas of religious extremism and APDM does not support any form of terrorism, at individual or state level. The left parties will support the call for an all out general strike on 1st of September 2008 called by APDM for the restoration of judges and to stop the policies that are responsible for consistent price hikes.

The AJT leaders opposed the withdrawal of state subsidies and neoliberal agenda of Pakistan Peoples Party.. It declared its total opposition to privatization. The AJT will support all the movements of the peasants and workers against price hikes.

The new office bearers of AJT announced at the press conference are Abid Hasan Minto convener, Farooq Tariq general secretary and Abdul Qadir Ranto deputy secretary. The AJT also announced a three-day conference on 3-5 October 2008 to discuss the present political situation and perspectives for the future.

Reprot: Khaliq Shah

Imperialism, Terrorism and International Organizations, *September 2008*

Pakistan is under imperialist siege. Parts of Pakistan are targeted regularly by the NATO forces based on the Afghani-Pakistan border. Killings by missiles have become an everyday event. Innocent tribal men, women and children are the targets of this imperialist aggression. The NATO forces are doing this dirty thing hand-in-hand with the so-called “democratic” government of Pakistan. The 3 August 2008 direct attack by NATO forces at Anghoor Ada in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan left 20 dead and scores injured. The excuse is curbing individual terrorism. However, this is state terrorism in open collaboration with American imperialism.

Tanks are rolling through the Northern parts of Pakistan, destroying any home, mosque or a locality, that is supposedly a base for the Pakistani Taliban. To propagate and justify the state aggression in the name of curbing terrorism, the language of war is used: “The forces are advancing, the bases are bombed and destroyed, forces are fighting with a national pride and saving Pakistan, the enemy is on

retreat.” These were the same words heard during the 1965 and 1971 bloody wars between Pakistan and India.

Over the last seven years, the Americans have been aided by many “comrades” in arms are looking for Osama Bin Laden just as the Americans claimed to be looking for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. As they invaded and occupied Iraq, they lied and as they are invading and occupying Pakistan they are lying once again. Osama is not who they are looking for. As in the case of Iraq, the justification works as an excuse in order to fool their own people and international opinion makers. Washington has been accelerating its international role of imperialist aggressor. It is an act of terrorism in the name of curbing terrorism. The reality is, the killing and displacement of ordinary people, whether in Iraq or Pakistan.

Unfortunately, the actions of the Taliban of Pakistan provide a reasonable justification to this imperialist and state aggression. The burning of girls’ school, CD shops, or demanding that barbers close up shop have nothing to do with Islam. It is sheer fanaticism. Yet over 150 girls’ schools, as well as scores of public institutions in different valleys of North West Frontier Province, Northern and Tribal areas are the victims of this extremism in the name of religion.

The Taliban of Pakistan, just like their brothers in Afghanistan, think a woman is only “worth half of a man. They must stay at home. Their education is waste of time. They must serve men to go to heaven.” These are the most conservative and extreme reactionary ideas of a group claiming to be anti-imperialist. It is anti-imperialism of fools. No movement can win without the help of women.

But even the most reactionary ideas of a group do not provide a justification to occupy and bomb an area. Neither bombs nor occupation are solutions to reactionary ideas; instead it must be a political battle of ideas. A civil war of ideas must be fought both against imperialism and religious fundamentalism.

After seven years of occupying Afghanistan, US imperialism has found a new scapegoat: Pakistan. All eyes are on Pakistan. According to some bourgeoisie commentators, “It is not Iraq but Pakistan that is the most dangerous place in the world.” And a war is

being waged in Pakistan. American imperialism is eager to restore its prestige by bombing the so-called breeding ground of religious fundamentalism.

The Pakistan ruling class has a shining history of imperialist submission. They cannot see a life without imperialism and capitalism. Pakistan's 62 years of independence have been largely dependent on U.S. imperialism, under both civilian and military regimes.

The United States as a global power claims to be a friend and supporter of democracy and democratic transitions in the "Muslim" world, especially in Pakistan. But the evidence does not support this assertion. In fact, Washington has used its crucial financial and military support selectively against democratic governments.

The pattern is unmistakably clear.

The first large-scale American operation in Pakistan began in late 1953. Months after the dismissal of Pakistan's first civilian government, the Americans began pouring both food and military aid into the country. For more than a decade, Pakistan was seen as the US ally during the Cold War. Pakistan's military regime joined various US-sponsored defense pacts against the Soviet Union.

Washington's problems with Pakistan began when an elected government came to power in 1972, under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. However, once another military regime took over in 1977, the Americans poured billions of dollars into the country, particularly because Pakistan agreed to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Similarly, while the elected governments that followed during 1988-99 had to live with a decade of US sanctions, the military regime of General Musharraf, that ousted the last civilian government in 1999, remained for eight years a "well-supplied" ally in the U.S. "war on terror."

After General Musharraf's resignation on 18 August, the present civilian government of the Pakistan Peoples Party is even more ready to carry out the work, the Musharraf dictatorship had been doing. The PPP is willing to work hand-in-hand with American imperialism to

implement both a neoliberal agenda domestically and to be a full partner in so-called “war on terror.”

After eight years of consistent support to a military dictator, the Americans decided the only way Musharraf could survive is with a partnership with Benazir Bhutto, who with a “democratic” face could help carry out the same dirty work as the military generals had been doing. But with Musharraf unwilling to make room for Bhutto, and her death at the hands of assassins, Musharraf had used up his ability to control the situation. The imperialists reluctantly let him go, just as they were forced to let other military general go: with General Ayub Khan (1958-69) when he started to warm up to the Soviet Union after the 1965 war with India or General Zia-ul Haq (1977-1988) when the Soviets decided to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 1987.

During the U.S. campaign against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Washington used the Zia dictatorship as a bulwark of reaction. The counter-revolution in Afghanistan was the biggest covert operation ever carried out by the CIA in its entire history. In the process, four million Afghans were displaced and hundreds of thousands killed in this imperialist-sponsored Islamic Jihad (holy war).

The US spent \$7 billion in direct cash on this operation

Religion became the military regime’s political weapon. In Zia's hands, reactionary Islamic ideology became a versatile tool for the extension of state control in the domain of personal and private lives of citizens as well as their public, political, professional and cultural activities. The introduction of the patriarchal medieval Islamic code, the shari'a law, was part of this exercise and remains the law of modern Pakistan. American imperialism unreservedly supported this process of Islamisation in the region.

The phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism was fueled by the flow of US money. The Zia dictatorship was based on very strong fundamentalist overtones. It used Islam to gain a social base amongst primitive sections of society.

When analyzing Islamic fundamentalism, one must understand that the religion of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism are not the same. Islamic fundamentalism is a reactionary, non-

scientific movement aimed at returning society to a centuries-old social set-up, defying all material and historical factors. It is an attempt to roll back the wheel of history.

Fundamentalism is a political and not religious phenomenon. It is best defined as a counter-thesis of modernism. Partly the growth of fundamentalism in Pakistan owes to its peculiar regional and national conditions--Pakistan is not a nation-state. It is an unnatural and unhistorical country with its borders drawn in the name of religion.

Religion was, and still is, used to provide a rationale for the country.

With this background, it is clear to see that American imperialism has local partners as they had in Iraq. Since the overthrow of the Shah in Iran, US imperialism has been unable to find the local partners in Iran. Despite the fact that Washington wants to invade Iran, it can't find local agents who can help them bring neoliberalism under the cover of importing "democracy." With local partners, imperialist aggression and occupation is much easier, or can actually be carried out by proxy.

The program for "military control of the planet" by Washington and its junior allies (NATO in particular) is clear when we look at the presence of 600 US military bases spread over the five continents. It can also be seen in the "preventive wars" already under way (Iraq) or being threatened (Iran). These are clear expressions of the militarization of globalization.

The execution of such programs of the imperialist powers, particularly of the only and only superpower, scorns the aspirations of all peoples of the South for peace and security. It lies directly or indirectly at the roots of the squandering represented by the arms race.

It inspires directly or indirectly numerous so-called "local" conflicts.

But imperialism isn't just military bases, occupations, and the entire military-industrial complex. It's also economic domination, represented by treaties that bind the countries of the South as tightly as a ring of U.S. bases. These are the treaties that demand privatizations and put intellectual property rights that have often been stolen above human needs and aspirations.

Humankind entering the 21 century is facing more challenges that ever. Peace, security and national sovereignty are being encroached upon by imperialist policies of aggression intervention (whether “humanitarian” or other justifications), unilateralism, arms race, terror, ethnic strife and religious conflicts. Neoliberalism is being imposed and spread in all continents. These reinforce economic domination of the imperialist countries, control and exploitation. They further inequality and dramatically worsen the situation of working people.

The international political and economic order imposed by imperialist powers has further restrained national and people’s sovereignty by practicing unfair trade, pushing nations of the South into the “race to the bottom”. Control by capital over media and politics has further concentrated political power in the hands of only a few. At the same time environmental degradation, climate change, epidemics, and HIV/AIDS are posing serious threats to the existence of humanity and indeed all living beings. While fundamental human rights are being persistently degraded, new dimensions of right’s violations have emerged. As ever, the peoples of the South have been the first victims.

Peoples need peace; nations and individuals need security. Neither is permitted by the imperialist nature of the capitalist system. On the contrary, because it is fundamentally unjust, the maintenance of the international order necessary to the expansion of the oligopolistic capitalist market requires the deployment of violence, including military threat and its effective implementation, against all movements, peoples and nations repudiating submission. That’s state terrorism.

American leaders at home and abroad have consistently used the rhetoric of freedom, justice, human rights, rule of law and democracy to persuade their constituents to support wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have justified their intervention on moral, legal and security grounds, with reference to good causes such as helping people in these countries liberate themselves from tyrannical regimes and eliminating sources of terrorism that might threaten American security.

The role of the international organizations like the United Nations is to legalize the crimes of the American imperialism. The NATO aggression and occupation of Afghanistan is just one clear

example of how U.S. imperialism functions by finding sufficient cover
for its deeds.

Fundamentalism will exist as an ideological challenge to imperialism until a more effective anti-imperialist ideology will grow in the region. The growth of fundamentalism happened because Marxism was defeated and isolated, through repression or through co-opting former revolutionaries.

The ending of Taliban government was not a task for “outsiders”. The people of Afghanistan were sick and tired of Talibanisation during the five years of their rule from 1996 until 2001. In reality the Taliban did not control even half of Afghanistan. Had the aggression of the NATO forces not taken place in end of 2001, the most unpopular regime would have lost power anyhow under the immense hatredness of the locals.

The occupation of Afghanistan by NATO forces has played a crucial role in spreading the Talibanisation of the whole region. Pakistan is paying the price of NATO aggression in Afghanistan. It is not the religious fundamentalism that is real danger but the American imperialist role. Pakistan people will deal these medieval forces themselves. They do not need Washington’s patronage. They need friends not masters. Getting rid of American imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq will be a tremendous step forward in bringing peace and security in the whole region and of course in the whole world. However it will not be easy.

Pakistan: Corruption in Privatization
\$23.84 billion Corruption in privatization process during
Musharraf dictatorship
June 2008

There has been massive corruption during the eight years of the Pervez Musharraf-Shoukat Aziz period (1999-2007). While the regime has claimed the privatization process key to economic development, the reality is that it was a total disaster.

On 12 November 2007, former Prime Minister Shoukat Aziz announced that the country earned 417 billion Rupees (\$6.41 billion) through privatization. , Claiming this was a record amount, he contrasted it with the 57 billion Rupees (\$.870 million) earned by civilian governments between 1991-1999. He stated that the cornerstone of our economic growth has been liberalization, deregulation and privatization.

Today (June 2008) it is clear to everyone in Pakistan that there has been a massive economic decline during the period of Shoukat Aziz's military-led government. According to Anti-privatization Alliance Pakistan, a massive 1550 Billion Rupees (\$23.84 billion) worth of corruption occurred during this eight-year privatization push.

This level of looting and plundering state assets tops any other period during the 61 years of Pakistan's independence.

Looking at the privatization of financial institutions alone, a record looting of 700 billion Rupees (\$10.76 billion) took place. When 51 percent of Habib Bank Limited (HBL) shares were sold to the Agha Khan Fund for Economic Development in December 2004 for only 22 billion Rupees, its total assets were worth more than 570 billion Rupees (\$8.76 billion). (HBL had 1437 branches and another 40 in 26 countries; the company owned the branch buildings as well.) Another large bank, United Bank Limited (UBL), was sold for only 13 billion Rupees. The sale of these two banks at throw-away prices is the largest financial scandal in Pakistan history.

Another gross violation of the rules set up by Privatization Commission Pakistan was the privatization of 26 percent of the Pakistan Tele Communication Limited shares to Dubai-based Aitsalat, which bought PTCL after a 10-day strike against privatization. The military regime crushed the strike in June 2005 and Aitsalat then demanded additional concessions. Slashing \$370 million from the original price of \$2.59 billion (157 billion Rupees), PTCL agreed that the price could be paid in installments.

At the time of privatization Aitsalat announced that none of the 70,000 workers would lose their jobs. However by 2007 the company has reduced the work force by 30,000.

Karachi Electrical Supply Corporation was sold for only 16 billion Rupees. Since that time service has declined and most political parties have demanded its renationalization.

There has been a severe crisis in agriculture due to the privatization of fertilizer companies. Pak Saudi Fertilizer in Mir Pur Mathelo was handed over to the Fauji (military) Foundation in 2002 for just 8 billion Rupees. At the time, its annual profit was more than 4 billion Rupees. At Multan, Pak Arab Fertilizer was handed over to the Arif Habib Group for only 13 billion Rupees. Yet when the company was sold in 2006 the factory's land alone was worth over 40 billion Rupees. On 15 July 2006, the largest public sector factory, Pak American Fertilizer, was sold for just 16 billion Rupees.

Following privatization the price of fertilizer has tripled (from 1300 to 3700 Rupees), placing a massive burden on the peasants. In fact, the prices of all agricultural inputs have risen.

Lahore Historic Fallaties hotel was sold for only 1.21 billion Rupees yet it is located in the heart of Lahore.

Large-scale corruption can be seen in almost every deal. There has been a massive price hike in the products produced by the privatized companies. The economy is declining while multinational companies have further monopolized the economy. These facts negate the very justification for privatization.

Unfortunately the present Pakistan Peoples Party government has continued the policies of the previous regime. The new finance minister has been the chairperson of Privatization Commission and minister of privatization during the previous two periods of Benazir Bhutto's government (1988-90, 1994-1996). He declared on 30 April 2008 that we have learned a lot from our previous experiences and we will do a "clean" privatization. He also tried to justified privatization as "pro-worker and pro-people."

The issue is not of clean versus corrupt privatization. The process itself is anti-worker and anti-people as experience has shown both in Pakistan and internationally. The result has been higher unemployment, price hikes, monopolization, low quality, inefficiency and huge profits for the rich.

Under the Nawaz Sharif government (1990-1993), the proceeds of privatization were to be distributed equally for defense, repayment of foreign loans and social welfare. The Sharif government did not practice this formula but at least that was the declared purpose. Under Musharraf Shoukat Aziz, this formula was changed: 90 percent was to go toward the repayment of foreign debts with the other 10 percent used to operate the Privatization Commission and for social welfare expenditures.

The Musharraf Shoukat regime earned \$2.5 billion during 2006-2007 from privatizations with the target for the following year an additional billion. If the chief justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan had

not stopped the privatization of Pakistan Steel Mills Karachi in 2006, the regime would have sold most of the remaining public institutions at bargain prices. This would have been like selling Pakistan.

Still, the website of Privatization Commission updated in March 2008 announces the planned privatization of Pakistan Railways, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), State Life Insurance Corporation, Oil and Gas Development Corporation, Sui Northern and Sui Southern Gas Companies, Faisalabad Electric Supply Corporation, Peshawar Electric Supply Corporation, National Fertilizer Corporation, Port Qasim Authority, Civilian Aviation Authority, Karachi Port Trust, Printing Corporation of Pakistan, All Utility Stores and Corporation, Rice Export Corporation, Cotton Export Corporation and Convention Center Islamabad.

We demand that the PPP government stop the process of privatization. An independent commission should be established to investigate the corruption involved in the previous privatizations. The Privatization Commission and the Privatization Ministry should be abolished. Because it gives constitutional protection to the process of privatization, the Protection of Economic Reform Ordinance should be withdrawn

Here are some facts

According to the Privatization Ordinance of 2000, the purpose of privatization is to alleviate poverty and repayment of foreign debts. But obviously these two purposes have not been accomplished. When privatization began in 1991, the foreign debt was \$23.323 billion, today it is \$45 billion. Internal debts have also been increasing. According to all government and independent surveys, over 45 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The country's national economic growth during the previous decade (1981-1991) averaged 6.7 percent; during the first decade of privatization (1991-2001), growth averaged only 4.4 percent.

The direct negative impact of privatization has been seen on working class. At least 600.000 workers have lost their jobs during the 15 years of privatization and those still working in the privatized factories are on a contract system. There are no permanent jobs in these

factories. Meanwhile the informal sector has grown. But no labor laws govern informal work, consequently super exploitation rules, particularly for women workers..

According to the 2002 report of Public Inquiry Committee of National Parliament, 80 billion Rupees earned by the Privatization Commission cannot be traced. In addition the privatization process has helped create five large cartels that have looted the masses at an unprecedented level. These are:

- An oil cartel based on 10 oil companies, *
- A brokerage cartel based on 4 groups, *
- An Automobile cartel based on 3 companies, *
- A sugar cartel based on 24 companies, *
- A cement cartel based on 10 companies. *

The creation and effective functioning of these cartels has resulted in an unprecedented price hikes and profits for the companies. On the other hand, the privatization process has weakened the trade union movement. While registered trade union membership stood at 870,000 in the early '80s, by 2007, it declined to 296,250.

Clearly privatization is a political weapon in the hands of the capitalists. It is not just an economic attack but a political attack as well. It retards the growth of social, political and class-based consciousness. It reduces the country's social capital and increases private capital. Instead of meeting social needs, it creates and increases private greed.

The World Bank, Transparency International and other international institution talk of state corruption but never speak about the corruption involved in privatization process. The stories of corruption during the privatization process are in abundance in every country but are ignored for political reasons.

The Anti-Privatization Alliance will do its best to stop the path of privatization by exposing the corruption and other irregularities in the process and launching a movement against privatization. We are happy to hear the stories of re-nationalization of privatization

companies in several Latin American countries. That is the only answer
that can be followed by all countries.

Press conference by:

**Farooq Tariq, Khaliq Shah, Azra Shad, Yousaf Baluch, Maqsood
Mujahid**

Anti Privatisation Alliance Pakistan

11 June 2008, Lahore Press Club



Farooq Tariq

Farooq Tariq is a seasoned left activist. He got radicalised during his student days at Punjab University in *mid seventies*. When in 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq imposed a military dictatorship, Farooq Tariq like thousands of activists was forced to go in exile. During his exile years in Holland and England, he co-founded Struggle Group around Monthly *Struggle* (Jeddojuhd), now appearing as weekly *Mazdoor Jeddojuhd*. In 1986, he returned to Pakistan ending his exile and was instrumental in launching *Struggle* from Lahore. When the *Struggle* supporters launched the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) in 1997, Farooq Tariq was elected its General Secretary. Currently, he is central spokesperson of the Labour Party Pakistan, now a rapidly growing *Socialist* party with modest basis all across the country.

Farooq Tariq has played a key role in organising a number of working class organisations and leading dozens of struggles. He has been repeatedly arrested and incarcerated, during the long course of his struggle, but not as frequently as during the Musharraf dictatorship ((1999-2008). Perhaps no other activist was sent behind the bars for over half a dozen times by Musharraf regime. Besides gaol, Farooq Tariq had to spend months in hiding during the heady days of Advocates Movement, in 2007. This movement finally humbled the military dictatorship.

Farooq Tariq occasionally contributes for mainstream newspapers but is a regular contributor for Weekly *Mazdoor Jeddojuhd* while his essays on politics appear in a host of left-wing publications across the globe. He has authored half-a-dozen books on Pakistani politics.

Farooq Sulehria