



# Trade Union Campaign for relief of earthquake victims in Kashmir and Pakistan

Trade Union Rights Campaign Pakistan  
PO Box 52135  
London E9 5WR  
Britain  
12 October 2005

To: Councillors, Members of Parliament, Trade Unions, community and youth organisations

## Earthquake disaster affects the poorest most Funds needed urgently

"I never saw such devastation in my whole life. We are without food, medicines, water and electricity. We desperately need medicines, warm clothes and tents. Please help us otherwise we all will die," Sardar Khalid Mehmood, President of the Paramedic Staff Association Kashmir (speaking from Rawalakot)

Whole families, villages and towns have been wiped out by the earthquake of 8 October, whose epicentre was in Kashmir. There is huge sadness and suffering because of the quake. 21 000 casualties have already been recorded in Kashmir alone and government agencies and the army have not even reached the majority of affected areas. It is not ruled out that the final death toll could climb above 50 000. Four million people have been affected by the quake and up to one million in Kashmir have already spent one night sleeping in the open facing hailstorms and torrential rain. We have received reports that six members of the TURCP and Socialist Movement Pakistan in Kalam (Swat Valley) were tragically killed by the quake.

The worst affected have been the poorest workers and peasants. Emergency services have been non-existent: they have simply collapsed under the strain. Successive governments in Pakistan have repeatedly cut spending for the fire and health service for example. Last year the Musharraf government spent 45% of its budget on the military and only 1.3% on the health service. In some places, those injured who have received medical aid are being operated on in courtyards as clinics are filled to overflowing. Some of the highest casualty figures were seen when school buildings collapsed crushing primary and secondary students to death. The only explanation for this is that school buildings have been left in a dilapidated state for decades, with successive governments spending far more on weapons than education. Neo-liberal economic policies, applied by the representatives of big business in government, have vastly increased the death toll in this disaster

Government officials have claimed that everything is being done. This is nonsense. No serious provision has been made in terms of government spending, over the years, for an eventuality like this. Millions of Pakistani and Kashmiri workers and youth have given food, clothing and money, in a moving show of solidarity with those who have suffered so terribly. But the government has not matched this in terms of action on the ground.

Western imperialist governments have given meagre funds and aid in response. For example, the US and British governments have pledged \$50 million and £1.4 million respectively in aid, so far. And yet, Bush has spent over \$66 billion on military operations in Afghanistan – also in the earthquake affected

region. Following an appeal by the Pakistani authorities, the US administration has agreed to send a miserly eight helicopters to help out in the affected region. But they must have many more helicopters at their disposal for military operations against the Taliban just over the border in Afghanistan.

It is facts like these which make a response from activists and trade unionists vital. The TURC in Pakistan and Kashmir has already collected food aid on the ground and is organising to send a container of aid to Bagh in the next couple of days.

Many aid agencies will be collecting funds over the next weeks. Unfortunately this will be distributed by the same corrupt government whose policies which increased the death toll.

The TURCP is appealing for trade unions to make donations which will go directly to help workers and fellow trade unionists on the ground. Most urgently money will be used to buy tents and blankets as well as food and water.

The money will also be used to build and rebuild trade unions in affected areas as well as to organise campaigns to ensure that the rebuilding efforts are carried out in the interests of the working class and poor peasants and to ensure that big business does not profit out of peoples' suffering.

All donations will be acknowledged and regular reports will be sent out explaining how donations are being used. Our campaign has set up a bank account in London, Britain for the collection of funds outside Asia. Please make all cheques payable to 'TURCP' and send them to Trade Union Rights Campaign Pakistan, PO Box 52135, London E9 5WR, Britain. Or alternatively send the money by Bank Transfer to:

TURCP, account number: 00574699, sort code: 30-95-03, Leytonstone Lloyds TSB Branch, 797-799 High Road Leytonstone	IBAN No: GB70LOYD30950300574699 BIC Code: LOYDGB21500 Swift Code: LOYDGB2L
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If you are sending a bank transfer please send an email to [turcpakistan@yahoo.com](mailto:turcpakistan@yahoo.com) giving details of the transfer or alternatively by post to the above address.

Yours in struggle,



Azad Qadri,  
Organising Secretary, Trade Union Rights Campaign – Pakistan

and Khalid Bhatti, National Organiser Trade Union Rights Campaign – Pakistan

The following unions in Pakistan have backed the campaign: Railway Workers Union workshops, PTCL joint workers action committee, Ptcl Lions union, Postal Employees union, Muthida Labour Federation, Informal sector workers organisation, Teachers union, commercial workers union Lahore, RMS Employees union, Pakistan state life staff union, Agriculture workers union.

The Trade Union Rights Campaign – Pakistan was set up in April 2005 to help coordinate solidarity and support for workers' struggles against downsizing, privatisation, and the neo-liberal agenda of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund which is followed slavishly by the Musharraf government in Pakistan.

We are trade union leaders and activists who have organised themselves on a radical fighting platform to oppose the massive attacks against Pakistani workers by the government and the big companies which dominate the economy.