



Emergency Solidarity Appeal from Pakistani workers and youth under martial law

Trade Union Rights Campaign – Pakistan

PO Box 52135, London E9 5WR, Britain

To all trade unionists, trade union branches and community groups

14 November 2007

Pakistani workers and youth under military repression Support the struggle for democratic and trade union rights!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Musharraf military regime has imposed martial law, arresting and torturing thousands of oppositionists and trade union activists. The working class in Pakistan is, once again, deprived of their fundamental democratic rights after martial law was imposed under the guise of a 'state of emergency'. The right of association, to strike, and to form a union are 'suspended'.

All protests and demonstrations in opposition to emergency rule and government policies face brutal state repression. Three trade union leaders have been arrested and face charges of 'treason', which could mean the death penalty. Their 'crime' is to have organised a press conference to denounce the imposition of 'emergency rule'. All trade union leaders, activists, lawyers and members of political parties who oppose the military regime can face the same fate.

Through the 'emergency laws', the regime has acquired the powers to ban trade unions.

Brutal dictatorship and deadly attacks from anti-worker Islamic groups

As well as facing this horrific state repression, the trade union movement is subject to violent attacks from reactionary Islamic groups, particularly in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), including the Swat valley. All girls' schools in NWFP are closed and many have been attacked and bombed. Female teachers face continuous threats from Islamic groups. Three female teachers and some nurses were recently gunned down. In the areas controlled by these Islamic groups, organised public sector workers are their first targets. Progressive trade union leaders and activists are especially targeted.

The Pakistani working class is caught between the military dictatorship on the one hand, and these reactionary groups on the other. The Trade Union Rights Campaign - Pakistan (TURCP) is organising resistance against both threats. TURCP members in Swat and other parts of the NWFP province are resisting the reactionary Islamic fundamentalist groups, risking their lives. TURCP members are also actively involved in protests and demonstrations taking place against the military regime. Many TURCP members were injured by police baton charges and by other police brutality. The Trade Union Rights Campaign – Pakistan will continue to fight for the political, trade union and economic rights of the working class.

Vicious neo-liberal policies

The military regime, during its eight years in power, has carried out vicious attacks on the conditions of workers in Pakistan. At the behest of the IMF, World Bank and other financial institutions, policies have been carried out which have imposed mass redundancies, declining real wages, increased working hours and even worsened conditions of work. Prices of food items and everyday utilities have increased by 200% to 300% over the last few years. Neo-liberal economic policies and a ban on trade unions and anti-trade union laws are viciously implemented by the Musharraf regime. Its numerous anti-union laws are aimed at further weakening the trade union movement. Only 3% of the work-force is organised in trade unions and that is mostly in the public sector. Workers in any part of the public sector are not allowed to join any political party, which means they cannot actively take part in elections and politics. The regime will use its declaration of a 'state of emergency' to speed up the pace of

privatisation, downsizing and to make more vicious attacks on the conditions of the working class.

The Trade Union Rights Campaign - Pakistan (TURCP) has been actively involved in the day-to-day struggle of workers against privatisation, layoffs and other problems faced by workers. The TURCP also provides legal, political and organisational support to workers. It has a proud history of continued and relentless struggle against the attacks of bosses, the repressive state apparatus and against anti-working class political forces. In recent months, it has produced thousands of posters and leaflets against privatisation, anti-union laws and downsizing. The TURCP also runs workers' education programmes and taken initiatives to form new unions in different industries and workplaces. Three national and four regional unions have been formed from this work. The TURCP has been playing a key role strengthening existing unions. It has the support of more than 100 national and local unions.

Support urgently needed from international workers' movement

Now, under the emergency situation, the Trade Union Rights Campaign - Pakistan (TURCP) urgently needs help from the international workers' movement to combat the Musharraf crack-down. We need aid for those arrested and to produce and distribute material calling for mass resistance. We need to be able to carry on campaigns and to be able to organise defence of trade unionists against the attacks of the reactionary Islamic groups. The support of trade union branches, members and activists is vital to continue our work in these very difficult times. The TURCP thanks all the trade union branches and union activists that have provided us very important financial and solidarity support already.

We will continue our struggle against exploitation, repression, and anti-worker and anti-women Islamic groups and for a better life for the working class. Our struggle for full democratic rights - brutally crushed by the military dictatorship - will continue. Support our demands for:

- ***An immediate end to military rule***
- ***Release all political prisoners, including trade union activists***
- ***Full democratic rights for all, including the right of assembly and protest***
- ***United working class opposition to the anti-worker and anti-women Islamic groups***
- ***Full trade union rights, including the right to organise in the workplace***
- ***No negotiations or 'deals' with the dictatorship***
- ***End British and US support and funding of the Musharraf military regime***
- ***Immediate elections to a democratic constituent assembly; full rights for workers and poor people to participate***
- ***The right to organise an independent political alternative for working people, poor and youth***

Please support the TURCP in any way you can.

Send resolutions of protest via your Pakistani embassy, hold pickets, solidarity meetings or demonstrations.

Please also send urgently needed financial contributions to TURCP

The TURCP has 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.

Alternatively send 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

Please keep us informed of protests, donations, meetings etc. through turcpakistan@yahoo.com and we will keep you informed of developments here as best we can.

Yours in solidarity,



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

On behalf of the TURCP National Executive Committee