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Pakistan

Appeal to support families of four dead comrades

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We have lost our four most brilliant comrades Abdul Salam, Najma Khanum, Rehana Kausar and Wahid Baloch in a road accident on 13th December 2009 near Ormara, Baloachistan. They were in the coastal region, one of the most deprived areas of the country, to organize the home based women workers (HBWW) on one platform.

They held two focus group meetings and a wider consultation on 11-12 and 13 December in port cities of Pasni and Gawadar. They also formed core groups and clusters of local HBWW and planned to organize more meeting in the region in month of January next year.

Comrades Abdul Salam, Najma Khanum, Rehana Kausar and Wahid Baloch were dedicated members of the team who lost their lives for the cause of downtrodden masses and were on mission till their last breath. Another member of team, Mohammed Rafiq Baloch, central president National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan (NTUF) survived but severely injured in that fatal accident.

Comrade Abdul Salam, Najma Khanum and Rehana Kausar were the staff members of Labour Education Foundation (LEF). While Wahid Baloch was trade union activist in industrial city of Hub and by profession he was a driver.

Abdul Salam, 29 was working as coordinator on peace, democracy and trade union issues. He was also elected central Finance Secretary of National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan (NTUF) in 2007. He was the Secretary of Labour Party Pakistan, Karachi chapter for 2007-2009. Comrade Abdul Salam had initiated number of awareness activities for the trade union members, young students and political activists. He conducted 6 regular monthly study circles on social, economic and political issues in different localities of working class. He was the guiding force behind his last initiative of six-month training course on labour laws for new and young trade union activists in a view to build a team of committed workers who represent workers in labour courts.

He was on the of editorial board of weekly Mazdoor Jeddojehad for two years. He was also a regular contributor in respect of articles to Mazdoor Jeddojehad in Urdu and Pashto and was the main source for the LEF's monthly "Newsletter". He had translated a Pashto novel of Noor Mohammed Tarakai in to Urdu. He was Pashto poet of good repute and organizer of the "Jurs", a progressive Pashto literary forum in Karachi. He belonged to working class family and started his career as textile worker in Al Karam Textile Mill, where he was expelled from job nine year ago because of trade union activities. He contested the management in court and won the case in October 2009.

Najma Khanum, 38 was social activist and was the former local body's councilor of the area, mainly comprising of working class. She had been staff member of LEF since 2003. She was the social Mobilizers to organize home based women workers. She was the leader of her community and always at the forefront of all political, trade union and woman rights related rallies and demonstrations. She formed a women theatre group of young girls with the title of "Apna Theatre", means "Our Theatre". Their performances on May Day, Women day and on other important events were always important portion of the programs. She was also a former member of Pakistan National Squad of women field hockey. She served LPP as women secretary of Karachi chapter for two years from 2007 to 2009. She had been running the home based women workers cooperative in Yousuf Ghoth for four years.

Rehana Kausar, 26 was one of the youngest staff member of LEF. She started to work as part time teacher at adult literacy center in Gadap town and become social mobilizer in 2006. She was very energetic and committed with the cause and a great fighter. She was also active member of LPP.

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Wahid Baloch, 40 was basically trade union activist and was sacked from job by the Bawani Air Products manufacturing company three years ago where he worked as a driver. His only crime was that he was trying to form union in the factory. No factory was inclined to give him job in Hub city industrial area due to his union related activities. He was involved in all activities of National Trade Union Federation and partly worked as driver with NTUF. All the comrades were from very poor and working class families. Three were working with full time for LEF and fourth one, the driver was an unemployed trade unionist.

Comrade Abdul Salam leaves behind two little kids, two and four year old and a young widow. Salam was the only one working. Najma leaves behind three children but to some extent grown up, from 13 to 20, all are studying. Her husband has job of contractual nature with very little earnings, living in rented house. Driver Wahid Baloch leaves behind 6 young kids, the eldest is only 14. Wahid was only the source to run the home. His old father and mother also live with his family in rented house. While, Rehana was not yet married, but one of the nine sisters and brothers and one of the two bread winners among them. She was also only hope for her old aged bedridden mother and father.

We as representatives of LEF, NTUF and LPP jointly pledge to do our best to cater the needs of their families and to work hard for the accomplishment of the cause for which they scarified their lives. In this respect we need your help. We appeal to entire circle of our friend, comrades and well wishers to come forward to show their solidarity with families of our shining comrades. We are launching this appeal to all of you to support us for raising 3,000,000 Pak Rupees (35,300 US\$) for the permanent well being of the four families. Our plan is to deposit fixed amounts in saving accounts bank in the name of their immediate family members so that they get a regular monthly income and an increased amount after a certain period of time.

In joint meeting of LLP, NTUF and LEF comrades on 19 December in Karachi they have promise to contribute PRs 605,000 (7,120 US\$) in response to this appeal.

Your contribution will accommodate financial needs of families of our departed comrades, strengthen the confidence in movement and further the cause working people of Pakistan.

Labour Education Foundation (www.lef.org.pk) is a social organization set up in 1993; its main work is to strengthen trade unions in Pakistan. It has done great work to unionize many unorganized workers and strengthening trade unions especially National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan (NTUF) in Pakistan.

You can send your contributions to the bank account of LEF as per following details.

A/C Title: Labour Education Foundation

A/C Number: 01801876

Swift: ALFHPKKALDA

Bank: BANK ALFALAH LTD., LDA PLAZA Branch, KASHMIR ROAD, LAHORE, PAKISTAN

Looking forward for your encouraging responses.

Farooq Tariq (Spokesperson LPP)

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Nasir Mansoor (Deputy General Secretary NTUF)

Khalid Mahmood (Director LEF)