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Pakistan:

Establishment of Awami Workers Party announced

- News from around the world -

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Three leftist parties, Awami Party Pakistan, Labour Party Pakistan and Worker's Party Pakistan, will formally merge into a new party called the Awami Workers Party on November 11 as a first step towards building an alternative to the status quo which has brought Pakistani state and society to the brink of collapse. This was stated by leaders of the three parties at a press conference held on Friday at the Islamabad Hotel.

Speaking to reporters, Workers Party leader Abid Hasan Minto said that the institutions of the state are fragmenting, and often completely at odds with one another. Democratic institutions remain weak and underdeveloped in comparison to the military establishment and civil bureaucracy. The increasingly untenable situation in Balochistan indicates a wider crisis of the federation, thus confirming that our ruling class has learnt little from the secession of east Pakistan in 1971. Finally the state continues to maintain a confrontational and interventionist posture vis a vis neighbouring countries, which serves only to isolate Pakistan and exacerbate internal divisions.

Minto said that the divisions within Pakistan society are quickly becoming irreconcilable. Conflicts along class, ethnic, sectarian, gender and other lines seem to be getting more acute on a daily basis. Violence is commonplace and the cultures of tolerance and harmony that have persisted for thousands of years in the region are increasingly marginalized. Both imperialist powers and religious militants constitute a constant threat to life, livelihood and indigenous culture

Finally, Minto pointed out that governmental performance is abject. The economy is afloat only on borrowed money and time, with the State Bank printing almost Rs. 1 trillion a year simply to meet foreign debt obligations. Delivery of basic services such as health, education, transport, housing and drinking water has effectively been handed over to profiteers with personal links to state functionaries. Justice remains a pipe dream.

Leader of the Awami Party Fanoos Gujjar said that the mainstream political parties that are supposed to both analyse the root causes of these various crises and then devise workable policies to redress them are neither able nor willing to do so. Indeed many of these parties still remain accomplices of the military establishment. Mainstream political discourse is little more than mumbo jumbo while the business of politics is to extend unequal and unjust patronage and power networks.

Gujjar continued that the establishment and complicit political elite sustain neo-colonial state and retrogressive, feudal social structures within Pakistan under the guise of defending the 'greater national interest'. This oppressive structure of power has been further consolidated by capitalist globalization and thus the impoverishment and division of Pakistan's working people deepens.

Progressive and left political parties throughout Pakistan's history have always striven to transform these obsolete structures and democratize state and society, whilst also struggling for democratization of the imperialist world order. In return the left has had to contend with untold state repression and reaction from the rich and powerful at all levels of Pakistani society. Today, the state's reactionary policies have become a Frankenstein that is increasingly impossible to control, class and gender oppression have deepened, while the denial of federalism has ensured the rise and strengthening of centrifugal tendencies.

Farooq Tariq of the Labour Party said that all of Pakistan's myriad crises today, both internal and external, can be addressed only by bringing together all progressive, anti-imperialist, anti-establishment, secular political forces so as to embark on a long-term struggle towards a socialist society, free from exploitation of all kinds. He said working

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people need a political party that not only serves up rhetoric of change but can also provide a workable political programme to deliver change on the basis of the countervailing power of the Pakistani people. The left and progressive forces have made many sacrifices for the establishment of democracy in Pakistan but until this day the working masses of this country have not benefited from the fruits of genuine democracy. The Awami Workers Party is committed to the establishment of real democracy – political and economic – free from the influences of the military, imperialist powers, and a self-serving elite in which all members of society can secure their fundamental freedoms and develop their creative potentialities.

Farooq Tariq concluded by asserting that the Awami Workers Party is not a party of landlords, capitalists, generals or mullahs, but the downtrodden and long-suffering mass of working people. He said that AWP's politics may not be welcome to the ruling elite, but it is the only politics that can extricate state and society from the current quagmire because only by transcending the feudal and capitalist order and the shift to a socialist system will the crises of Pakistani state and society be resolved.

In closing the leaders of the new party summarized the AWP party program:

• Redressal of the state's hostile policy towards neighbouring countries which has been used to justify the military establishment's economic and political power.

• Recognition of Pakistan's multinational essence and the establishment of a genuine federal system based on the right of self-determination for all nations.

• Break from the dictates of multinational capital and imperialism in all its forms.

• Replace existing and oppressive state institutions with those that provide for basic needs and are fundamentally democratic in their functioning.

• Immediate implementation of all existing land reform legislations and elimination of feudal social power in all its forms.

During questions and answers a firm stand against Kalabagh Dam was asserted, and it was pointed out that the party will run for elections but will also continue to build upon the historic traditions of the left in mobilizing workers, peasants, students and women. This, the leaders of AWP said, is the only way to truly challenge the machinations of the establishment.

Awami Workers Party (AWP)
Islamabad, 2nd November 2012