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International Finance Appeal

Help fight against Taliban and military operations

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This is a formal appeal by the Labor Relief Campaign to help in the fight against Taliban and military operations. The purpose is to provide immediate help to some of the more than 1.5 million internally displaced people from the Malakand Division of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in Pakistan.

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Tittle_logo.jpg]

Mazdoor Jeddojuhd

This displacement has resulted from the fight between the Taliban and the Pakistani government. We also aim to publish Mazdoor Jeddojuhd in the Pushto language more frequently. At present it is published weekly in Urdu and monthly in Pushto. We want to counter the ideas both of religious fanatics and state repression. We aim to aid the labour and social movements in the province by publishing their activities and views, bringing them together to form new networks.

The Situation

The Taliban have taken over parts of Pakistan. They have threatened to occupy other parts as well. To pacify them, the government went into an accord with the Taliban this April, imposing a so-called Nizam Adl (system of justice) in Malakanad. The Taliban then imposed medieval laws in the areas under their control, targeting women and minorities. This accord also provided the Taliban with the opportunity to move into other areas.

Then the government went to another the opposite extreme and launched a military operation. This then resulted in an unprecedented influx of refugees into different part of the country. The army says that the operation is meant to wipe out religious fanatics and it will take time. But the religious fanatics are holding on and in fact are spreading all over Pakistan.

A military solution cannot eliminate the fanatics. On the contrary, it will help them to spread their ideas. The Taliban lost power in Afghanistan after NATO forces occupied in 2001. However, with a few years they re-emerged in Pakistan and later re-emerged in Afghanistan. The situation is very complex.

The military operation in Swat covers up the reality that the Pakistan military considers the Taliban an asset and is not willing to sacrifice that asset to please the USA. While army is flushing the Taliban out of Swat, the Jihadi-infrastructure (training camps, seminaries, newspapers, charities; the fronts for the Taliban) remain intact in other parts of the country.

The scale of the insurgency is exacerbated by the 1.5 million people now living and festering in underfunded refugee camps or inadequate and temporary housing, devoid of gainful employment. This displacement does not engender confidence in the capacity of the Pakistani state to solve their problems.

Another major problem is the U.S. drone attacks. Over 700 people have been killed since 2006, with 164 killed in 14 attacks under Obama's watch. These drone attacks are further fueling anti-U.S. sentiments. The US/NATO occupation of Afghanistan is detrimental to the overall stability of the NWFP.

Our Perspective & Strategy

The fight against religious extremism can only be successful when the basic problems of the working class in social, political and economic fields are solved. In addition to developing a system of free education with a secular syllabus for all, this means an end to feudalism, implementation of land reform and an end to the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. Our strategy is to fight the fanatics with local defense committees.

The Alternatives

Both the Taliban and the military are destructive. We must support neither military action nor the Taliban. Our position is more radical than simply working for humanitarian help for the internally displaced persons (IDPs), although this work is absolutely essential. It is more than condemning, on the basis of sovereignty, the drone attacks and the civilian casualties that result from them. We are unequivocally opposed to the war because a military campaign like this will guarantee the violation of human rights for generations to come.

One of the main aspects of our campaign is to intensify the ideological campaign against the growing influence of Taliban. Our strategy is to build and strengthen the labour and social organization in the areas dominated by the Taliban. Since 2004 we have been able to build significant forces of labour, women and peasants in progressive organizations. A proper office, set up in 2004 in Murdan, has played a pivotal role in organizing progressive activities, primarily of women, in different parts of NWFP. Several new trade unions and peasant organizations have been set up and many more were brought together to help each other and unite around one common platform.

In the beginning the most significant development was the printing of Mazdoor Jeddohud in Pushto, the local language in the NWFP. The paper began on a voluntary basis with over 200 poets, writers, trade union, social and women activists lending their support. This is the first progressive Pushto paper of the trade unions and progressive writers. Five editions have been printed and are available on line (www.jeddojuhud.com <<http://www.jeddojuhud.com/>>). This is one concrete way to counter the religious fanatics in the language the majority of the Pukhtoon working class can read. It is imperative to increase the number of Pushto editions.

The Taliban has become a great danger to our existence and must be opposed. Although some progressive currents have called them anti-imperialists, they are like neo-fascists. Now the general public is turning against the Taliban. The swing in the public's perception was catalyzed by a video showing the Taliban whipping a girl, shocking Pakistanis. However Taliban spokesperson Muslim Khan defended the punishment and asserted that the girl should have been stoned.

What is Labor Relief Campaign (LRC)?

After the devastating earthquake in Kashmir and other areas in October 2005, five organizations including Women Workers Help Line, Labour Education Foundation, Labour Party Pakistan, National Trade Union Federation and Progressive Youth Front took up an initiative to deal with the emergency that left over 100,000 dead and many more injured and displaced. Within two months, the LRC raised over half a million U.S. dollars from inside and outside Pakistan. This money provided immediate relief to the affected people.

Immediately after the military operation began in the first week of May 2009, once again the LRC initiated a campaign to help the internally displaced. LRC relief camps have been set up and volunteers raised a significant amount of

money. The LRC bought and distributed goods from 16-18 May 2009 at different refugee camps in the NWFP.

LRC position:

We believe it is essential to develop a short-term, as well as a long-term, radical plan to confront religious fundamentalism. The following are a few points we are promoting through our literature:

Â· The LRC demands separation of the state from religion.

Â· We believe that at least 10 percent of national budget needs to be allocated to education. We must end state subsidies to the madrassas and nationalize all the major private /religious educational institutions, integrating them into a revamped public education system open to all.

Â· The LRC demands a radical land reform program, effective immediately.

Â· There should be a radical reduction in the army budget, an end to the nuclear program, and a redistribution of army lands.

Â· The LRC stands for a comprehensive legal and constitutional reform package that includes the decolonization of FATA, protection of minorities/ women, the convening of a committee (comprised particularly of minorities and women) to draft new educational curriculum, and the convening of an assembly to write a new, minority-friendly, secular constitution.

Â· The LRC demands the announcement of a living wage policy.

Â· The LRC demands an end to the occupation of Afghanistan by NATO and American forces and U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and other areas of the world.

Please Donate

The Labour Relief Campaign requests that social organizations, individuals, trade unions and political activists and parties come forward to help this important campaign. Please donate to the campaign by affiliating with LRC. To affiliate, a minimum donation of US \$300 is recommended.

Below are details of the account for sending money to the LRC. We will update you with all the relevant information on the campaign as well as on subsequent political developments.

A/C Title: Labour Education Foundation

A/C Number: 01801876

Route:

Please advise and pay to Citi Bank, New York, USA Swift CITI US 33 for onward transfer to BANK ALFALAH LTD.,

KARACHI, PAKISTAN A/C No. 36087144 and for final transfer to BANK ALFALAH LTD., LDA PLAZA, KASHMIR ROAD, LAHORE, PAKISTAN Swift: ALFHPKKALDA for A/C No. 01801876 OF LABOUR EDUCATION FOUNDATION.

Member organizations

- 1- Women Workers Help Line
wwhlpk@yahoo.com www.wwhl.org.pk <<http://www.wwhl.org.pk/>>

- 2- Labour Party Pakistan
Labour_party@yahoo.com www.laborpakistan.org <<http://www.laborpakistan.org/>>

- 3- Labour Education Foundation
lef@lef.org.pk www.lef.org.pk <<http://www.lef.org.pk/>>

- 4- National Trade Union Federation Pakistan
ntufpak@gmail.com

- 5- Progressive Youth Front
pyf_pakistan@yahoo.com

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