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**Pakistan**

# **Top judges' anti-workers attitude: Now face the music of workers' anger on 1st March**

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**There is a growing trend among the higher courts of Pakistan to show their anti-workers' anger whenever there is a case being heard on the issue of strikes, demonstrations, rallies and other means of peaceful protests. There is a different attitude of the higher courts about the protests of lawyers and other sections of the middle classes. There is a very clear discriminatory attitude towards working-class struggle in Pakistan by the top judges.**

Top judges are happy to take individual cases of violation of human rights and we are happy with that, however, whenever there is a collective action by a section for the working class in Pakistan, the attitude seems always to favour of the bosses. It has been shown in declaring the workers' strikes as illegal, rejecting the bail application of the arrested workers during strikes, not taking notices of gross violations of labour laws, no implementation of minimum wages, no remedies for those workers losing jobs in violation of labour laws and so on.

Labour Party Pakistan has decided to organize a day of action for workers' right to protest and against the top judges' discriminatory attitude towards the struggle of the working class. On Tuesday 1st of March, thousands of workers across Pakistan will organize rallies, demonstrations and strikes to assert their rights of organizing peaceful means of struggle.

There will be a complete strike of power looms and textile workers in Faisalabad, Jhang, Gojra, Toba Tek Singh and Kamalia. Hundreds of textile factories and power looms factories will be shut down during this strike. In Faisalabad, thousands of workers will come to Ghanta Ghar, the center of Faisalabad and will organize a sit in. Over 250,000 workers will take part in strikes and rallies on the day in Faisalabad division.

Four leaders of the Faisalabad power loom workers, Fazal Ilahi, Akbar Kamboh, Rana Riaz and Babar Randhawa have been behind bars since 21st July 2010. They were arrested during a power loom workers' strike for a wage increase and were framed under anti terrorist laws. Despite all the assurances by the police and local administrations during several protest rallies to remove the anti terrorist charges against them, they are still facing the terrorist charges and are behind bars. Their bail application was rejected last week by the reactionary chief justice of Lahore High Court without looking at the file of the case.

**We have decided enough is enough; now face the music of Pakistani working class on 1st March across Pakistan.**

Over 600 Pakistan Telecommunication (PTCL) workers have been suspended or removed from their jobs by the administration of the privatized PTCL. Their crime: to organize protest for wage increase. Most of the 600 workers of PTCL are the leaders of different unions of PTCL and there is a whole sale attack on the unions in PTCL. The top judges are quite on the issue and no action taken by the courts or even by the PPP government about the fate of these very senior leaders of the trade union movement.

They are now organized in a united front of all the PTCL unions and will start their mass campaign for the reinstatement from 23th February by erecting a protest camp in Islamabad and then from 1st of March will join the national campaign for workers' rights.

Despite the stay order of the National Industrial Relation Commission (NIRC), 17 union leaders have been kicked out of their jobs when they formed a union. Nishat Textile Mills is owned by the richest man in Pakistan, Mian Mansha,

thanks to the privatization of MCB Bank under Nawaz government that Mian Mansha has become the richest man and has become a very anti worker boss. The union in MCB was thrown out and now all the textile factories of Mian Mansha are without any union.

Most of the union members of The Inter Wood furniture factory lost their job after they formed the first ever union in Lahore factory of Inter Wood. It is known to labour department of Punjab that Mian Nawaz Sharif family took special interest in this case to favor the boss who is a close friend of the family. No action was taken by any court of Pakistan for this gross violation of human rights of the labour for their constitutional right of forming associations.

New Khan Metro Bus Service is owned by a leader of Muslim League (the boss changes the Muslim League frequently, now a leader of PMLN and earlier was in PMLQ). The first ever union in the company was suppressed by the boss by terminating the jobs of the union leaders. The case has been in labour courts for over two years and no grievances of the union is been addressed by the courts.

No labour department officer can enter any industrial units in Punjab. This was the order of Pervaiz Ilahi in 2003 (the Punjab chief minister under Musharaf), a complete unity is shown by Mian Shahbaz Sharif on this issue with him, this ban is still intact despite a very clear order of Lahore High Court and courts seem impotent after they have decided in favour of workers to implement their order.

There are at least 14 other cases of top judges' discriminatory attitude towards the workers' effort to form new trade unions.

There will be demonstrations in at least 50 cities of Pakistan on 1st March 2011, we will issue the list of the cities and place and timing of these demonstrations and rallies.

## Our demands

- Release the four textile workers facing terrorist charges immediately;
- Reinstate all PTCL suspended workers with immediate effect;
- The courts must take action against those bosses violating labour laws;
- Lift labour inspection from the factories;
- A guarantee of implementation of Rupees 7000 wages for all unskilled workers according to the notification of the government all over Pakistan and just in Islamabad , (Chief Justice Iftikhar Choudry issued an order of implementing this in Islamabad while taking a sue moto notice of a security guard);
- Respect workers right to strike, organize unions and demand a respectable working condition, environment and wages for all workers;
- Increase the minimum wage to Rupees 15000 monthly for all workers.

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We expect all friends and supporters of workers to participate in these rallies. We also call on other political parties and trade unions to endorse this call of action.