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**Pakistan**

# **Urgent Appeal : Death threat to activists imprisoned in Pakistan**

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**During the last week we have received particularly alarming information on the fate of five political prisoners in the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan, the Himalayan "Northern Territories" of Pakistan.**

In the morning of 28th of April, these five political prisoners were violently beaten and tortured by the police and the agents of the security services. They were left for at least a week without any treatment for their injuries, without seeing a doctor, in violation of a court injunction demanding that they be examined with only dry bread to eat. They were forcibly transferred to a prison reserved for hardened criminals and we can fear that the goal of this transfer was to have them murdered by other prisoners (in a fight among prisoners...) so that the authorities would not be held directly responsible.

The five prisoners concerned are members of the Labour Party Pakistan, (LPP) and of the Progressive Youth Front (PYF). The best-known among them, Baba Jan, has just been re-elected to the federal committee of the LPP during its recent congress in March.

The prisoners have been kept in secret since the 28th of April attacks (even their lawyers have not been able to see them); it has therefore been difficult to gather information. The latest news is that Baba Jan, Iftikhar Hussain and Amir Ali have been severely injured. Baba Jan has apparently two broken fingers (possible a broken hand?), wounds to his face and his head shaved in order to humiliate him. Two others, Ameer Khan and Rashid Minhas, are less severely injured.

They have been transferred to the high level prison of Zulfikarabad, in the city of Gilgit.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) published a communiqué on the 4th of May in which it considers "exceedingly worrying" the information received (according to which at least five activists have been tortured) [1]. It notes with concern that the five activists "who have been in prison for several months continue to face very harsh treatment for protesting against the poor quality of food and delay in hearing of cases of prisoners at the jail". La commission "strongly protests maltreatment of the activists". It "demands that the basic rights and due process must not be denied to the five political activists". "Those accused of torturing them must be suspended pending investigation and those found guilty punished under the law." Finally, the Commission concludes "the government must desist from making a terrible situation in Gilgit even worse by stubbornly sticking to its strong-arm tactics."

On the 7th of May, la HRCP launched an "urgent appeal" that letters should be sent to the federal authorities and those of Gilgit-Baltistan. [2]

**Reminder of past circumstances.** As the HRCP states, the five "have been incarcerated for protesting on behalf of the victims of forced displacement on account of the Attabad landslide in January 2010". This devastating landslide, caused by flooding occurred in the Hunza valley. In August 2011, the police fired on demonstrators demanding that all the families concerned should receive the aid promised killing one boy, and then his father who came to protect him. These murders provoked a veritable local uprising. Baba Jan, the LPP and the PYF played a very active role in making these facts known nationally and this is why they were actively sought by the security services. Baba Jan gave himself up in September 2011 fearing that he would be secretly and summarily executed if he were discovered while in hiding. [3]

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**The current context.** Gilgit is not the only place where progressive trade-union activists have been tortured. This was also the case very recently for seven workers from the weaving industry in Karachi, whose crime was to want to form a union in a workplace subject to the boss's terror " these facts provoked an international outcry from trade unions, EU representatives and anti-torture campaigns. [4]

In Pakistan there is a policy of criminalisation of the social movements that we find in many other countries, including in Western ones. But this policy is implemented here in a situation of extreme social, religious sectarian and state violence. Activists are dragged in front of redoubtable anti-terrorist jurisdictions or accused of foul crimes (rackets, murders...). The existing authorities and the repressive forces have an (unfortunately well-founded) feeling of impunity.

All of the progressive movement is under threat. Leaders of peasant associations and trade-union leaders close to the LPP are currently repressed not only in Gilgit but also in the Punjab or Sind. Repression is spreading and goes so far as to threaten the lives of activists, a certain number of whom have been killed in the last few years, such as the peasant activists from the military farm of Okara [5] or the activists of the weavers' unions in Faisalabad [6].

**Urgency.** We have to respond to this terror policy against the workers', peasants', popular and political progressive movement. Pakistani activists need our solidarity. The most urgent today is to protect the lives of the five detained in Gilgit and demand their immediate unconditional release as well as an end to all trials before the anti-terrorist jurisdiction. There must be no further violence against them, and those responsible must be tried.

Many protest actions have been called by the LPP and the PYF in Pakistan itself. It is very important that solidarity is also shown very rapidly on the international level so that the Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan authorities know that they will be held responsible for what happens to Baba Jan and his comrades.

Different solidarity initiatives have already taken place: in Australia, in the USA (with the participation of radical ecology networks), in Sri Lanka, etc. The first actions are being prepared in Europe at the parliamentary level notable. We will report on these initiatives.

We are making an urgent appeal for solidarity to spread and more initiatives to be taken: letters, delegations and pickets to Pakistani embassies; information to be spread through international media, alert warnings sent to the solidarity networks, statement from human rights' organisations, etc.

We will report on the situation again very soon and we also call for the financial solidarity that the LPP needs in order to organise the defence of its militants and to support their families.

*For more information on this question, click here: [JAN Baba](#)*

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## Financial solidarity

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### **Cheques**

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#### Bank Account:

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10 boulevard Chanzy  
93100 Montreuil  
France  
ESSF, account number 445757C

#### International bank account details :

IBAN : FR85 3000 2005 2500 0044 5757 C12  
BIC / SWIFT : CRLYFRPP  
Account holder : ESSF

*For a recent update on the financial campaign, see on ESSF [Financial update of the 2011 Pakistan Solidarity Campaign](#)*

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[1] See on ESSF [Baba Jan case: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan slams torture on detained activists in Gilgit](#).

[2] See on ESSF [Gilgit-Baltistan/Pakistan: Torture of detained political activists in Gilgit jail](#).

[3] See [Violent repression in the north of Pakistan](#).

[4] See on ESSF [Appel urgent – Pakistan : Sept personnes torturées pour avoir créé un syndicat](#) (in French).

[5] See on ESSF [Pakistan/Okara: AMP commemorates third death anniversary of tenants killed by Military henchmen](#).

[6] See on ESSF [Trade Union Leaders Heavily Sentenced in Pakistan: Urgent Finance appeal for "Faisalabad 6"](#).