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Pakistan

# Left groups unite

- News from around the world -

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**Six Pakistani left parties and groups have united to form Awami Jamhoori Tehreek (AJT - the People's Democratic Movement), which has the potential to become the fifth-largest political group in Pakistan. The AJT aims to contest the 2007 elections.**

The parties in the AJT are the National Workers Party (NWP), the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP), Awami Tehreek (AT - People's Movement), Pakistan Mazdoor Kissan Party (PMKP), Pakistan Mazdoor Mehaz (PMM - Workers Front) and Meraj Mohammed Khan Group (MMKG).

[<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/local/cache-vignettes/L320xH239/pakistanleftdemo-1003c.jpg>]

A 12-member convening committee has been formed with two members from each group. Abid Hassan Minton from the NWP will be the national convener and Afzal Khamoosh from the PMKP will be secretary of the convening committee. The LPP will organise the AJT secretariat in Lahore.

The AJT has announced a campaign against growing militarisation and the grip of imperialism and religious fundamentalism in Pakistan. On March 18, a rally was held in Lahore to mark the third year of the occupation of Iraq.

The AJT will hold a public meeting on April 21 in Karachi to oppose the military action in Baluchistan, and has called a nationwide mass workers' rally for May 1 in Karachi.

According to LPP general secretary Farooq Tariq, this new left unity project will strengthen the organisation of workers and peasants.

"The draft program of the AJT is mainly an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist and anti-feudal program", he told Green Left Weekly, adding that the program calls for "the abolition of all discriminatory laws against women and minorities".

The NWP, Tariq explained, is a well-known left party in Pakistan. It came out of a merger between the Workers Party and the Pakistan Socialist Party in the early 1990s. The NWP is a radical party that does not include the word "socialism" in its manifesto.

"It has some important personalities of the left and has respectable weight in the trade union movement. While it is not as active as the LPP, we have worked together for some time despite some political differences.

"We have been working together in the Anti-war Committee Pakistan, Anti-privatisation Alliance and Pakistan Peasants Coordinating Committee."

The PMKP is an ex-Maoist party - mainly based in the North-West Frontier Province - which led a peasant struggle in the '70s and still has a significant base there, and to some extent in Punjab. The PMM is mainly based in Karachi and has a base in the unions.

AT is the largest party in the AJT. It was considered a radical nationalist party but has moved left in recent times, Tariq told GLW. "It mobilised more than 25,000 in Bhit Shah Sind on March 5 for its national convention", which LPP representatives attended.

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The AT "has led a successful movement against building a controversial dam recently and is part of several alliances on the issue of water in Sind. It has a mass base among women in Sind."

Tariq explained that the MMKG is led by a well-known left personality, Meraj Mohamed Khan. "He was one of the main student leaders in the '60s and has led the youth movement against the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan. He was a founder of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

"Meraj Khan became a minister under Bhutto, but he resigned when the PPP fired at a workers' strike, killing many in early 1972. He was jailed for the next four years by Bhutto." According to Tariq, Khan then formed a small party, "but later merged with Imran Khan, the Pakistani cricket hero, to form the Pakistan Justice Movement. He became secretary of the party but then left his party due to the feudal attitude of Imran Khan."

Tariq described the AJT as a joint activity-oriented forum and not even an alliance, at this stage. "We need to give the room for the groups to work together in activities and see the possibilities in future and also to bring more left groups into it. All parties in the AJT will work independently but also together as the AJT."

From [Green Left Weekly](#), March 22, 2006.