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Pakistan

The international solidarity campaign with Ali Wazeer and Moshi Dawar

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An international solidarity campaign has been ongoing since late May, following the bloody repression of the Pashtun Tahfuz Movement (PTM) by the Pakistani army. It is important to continue this, as the stakes are so high.

The Pashtuns (Pathans) live in northwestern Pakistan [1], on the border with Afghanistan (a state in which there are also Pashtun populations). The PTM leads its struggle in non-violent forms and is not an independentist. It thus differs from other movements that have engaged in armed liberation struggle in Balochistan, in the southwest of the country. He only demands justice from the Pakistani state.

The history of this region is very complex. The Pashtuns were the main ethnic group in Afghanistan, but the wars that ravaged the country led many Pathans to settle on the Pakistani side of the border. The Pashtun elite has been integrated into the functioning of the state, the administration and, in particular, the officer corps in the army. It has spread all over the country.

The PTM is also the target of violent attacks by Taliban movements operating throughout the region. Ali Wazeer, one of the two Pashtun deputies currently in prison, has had his family decimated by them.

A mass movement

The International media tend to blur Pashtuns with the Taliban. The PTM's fight shows that this is not the case. This is all the more true since the latter is socially very rooted and very representative.

The Pashtuns are estimated to number about 50 million, the majority of them living in Pakistan (about 30 million?). [2] In addition to the population residing in Afghanistan, the Pashtun diaspora is significant in Europe, Australia and the United States. They are also strongly present among migrant workers in the Middle East.

Pashtuns are also present in various parts of Pakistan, so the PTM has probably become the largest mass movement in the country, capable of mobilizing not only in the northwest, but also in Lahore (Punjab) and Karachi (Sindh, in the south), for example. It receives the active support of a front of components of the Pakistani left. This is one of the reasons why it has become the target of the military and special services, who want to break it.

On May 26, the army fired at a peaceful demonstration organised by the PTM protesting against the abuses suffered by the population (especially women) during operations in the border region. At least 13 people were killed and more than 40 injured. The two PTM deputies, Ali Wazeer and Mohsin Dawar, were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and then imprisoned in Peshawar [3]. They were directly targeted by the shooting and Mohsin Dawar was one of the injured.

The PTM, a mass movement, has two elected members in the National Assembly. Ali Wazeer is a member of the "The Struggle" movement, which recently became part of the framework of the Fourth International. Mohsin Dawar does not have a specific "party" membership. They both show great courage.

A sustainable campaign

They have received a lot of support in Pakistan, including from feminist groups very sensitive to violence against Pashtun women by repressive forces of the state and by the Taliban.

An international petition has been initiated via the Europe solidaire sans frontières (ESSF) website. It has already received some 500 signatures from a large number of countries: Argentina and Brazil, France, Poland and Portugal, Philippines (Mindanao) or Canada-Québec, Tunisia and Algeria, to name a few. This petition is currently posted on the home page of our site [\[4\]](#)

The objective of this campaign is threefold:

- Demand the release of Ali Wazeer and Mohsi Dawar;
- Keep them safe after their release. The Pakistani army has close links with the Taliban movements in Afghanistan (others are operating in Pakistan itself) and would not necessarily prevent them from being murdered;
- Achieve a return to normalcy in the north-west where the Pashtuns are currently under a real blockade and state of emergency.

So it is not a one-off campaign. It must carry in the long term.

In general, the situation for progressive forces in Pakistan is very difficult. Support for the PTM is one of the manifestations of solidarity that we must continue towards the left and the Pakistani people's movements. The "disappearance" of bloggers, trade unionists, peasant leaders and the use of torture are regular. Women's movements face a multifaceted violence. What remains of democratic rights is under threat. Other concrete solidarity campaigns are on the agenda.

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[1] The province which was previously North West Frontier Province is now called Kyber Paktunhwa

[2] Pakistan has a population of 212 million

[3] The capital of Kyber Paktunhwa

[4] <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article49080>.