

# **The Lawyers Movement and the question of democratic struggle in Pakistan: a brief review**

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Pakistan is once again a central focal point of imperialist extension of global agenda and so-called war against terrorism. The American imperialism and its coalition partners want to continue their policies with the new coalition government of PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party) PML N (Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz) and ANP (Awami National Party) under the supervision of unpopular president retired General Pervez Musharaf. He is a darling of the West and is in many agreements with imperialistic forces.

American claims that they had invested a huge amount of 60 billion Dollars for the strengthening of Pervez Musharaf dictatorship. They can not leave him alone after this massive investment.

During his nine years of power, General Musharaf didn't have to face any massive internal challenge, but on 9 March 2007, he made a mistake to suspend the Chief Justices of Supreme Court of Pakistan Mr. Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry. In contrast to the previous practices of the judiciary, the Chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry strongly opposed Musharaf dictatorial order and decided to say “No”. He was initially asked to resign and he refused, then the dictatorship had to suspend him from the job illegally.

The illegal suspension of Chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry was strongly condemned by the Supreme Court Bar Association and Pakistan Bar Council. The two representative bodies of lawyers took decision that 80,000 lawyers all around the country will go on peaceful movement against Musharaf attack on judiciary.

This timely decision was appreciated by all section of society and thousands went on the roads in support of lawyer's movement. To suppress the movement, the regime went on most known repressive measures. Thousand of lawyers, political and social activist were arrested, tortured, injured and many killed by Musharaf regime.

After four months of regular proceeding at Supreme Court of Pakistan, it declared that suspension of chief justice was illegal. He was restored to its position. General Musharaf had to accept this decision because of the strong lawyers movement and public pressure. But he did not accept the total independence of judiciary, so he imposed emergency on Nov 3, 2007.

After the imposition of emergency, the constitution of Pakistan was suspended and PCO (provisional constitution order) was issued. 63 top Judges refused to take oath under the repressive PCO. The

Musharaf regime arrested the judges, lawyer and political activist who were opposing this illegal act. To counter the lawyer's movement, Musharaf went into a deal with Pakistan Peoples Party Benazir Bhutto in 2007.

The agreement was seen in the shape of NRO (National Reconciliation Ordinance) with exile leadership of Benazir Bhutto under the pressure of Bush Administration.

The Bush administration wanted an effective political alliance to control the growing influence of religious fundamentalism. He wanted Benazir Bhutto and Musharaf to work together. Just after the return from exile, Benazir Bhutto realized the public mood against her policies so she tried to retreat her commitment with Bush and Musharaf. As consequences she lost her life on 27 December 2007.

There were a lot of expectations after the general elections of Feb 18, 2008. It was a massive anti Musharaf vote. Some thought that there will be a change in policies but it was not the situation. All the judges are still deposed, economic and political policies of Musharaf are continuing, price hike and load shedding of electricity has made the lives of people hell.

The new PPP government don't have any solution of economic, political and judicial crises so situation of going to be worse day by day. The alliance with Muslim League has broken. PPP leadership is going on with the American imperialism and having a power share with Musharaf, the PPP government is on a fast track of unpopularity. It will face the music. It can not go on with the present policies. The people have seen the real ugly face of the corrupt PPP leadership. It is time for alternative ideas and alternative policies. Labour Pakistan is bringing these policies into the eyes of the masses and becoming popular day by day.

After the formation of the new government, the main stream ruling political parties promised that they will restore the Judges within 30 days on their pre November positions, though 12 days extension was agreed by the two main parties, but they are still failed to restore the top judges.

A major political party PML Nawaz had withdrawal its ministers on 12 May 2008 from the cabinet and announced they will join the purposed Long March of Advocates for the restoration of judiciary.

All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM), an alliance of 20 political parties that boycotted the general elections, have announced that they will start the movement for restoration of judiciary, rule of law, and for the cancellation of constitutional amendment announced by Pervez Mushraf.

Labour Party Pakistan and some other Left wing political parties are also members of APDM. The Government denial for the restoration of Chief Justice Iftakhar Muhammad Choudray is also part of American strategy towards Pakistan. It seems the American Imperialism do not want an independent judiciary. They need those judges whose obey and do not oppose the Bush administration political and economic agenda for Pakistan.

Due to worse economic and political situation, poverty is growing rapidly and hundred of the people are committing suicide every year. On average, 4 persons were committing suicide in the month of April 2008. The Government has no agenda for the improvement of this worsening situation but they are implementing the policies of new liberalism, privatization, and free market economy on the dictation of IMF, World Bank. These policies are directly responsible for the growing poverty in Pakistan.

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