

# **Peasant women forces police to retreat: Anti terrorist charges withdrawn against trade union leader**

Wednesday 30 April 2008, by [TARIO Farooq](#) (Date first published: 29 April 2008).

Today on 29 April, at Okara, hundreds of women, children with their (Thapas) sticks forced dozens of police officers to retreat. The police had come to vacate the land reoccupied by the tenants during the last two weeks. Ex military officers like brigadiers and colonels had taken over the land of the tenants forcefully some six years ago at Kulana Estate Military Farms in Okara.

The Anjuman Mozareen Punjab (AMP) had decided to strike back and take over the land once they cultivated. The tenants reoccupied over 150 acres of land. He ex military officers demonstrated yesterday in Okara and asked the police to take actions. Over 100 police officers went to the area to vacate the land occupied by the tenants.

They did not expect much resistance but were surprised to see the level of resistance put up by the peasant women and children. For over three hours, there was pitch battle between the two groups. The police used its sticks while the peasant women used its Thapas, a wooden stick normally used to clean the dirty cloths at the canal side.

It was already decided in a meeting that if police intervene, it would be women to shoot the first shot. This was already in our experience from the battlefields of 2002, 2003 at the same district but in different Estate that women are the best fighters. It proved once again the right tactics.

Saleem Jhakar, peasant secretary Labour Party Pakistan Punjab, leads the AMP in this area. He was elected to the LPP Punjab Committee and as peasant secretary on 20 April at Lahore LPP Punjab congress. On 17 April we had already held a massive peasant conference in a nearby area and had warned the authorities about any intervention in our villages.

## **The Anti terrorist Charges to be withdrawn against the workers leader**

The Labour Minister of Punjab Mr. Ashraf Sohna informed me this evening that he has been to Faisalabad and has spent several hours to resolve the issue. Finally, he went to jail to meet Niaz Kamoka, the power looms workers leader who is in jail under anti terrorist charges. He asked the police to withdraw the charges and demanded from the workers to end the strike. I shared a platform with the minister yesterday evening at a television forum on May Day and demanded that he intervene on the issue. I raised it in the Forum as well and he assured on line that it would be resolved within a day. Mr. Ashraf Sohna is an MP from Okara district and comes from Pakistan Peoples Party. He knew very well about our militant activity at Okara military Farms and had been a supporter of our demands earlier as well.

After meeting the minister yesterday evening, I postponed my scheduled press conference on the issue and decided to wait for a day of the outcome of his claim to resolve the issue peacefully. It was ok in the end and Niaz Kamoka be released tomorrow according to the minister. The power looms workers leaders only crime was to demand Rupees 6000 wages as was announced by the prime

minister of Pakistan.