

Pakistan: Workers injured, arrested at the beginning of Faisalabad strike

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Several workers have been injured by police tear gas shelling and by power looms bosses gangsters firing and stone throwing. Rana Tahir, district president of Labour Qaumi Movement is one of them. Over 100 workers have been arrested so far by the police which is all out in favor of the bosses. Workers are out in thousands from different parts of Faisalabad to reach the city center.

The newly appointed police chief of Faisalabad Aftab Cheema is famous for fake police encounters and is showing muscles now to the working class movement. He is been brought in to "control" the labour movement. Punjab Government of Mian Shahbaz Sharif cannot go very far on this road of repression.

Labour Party Pakistan has appeal to all its supporters to denounce the use of police force against workers and condemn the actions of repression.

At least two district of Punjab have aroused in terms of class struggle. Power looms workers in district Jhang are on strike for the last fifteen days. In Faisalabad, over 100,000 workers have started their strike today despite all the police threats and heavy rains. Workers have started their processions from different parts of the city to reach the center of Faisalabad despite an imposition of section 144 that ban gathering of five or more in public places.

Today, the power looms bosses in Jhang district have paid a half page advertisement in *Daily Express Faisalabad* asking government to suppress the workers movement. The bosses alleged that Labour Qaumi Movement (LQM) is linked to Mutihida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a sectarian mass organization in Karachi and is part of the coalition government of Pakistan Peoples Party at Center and in Sindh. The bosses claimed that 15 days strike has cost them over 9 billion Rupees and 15000 power looms factories are closed. They appealed the government to save Jhang becoming another Karachi.

Bosses are lying. LQM has nothing to do with MQM. LQM is an independent labour organization of mainly power looms and textile workers and the leadership is members of Labour Party Pakistan. The advertisement is an attempt to smear the LQM leadership and to provoke the Punjab government against the working class movement.

In Faisalabad, the local administration has imposed section 144 to stop workers marching to city center. They had used all the SHO in different areas to pressurize the workers for cancellations of the strike. The LQM leadership refused yesterday all the fake assurances of the local administration for mediation between bosses and workers. They have used this tactics several times and LQM postponed their planned actions. One such action of a strike was on 5th July, which was postponed on the assurances of the administration. Very next day, two leaders of LQM were gunned down in one of their offices.

There is no way back. LPP appeals to all its supporters to use all means to support the working class movement in Faisalabad and Jhang.

Strike to go ahead despite the ban and threats

July 19, 2010

Faisalabad administration have imposed section 144 and banned all public gatherings from today. This is to prevent the strike call by Labour Qaumi Movement that starts tomorrow to press for better rates and wages for power looms workers.

The police inspectors have been calling all the main leaders of LQM and asking them to withdraw the call for a strike. Every LQM local sector in charge have been called by the police and pressurized to cancel the strike call.

The strike call by LQM was given after the local power looms bosses failed to implement the government fixed 17 percent increase in the rates of the workers. Although, the public sector workers have been given a 50 percent wage increase this year, the private sector workers would get only 17 percent wage and rates increased if the bosses agree to implement. The LQM leadership gave several notices to the bosses and the administration. However, none of the two took it seriously.

Instead of listening to workers, a new police chief famous for fake police encounters have been posted in Faisalabad and a new District Administration Office (DCO) is been brought in to deal the situation. Police has also failed to arrest the murderess of the two labour leaders of LQM who were killed in their office on 6th July.

Police today also failed to protect the two Christian brothers falsely accused of blasphemy. Both were murdered today in district courts by an unknown person. There has been a violent reaction to these murders by the Christian youth. In retaliation, Muslims youth are also attacking Waris Pura area where the majority is Christians. At the time of writing this report, there are reports of cross firing in Waris Pura.

Workers leaders gathered today at LQM office and decided to go ahead with the strike despite all the threats and intimidations.

We need your support. We will keep you updated about the situation tomorrow. Please protest if the government uses violent mean to end this strike by arrests, lathe charge or firing.

The main stream media is ignoring the worsening situation of Faisalabad workers. Not a single report by any main stream media is been printed or broadcasted on the murder of the two labour leaders.

Workers are demanding to implement what government has already decided. It is not accepted by the bosses. Instead of arresting the bosses, the police are threatening the workers if they go on strike. Strike is our basic human right. It is the most peaceful act of protest that workers are engaged in. They will just refuse to work. They are not violent. They are not doing any suicidal attacks. They are exercising the rights that the constitution of Pakistan has granted them.

We have not accepted any authoritarian rules during the military dictatorship. We will not accept now either. Labour Party Pakistan appeal to all its supporters nationally and internationally to take notice of this gross violations of human and labour rights in Faisalabad, the third largest city of Pakistan.

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