

Press Release

Pakistan - Occupy Lahore: Anti Capitalist Camp

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Leftwing political parties, trade unions, social activists and student groups at a press conference in the Labour Party office on Wednesday invited people to join them in an Occupy Lahore: Anti-Capitalist camp at 1 pm Nasir Bagh. The camp shall continue for at least two days. A program for the camp will be announced soon.

The camp is being set up in solidarity with the worldwide Occupy Movement and the growing unrest amongst people's caused by the global economic recession.

Addressing the press conference, Progressive Youth Front representative Ammar Ali Jaan honoured October 15 the world stood against the capitalist financial system . This unrest has been developing since 2008 here people believed governments would take to task those responsible for causing the global financial crisis. However, governments gave billions of dollars to bail out financial institutions and corporations at the cost of the masses. In the context of Pakistan which is facing numerous ordeals like price hikes, electricity and gas shortages, and at a structural level feudalism, and capitalism, the security state and there is a global realisation that the system that was preserved by governments has failed us in Pakistan as well and must be overturned.

Lawyer Misha Rehman said, "Very rarely do moments arise when we can get together as a community for dialogue. The purpose of the camp is to provide that space where people can discuss everyday issues, criticize existing systems and find solutions through sustainable engagements."

"One of the slogans the Occupy movements has taken up is, 'We, the 99% of the world, stand up against the 1%.' We understand that the 99% needs to formulate its political voice and this will be an opportunity for the people to formulate a political voice," she said.

Workers' Party Pakistan Vice President Naeem Shakir stated that almost 50 per cent of the general population has been swallowed by impoverishment. "Our view is that this space will give the silenced a voice and the hope is to find a long term plan and vision for Pakistanis who are suffering at the hands of status quo mainstream parties," he said. He said, "the camp hopes to encourage people to leave their house and discuss the issues in a progressive environment."

Labour Party spokesperson Farooq Tariq appealed to the residents of Lahore and its neighboring localities to join the camp at Nasir Bagh. He said the National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan Trade Union Federation, Railway workers, PTCL, Katchi Abadi alliances, the National Student Federation, Muttahida Labour Federation, the Progressive Youth Forum and other progressive groups have confirmed participation.

The speakers announced discussions were already underway in Islamabad, Karachi, Faisalabad, Mianwali and Okara to hold similar events.

Invitation to Anti-Capitalism Camp in Lahore on Saturday, 22nd Oct at Nasir Bagh

Dear Friends,

This is to invite you all for the Anti-Capitalism Camp to be set up at Nasir Bagh on Saturday, 22nd Oct at 12:00 noon. Progressive forces in Lahore are uniting to express their solidarity with the protesters at Wall Street and around the world who are expressing their anger and their disgust at current crisis of capitalism. It is clear that capitalism has become an impediment to a dignified life for a vast majority of people around the world. These global protests are a way to let our policy-makers know that enough is enough and that this system based on the exploitation of ordinary people will no longer be tolerated. It is a way of reclaiming the political space that had almost been completely taken over by financiers and industrialists with little regard for the interests of the common people. But most importantly, it is a movement that identifies capitalism as the central problem and challenges us to think of alternatives to the current system that has worked wonders for the rich but has miserably failed for ordinary people around the world.

We in Lahore wish to become part of this global upsurge against Capital. Of course, we have our own issues and context in Pakistan which we would like to highlight. Here, the failures of the system are far too obvious; Hunger, unemployment, load shedding, unequal land distribution, price hike, dictatorial attitude of the IMF and World bank, religious fundamentalism, military oligarchy and US imperialism are some of the more obvious problems caused by capitalism. What connects us to the struggles taking place all over the world is the universal category of Capital that structures our lives and it is time we try to move beyond it.

For over 200 years, the advent and consolidation of capitalism in our region has ruined the lives of millions of peasants, workers and students. It is these forces that are today uniting to initiate a struggle against this decadent system. Our decision to set-up a camp at Nasir Bagh is a first step in that direction. We invite progressive forces to come to these anti-capitalist camp and raise their own issues so that Nasir bagh turns into a festival of the resurgent Pakistani left. We know that overcoming capitalism is no easy task and it will require a much larger and prolonged struggle to fight. But it's a task that we must undertake or else accept our miserable fate as being inevitable and eternal. This camp gives us the opportunity to intervene in public discourse and to ignite a public debate on the need for an alternative system. It will be the first step towards a greater movement for a fundamental break with capitalism.

All Power to the People!
Down with Capitalism and Imperialism.

By: Ammar Jaan
