

PRESS RELEASE

Pakistan: Progressive parties agree to form alliance against rising extremist threat

Announce plans for upcoming conference and rally against fascism in state and society

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Islamabad, Wednesday 24th December: The Awami Workers Party Islamabad/Rawalpindi hosted a public meeting on Tuesday to discuss the escalating threat of religious fascism and terrorism in Pakistan and devise practical mechanisms to organize and challenge it in society and state. The meeting was presided by central leaders of the AWP including Aasim Sajjad, Farzana Bari, Zahoor Khan, Nisar Shah, Ismat Shahjahan, Farman Ali and Masood ul Hassan. Over 70 activists and political workers from several parties and student groups from the twin cities attended the meeting, including National Students Federation (NSF), Progressive Students of Gilgit Baltistan (PSGB), Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP), Communist Party Pakistan (CPP), United Kashmir Peoples National Party (UKPNP), Pakhtun Students Federation (PSF), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Balawaristan National Students Organization (BNSO) and Progressive Youth Federation (PYF), as well as other activists from the twin cities.

The participants of the meeting asserted that the growing menace of extremist violence and fascism had to be tackled through concerted and direct political action by all progressive groups and actors in the country. All agreed that the battle was a long-term one which would require political, social and cultural mobilization aimed at countering the deep-seated indoctrination of jihad and religious intolerance that had taken root in the collective psyche in the country since the 1970s, because of the state's constitutive contradictions and the misguided policies of military and political elites.

A number of participants spoke of the need to undermine the material and ideological infrastructure of jihadist violence maintained by the state in order to be able to combat the growing extremist threat. Many expressed concern about the war-mongering atmosphere that was being fostered in the wake of the Peshawar massacre, including public executions, escalated operations, military trials and rampant religious ultra-nationalism, and agreed that such an approach was bound to escalate the violence without addressing its foundational causes. All present agreed that those who had suffered the most at the hands of the state's national security doctrines would have to be organized in order to combat the fascist threat, including Pakhtuns, Baloch, Sindhis, Gilgit-Baltistanis, Kashmiris, Shias, Ahmedis, Christians and working classes around the country.

The participants unanimously agreed to form an alliance of leftist, progressive and nationalist parties that would engage in organized and coordinated political action to challenge the forces of fascism in society and the state. For this purpose, it was decided that a major multi-party conference and protest rally of progressives and nationalist parties and groups would be organized in Islamabad in the second week of January, to mobilize for the fight against religious and state fascism, preparations for which would begin immediately.

