

Pakistan: Escaped by seconds - the fourth day of life underground

Sunday 31 January 2021, by [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 7 November 2007).

On the third day of my underground period, I escaped an arrest by seconds. It was all because of living in a society that is full of high-tech techniques for finding a person.

I called my partner on the morning of 6 November, with a new SIM, to send me clothes at the place where I was staying. My family has given me a new car recently to travel in a little more comfort. I had been driving a Suzuki car 800cc for a long time. I am one of five brothers and three sisters. All the others decided to acknowledge my political activities by giving me a new Toyota Corolla. The car has a tracker as well. We have a car driver who takes our two children to school and drops Shahnaz at her office. He came to bring my clothes.

I had to go to a new place in Lahore to work with some other comrades. I did not realise that the car had a tracker, and asked the driver to drop me at a certain place, from where I could take public transport.

As Allah Ditta was driving, he told me that he had been stopped two times yesterday by police who asked my whereabouts. I got angry with him: why did he not tell me earlier? So I asked him to drive fast and drop me at the first available safe place. In the meantime, a police jeep was in front of us. He slowed down so we could come next to him. [We slowed down in traffic.] The police jeep tried to come next to us. I asked Allah Ditta to drive fast and turn down the next road. He did that. The police jeep could not follow us.

I asked that I be dropped now. He stopped the car about a kilometre from the place where we had had this encounter. As he stopped the car, a police van stopped just next to us. Because we had already stopped the car, I jumped out of the car and, while the police were still stopping their van, I rushed into a running three-wheeler and asked the driver to drive fast. He was surprised but acted accordingly. There was a lot of rush and there were a lot of three-wheelers around the place, so the police could not follow me.

The driver told me later that the police van followed him for another three kilometres and then let him go when they could not find me.

In the afternoon, two plain clothes police officers came to the place I had been staying for the night and enquired about me. I was not there. They had to leave in disbelief.

Five of us got together to work on the movement. We issued press releases from there about our participation in the movement, and that I will not give myself up for arrest but will organise the movement from the underground. We faxed the press releases to all the news media after checking the telephone number that would appear on the fax. It was the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) number but we were not at the LPP office.

We bought some more SIMs on anonymous names. I had to arrange a new place to stay. My friends

are fantastic. They are all waiting when I call them to stay the night. I am not staying at LPP comrades' houses as they are already under surveillance. I had a good night and good sleep after I arrived at the place of my friend, travelling over one hour in a public bus.

Yesterday, the picture of one of the LPP comrades, Rabia Shahzadi, was on the front page of some papers in Lahore. She is a lawyer and was pictured while throwing stones at the police.

She told me later on the telephone that, at one time, she was the only one fighting with police. She saved herself afterwards in a library when police entered to arrest more than 700 lawyers from the premises of the Lahore High Court...

She went yesterday to different police stations to help the lawyers who were in custody, despite being printed on the front page.

Yesterday, in Islamabad, the lawyers' movement was also led by Nisar Shah Advocate, who is chairperson of LPP. He was in the forefront of the demonstration of advocates in Islamabad, along with LPP comrades. He is not arrested yet. Although, on 5 November, he just escaped arrest at a demonstration in Rawalpindi .

At Karachi, LPP comrade Shakeel was dragged away by police during a demonstration in front of the Karachi Press Club on 5 November. This led some press photographers to intervene to save Shakeel. A fight started and that led to the arrest of several press photographers and political activists. It was mainly LPP comrades who had started shouting slogans in front of the police while others were inside the press club building.

Police have raided the house of the secretary of LPP Punjab, Afzal Soraya, three times during the last two days but he is safe.

The plain clothes police came to the LPP office in Lahore and checked whether I am there. They went to the Good Books shop and remained there for some time on the pretext of buying books. They tried to ask about the whereabouts of the different comrades, pretending that they are LPP supporters and want to join the party. The comrade in charge of Good Books is an experienced comrade, he immediately realised who they are. He cleverly convinced them to buy Tariq Ali's book "The clash of fundamentalisms", while offering them comradely hospitality of tea and good political talk. The comrade told me the story: after they left the office, they were proudly telling that they came to look for you; but instead they took a book that may change their minds.

Today is the morning of the fourth day and I am again writing this from a public net cafe and will open the mail for a few minutes to send this story and leave the place.

Thanks to some comrades telling me more about information technology and how to avoid arrest.

I will try to write every two days all the main happenings of the underground life to share with the comrades in Pakistan and internationally.

Farooq Tariq

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