

Pakistan: Run for your life: Day 11 of life underground

Tuesday 2 February 2021, by [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 15 November 2007).

On 14th November, around 4.45pm, I had just got off a public bus and went to a net café. The owner told me that speed is very low and there is no use of sitting here. I went to another one, not far from the first place, the same answer. I came back to the main road to fetch a bus or take a rickshaw; I had not made up my mind where to go from here.

A police van came with several police men sitting in front and on the back seats. I saw them and tried to hide myself but they were there. The police constable sitting on the front seat and the driver were the same who had arrested me from my home on 3rd June 2007. I immediately recognized them and had gone two feet behind a rickshaw.

The police constable recognized me as well but may be, it took him few more second to come to conclusion that it is me. I had a Peshawari cap on my head and Punjabi Parna (a sort of long cotton shawl to cover your head and body) on my shoulder. I was also wearing new glasses, not my usual glasses.

The Peshawri hat was just given to me by a comrade where we had meeting in the morning. As I was leaving the meeting place the comrade told me that the present arrangement to change your self is insufficient, why do not you take a Peshawari cap. I said yes but I can not find one. He said there is one at my place and my father used it. He asked his father for permission to give it to me and the old man was quite happy to assist me in this way.

As I went to the back of the rickshaws, I saw him asking the other to get off the police van. Here I had to decide what to do. It took maybe part of a second in my mind to decide that run for your life. It was the quickest reaction time. I started running and the police constables then jumped to their van to follow me.

I turned to one street an then to the next one, while turning inside to the first street available from the main road, I saw the police van coming to this side. This was one of my fine fast running, not on my usual running machine with 12 kilometer an hour, but may be over 20 kilometer an hour. I turned to second on and to the third one. I did not know the area very well. I had been to the area but not like this. I did not know where to go forward. People in street were watching with surprise what is happening. I was thinking to see an open door and jump inside but that was also not insight. It was like kilometer run.

I stopped for a second and suddenly, there was a person saying to me hello Farooq, how are you, he recognized me. He was walking in the street while I stopped for a while. I recognized him but the name did not come to my mind. I told him please get me inside a home immediately, police is after me. He did not hesitate for a second and it was like the third house that he asked me come in. He closed the door immediately and asked me to sit in a room. The door of the house closed but not locked so we just went in for no time.

Aslam, (a fake name) was here as teacher for two children. He had just finished his teaching and was leaving for his place. I knew him from early nineties. He was an industrial worker and then went to study and completed his master degree, a rare thing to happen here from a worker, and was a regular professor in a college at present time. He used to come to our study circles at the time. I had lost the contact and did not even remember him name when we met yesterday. He was happy to safe me for a while but worried what if the home boss come to know who I am. In the mean time, we heard the police van passing by. I was offered a glass of water.

He started teaching the two young students again and posing that something was missing from that day of the tuition. We needed that few decisive minutes to pass by safely. After fifteen minutes, he told me that there is another comrade living in this area. He has built a house recently, why do not we go there and you can leave afterwards. Aslam went out to see if police is still there. After being satisfied, we left the house to go the next street. The comrade was there fortunately and he did not recognize me. As soon as I took off my cap, he was bloody pleased and we had good tea and chat at his place.

Two years earlier, one of my closest friends from childhood, Mohammed Amjad told me in Amsterdam that I am going to die soon. He was always very straight to friends. Amjad was one of the original "gang of four" who started our group Struggle in 1980 during our exile period. He opted to stay in Netherlands and was running a Pizzeria restaurant in Amsterdam . He had checked my blood pressure, it was 160 110. My weight was around 89 kilograms and my belly was getting out of control. He said that I do not take care of my health, "how the revolution will come if I die early and not because God wanted it but because of my carelessness" . He warned me.

I always had good respect of him. I told him that I will do my best to change my shape and body. He gifted me a machine to check my blood pressure. I bought an exercise machine and started running on it gradually to six kilometers day, some time on 12 kilometers an hour speed. It changed my life. I would get up early. No dizzy days, I was active like I was in seventies and eighties. I reduced my weight by seven kilograms and sustained it. Exercise has become part of my life but with intervals of going to jail or visits.

It paid off yesterday. I was running like a teenage although I am 52 now. I was confident that they can not catch me. I was doing my regular exercise may be for this day alone. I had run for my life successfully.

I am not afraid of being arrested. I have faced police several times and was arrested without running. Most of my arrests were calculated risks. But now, my task is to organize the movement rather than going to jail as a defiant act by LPP. Chairperson LPP, Nisar Shah is already in jail. His arrest pictures made headline internationally and inside. He was arrested while fighting with police and resisting. He kept the revolutionary traditions and culture of resistance set by LPP and other revolutionaries during the last eight years in Pakistan and internationally.

But I do not want to be arrested at the time set by police and the state. Our effort is to set the agenda ourselves. Let us see how far this goes on.

It was around five pm already. I called some friends from my new sim. There was going to be a press conference at 4pm with LPP main leadership present at Lahore Press Club. I had called to a comrade at 4.35 to check if everything ha gone alright. She told me that it is ok and there was good press present and no arrest is been made while they were coming to the press conference. The press conference was addressed by Abid Hasan Minto, convener of the Left alliance and a very respected leftwing leader of Pakistan .

Around 2pm, while I was downloading my emails on my blackberry in a running bus, I got a call from Asharaf Chadar, the police officer in charge of LPP office area. He asked me what is planning of today's activity. We had issued a press release of the press conference and possibility of a demonstration inside the Press Club building to avoid the arrests.

When I told about the press conference, he told me point blank, I will arrest every one coming to the demonstration. I had some good personal relationship with this police officer. He was the one who had arrested me from my office on 3rd May and kept me well at the police station for three days.

I asked him if he is ok and recovered and has come out of the hospital, he was injured on 5th November after the advocates retaliated to police tear gassing. I also told him that we do not police to beat us and we do not want to stone the police. He said yes I do not want that either but I am doing my job and not pleasantly. I asked him not to arrest any one coming for the press conference and I guarantee that there will be no demonstration today by us. I wanted to make sure that we are in the media on the question of emergency and our strategies.

We agreed on this and I called the comrades to tell that they can have safe press conference today but do not go for the demonstration. The bus was running and I stopped my regular mobile and went off the next bus stop. I could not trust any police officer. It was this background that I wanted to check if everything has gone alright at the press conference and the police officer has kept his words. He did.

I left area after an hour at a rickshaw and decided that no more public buses to travel. I have now made alternative arrangements to travel inside the city that is more secure and safe apparently.

Earlier on the day, some of the leading members of LPP met and had a political discussion on the situation. It was agreed that Musharaf dictatorship is becoming more and more isolated. He is been facing a lot of criticism at home and abroad. We agreed under such repressive situation, LPP will not take part in the coming elections but will be part of the movement to overthrow the regime. We agreed to welcome Benazir Bhutto pleasant U turn against the military dictatorship and decided to contact PPP for a broader front alongside with Left and progressive forces. We also agreed on some actions.

We congratulated the young female activists to produce the two editions of our weekly paper Workers Struggle despite all the threats and intimidations.

I had to be more careful after the arrest of Imran Khan and other political leaders during the day. The police is haunting all the political activists like anything.

Farooq Tariq

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