

Pakistan: Musharraf's days are numbered - solidarity needed

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General Musharraf would have not thought of the political scenario that has emerged after five days of the martial law he imposed on 3 November.

His hopes for a normalisation of the situation have been dashed even after he has used the most vicious repression against the advocates and political activists. More unpleasant surprises will come in future for the military regime who was used to a rather stable political control until now.

After advocates, now students are emerging on the political opposition to the military regime. Demonstrations took place on 7 November in most of the public and private universities, mainly in the main cities of Pakistan. "Student power rises from slumber" was the headline of News International on 8 November. All the courts across Pakistan are on stand still and the Pakistan Bar Council has announced an indefinite strike till the new Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) is withdrawn. There have been daily demonstrations by the advocates across Pakistan. This is an extraordinary militancy shown by the middle classes during this period.

Most of the newspapers in Pakistan are full of stories of the arrests, demonstrations and strikes of different actors of the society. But it is the fifth day; no private television channel has been allowed to telecast their broadcasting in Pakistan. You can only watch songs, dances, sports and religious readings on different channels but no news bulletin is allowed, apart from the official Pakistan Television.

The most surprising opposition to the military regime has come from Benazir Bhutto. She was in negotiation with the Musharraf regime for a power-sharing formula. But the advocate movements intervened in this unholy alliance forcing Benazir Bhutto to come up openly against the military regime. Almost half of the arrested advocates belong to the Pakistan People's Party. It left very little room for Benazir maneuvering and playing games with the regime. She asked the Pakistan masses to rise up against the martial law of general Musharraf. "Restore the constitution or we will have a long march from Lahore to Islamabad on 13 November" she warned the regime. This resulted in the arrests of Pakistan People's Party activists across the country. They had been spared by the regime in the first phase of repression that started on 3 November.

The media organisation of the bosses and employees are also joining the mass movement after unprecedented repression against the electronic and print media by the regime.

It was a black Monday on 5 November for the stock exchanges in Pakistan. The stock exchange crash resulted in a net loss of four billion dollars in one day, unprecedented in the history of the last 17 years of the exchange.

His close imperialist friends from US, UK and European Union have been forced to condemn this imposition of emergency, at least in word, for the first time since 9/11. Any gross violation of human rights in Pakistan since 9/11 was always an internal matter as far as US imperialism was concerned.

Even Australian imperialism is also condemning the sorry state of affairs of Pakistan and terming Musharraf "a dictator" for the first time, a fact Pakistani people knew for eight years. But it seems General Musharraf is trying to show his angry eyes even to his bosses, the same way the religious fundamentalists are going out of the control of the military regime in Pakistan. "You can never control a monster for long time", it seems from the actions of General Musharraf. Netherlands has suspended aid to Pakistan and the US is reviewing its relationship with the military regime, according to the reports printed here.

The movement is still growing in all spheres of life. This is despite an unprecedented level of repression during the first five days of the emergency - the real name is martial law. The police entered the office of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and arrested more than 80 social and political activists who were discussing their strategy to oppose the military action. This was unheard of in the past, that police will enter this most prestigious independent building in Lahore. Police went into the buildings of the Lahore High Court and arrested more than 700 advocates from the chambers of the judges, libraries, bar rooms and canteen. This was not done even under the most brutal martial law of General Zia Ul Haque in the Eighties.

According to the home ministry in Punjab province, 1,734 political activists, journalists and advocates have been arrested during the first four days of the martial law. Similar figures are stated by the administrations of the other three provinces. This is the most brutal repression of the opponents of the Musharraf regime during the last eight years. The arrested advocates and political activists have been charged under the Anti Terrorist Act and they have been sent to far-off places from their home towns. No one can meet them.

Similar repressive treatment has been the lot of those judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts of Pakistan who have courageously refused to take the oath under the new Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO). They are put under house arrest and their children are not allowed to go to school. Doctors have been refused entries to their houses when they were called for emergency treatments.

Police are raiding the houses of the advocates and political opponents of the military regime on a regular basis. Pakistan has become a police and military state in the real sense of the term. Police are seen everywhere in the main cities. There has been an increase of thefts and robberies during the last four days because the police is only deployed to curb the opposition of the regime.

General Musharraf now has more opposition than ever among the general public in Pakistan.

Musharraf is losing his internal and external support at a fast speed. He has almost lost the support of his most recent friend, Benazir Bhutto. The religious parties have been forced to de-link their long lasting relationship with the regime. The old alliances and formations are in crisis. This is a real crisis of the Pakistan state. The regime is becoming more isolated day by day. Now, there are only two political parties supporting the regime: Muslim League Q and Muhajir Qaumi Movement, both are partners of the military government. But both are hated more and more by ordinary citizens of Pakistan.

The path of repression to control the opposition is losing its weight day by day. The state cannot repress all growing voices against the regime. The implementation of the neo-liberal agenda at a faster speed has been marked by daily price hikes and growing unemployment. It is the brutal rule of the free... The growth of the capitalist economy has not reached the people at the bottom and the people at the bottom are more than 70 percent of the 160 million population.

Several activists of Awami Jamhoori Tehreek, the left alliance of seven political parties and groups, are under arrest including Nisar Shah, the chair person of Labour Party Pakistan. Abid Hassan

Minto, the convener of AJT and president of the National Workers' Party, has asked all the left forces to join the movement and fight the military regime. The Left is not any more an insignificant force in Pakistan. The student uprising against the regime is mainly the work of left-wing forces and radical social activists.

The regime cannot last long. The movement is on and is growing. The advocates' unprecedented courage has influenced many and they are taking the road of active opposition.

The opposition to military regime will be strengthened by the active solidarity of our friends and comrades outside Pakistan. The pickets of the Pakistan embassies all over the world will be one of the most effective way of opposition. We are not alone, we know, but we need to know more of it.

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