

Pakistan: Baloch Resistance: Again I shall rise!

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The story of the underdog, the cornered and the oppressed standing tall in the face of great odds with nothing but resilience as a shield and conviction as a sword is as old as history itself. The names might change, the conditions may vary, and the forms of oppression may shapeshift. Still, it is the law of motion of history that as long as oppression exists, the oppressed shall always retaliate against the oppressor. No matter how weak it may become or how often it is forced to retreat, the struggle for freedom shall not cease until one of the two are annihilated. The heroes, the messiah, and the legends rise and fall on the stage of life. Those few lucky enough to catch the eye of the poet at that rare moment when he is not self-absorbed get cremated in songs, while many are forgotten like a faded old memory buried deep inside the mind. The villains also appear and perish to hold up their end of the bargain, and with equal dedication and devotion, they build their monuments with blood and death. Forty-seven days ago, in Turbat, Balochistan, a far end of the federation, the same old story surfaced again when another Baloch mother and father had to go through the agony of identifying and carrying the corpse of their young boy.

Mulabaksh Balach, hailing from Turbat, was arrested on the 20th of November by CTD (Counter Terrorist Department) and was given into their custody for a ten-day physical remand by the local court on the next day. Three days later, he was found dead with three others. CTD has claimed that they took Balach with them on a raid for identification, where the terrorists attacked them, and they killed him during the raid. It is interesting to note that in this fatal attack, not a single policeman was killed or even injured. Inquiries have been called into the matter by the government. Still, like all other past inquiries, commissions, and reports, this inquiry is just a tactic to appease the political reaction for the time being. The whole state apparatus is on board with such brutal tactics, which are so cruel that they can put the Gestapo and KGB to shame. For instance, recently, in response to criticism for using excessive force against the peaceful Baloch long march for missing persons just outside the capital, the caretaker prime minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, who himself is from Balochistan, publicly admitted to the extra-judicial killings and abductions. He also very callously dismissed the Baloch protestors by declaring them and all their allies as BLA sympathizers and families of terrorists. He said, "Our criminal justice system is weak, and we cannot punish terrorists. Should we let them go on a rampage?". These words accurately depict the historical crisis of this state and the extent of its degeneration. In other words, this statement means that to maintain its authority and control, the state shall not hesitate to violate even the most basic and universally accepted human rights, such as the right to a free and fair trial, guaranteed to every human being regardless of the nature of the crime by the entire civilized world, including the constitution of Pakistan. Any state that consciously starts to ignore or violate the rights of its citizens and resorts to brute force as the only means for establishing its writ shall soon find itself in open rebellion and disintegration. From its inception, the State of Pakistan was bound to take a brutal form given its historical, socio-economic conditions and its purpose and place in the Post-War great game determined by imperialist powers. Democracy in Pakistan has always only existed in the wishful

thinking of democrats confined to their drawing rooms, having nothing to offer in theory or practice other than their ironic disgust and disdain for the very electorate. On the other hand, the masses are least bothered by their condescension or forms of government since they do not have the luxury to entertain abstract ideas that fail to answer their immediate, material, and existential questions. Therefore, only a revolutionary program combining the democratization of society with structural and economic reforms can draw large and diverse sections of society into political action for a new social contract or a new volunteer federation.

On the surface, the issue of Balochistan is indeed quite simple. It has been an oppressed nation kept under military occupation by an imperialist state for the last seven decades, so they have a natural right to defend themselves and their land by any means they deem necessary. Almost a hundred years ago, capitalism transitioned into its highest stage: Imperialism. A global integrated economic system of finance capital sitting upon the shoulders of large monopolies concentrated in a few core countries became colonizers with the rest of the world divided amongst them as their colonies. For over two centuries, core countries, like Great Britain, extracted wealth worth trillions and pushed these colonies into extreme poverty. They groomed the local comprador ruling elite to manage this exploitation and set up their client states within these colonies. Semi-colonies like Russia also emerged and filled the middle ranks of the Imperialist structure. They preyed on the weaker nations while they were prey for the big predators. At the peak of Imperialism, the division of the world was completed among the imperialist powers, and there was no more land to colonize except for taking it from each other. The attempts to expand by emerging imperialist powers like Germany and Japan pushed them into conflict with established empires like Great Britain and France. The intensified inherent crisis of capitalism constantly exacerbated this conflict. The First and Second World Wars broke out as an inevitable outcome of this heightened competition for markets and raw materials. The wars were succeeded by waves of revolutionary upsurges of the working class worldwide both within core countries and in the colonies against their occupation. The success of the Russian Revolution further fueled national liberation movements in colonies. After the massive destruction of Europe and Japan at the end of the Second World War, the European powers could no longer directly hold on to their colonies. So the United States emerged as the sole heir to all the imperialist empires, with only the Soviet Union as a challenger. The imperialist powers managed to diffuse workers uprisings within their cores through massive social reforms thanks to the post-war boom. Aided by the loyalist local bourgeoisie elite and the betrayals of Stalinism, they successfully crushed movements for national liberation in their colonies, with few exceptions, like China and later Cuba, where successful revolutions prevented that from happening, giving birth to a new world order with a new form of Imperialism. Instead of the earlier direct control, they shifted to indirect control of the colonies through finance capital, financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank, the dollar, monopoly over technology, and most importantly, through their client states and local ruling elite. During late capitalism, these 'liberated' newborn nation-states emerged throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Their ruling elite could not compete with the global elite and hence was reduced to serving as commission agents for multinational companies.

Every state became a semi-colony with imperialist designs for neighboring weaker nations or its own peripheries. These semi colonies never had the economic stability or necessary development required to transition into healthy, bourgeoisie democratic nation-states; hence, in most formerly colonised countries, the national question remained in some form or the other, turning these states into prisons for oppressed nationalities.

In 1947, the British Empire, in fear of the workers and the peasant movement, hastily divided India based on religion, transferring power to the local ruling elite and giving birth to two sister states, India and Pakistan. The poison of divide and rule that the cunning master had been injecting into the veins of India for two hundred years bore results and the people who had lived harmoniously for

centuries celebrated the end of their slavery by drinking each other's blood and feasting on the flesh of their sisters. The trauma of that long night still lurks in the shadows; it haunts the people of the subcontinent, keeping them bitter, cold, and hateful. Perhaps the ordinary people who suffered through partition also learned something, but the Uncle Tom that the colonial masters left behind to rule had learned all the tricks. Divide and rule is still the most successful principle for the ruling elite to govern Pakistan. In the great game, an economically weak Pakistani state was to serve as an outpost in South Asia for the imperialist powers, now led by the US to curtail the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, since Pakistan was plunged into the struggle for economic and physical survival, it quickly transformed into a repressive state. The conditions for its survival made it necessary to take a hawkish stance with an imperialist disposition towards its peripheries and other oppressed nations. After the fall of Dhaka in 1971, Pakistan lost whatever ideological basis it had, and it has only intensified its insecurities, amplifying its identity crisis and forcing it to impose itself even more aggressively. This forced imposition fueled the national question, leading to more reaction in society.

Just a year after its birth in 1948, it launched its first operation in Balochistan after Khan of Kalat declared independence, and ever since, this conflict between the Baloch separatist and the Pakistani military has been ongoing periodically, consuming countless lives on both sides. Like in every imperialist war, the blood of the working class was shed. Whether it is the blood of a peasant from Punjab who joined the military to feed his children but found himself pointing a gun at a fellow Baloch brother or may it be of a Sarmachar (separatist guerilla) whose daughter found his mutilated body.

Meanwhile, the people sitting on the top of the food chain, the global and the regional imperialist powers, the men of the military-industrial complex, the Baloch Sardars, and the Punjabi industrialists continue to sell the blood of our children to fill their coffers. It does not matter whether the form of government is democratic or a dictatorship; the underlying character of this state cannot change. The most extensive operation in Balochistan was ordered by a civilian prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in the 1970's. There had been several efforts for negotiation, but none ever actually succeeded since the state, instead of having a meaningful dialogue, has always used them as bait. The recent insurgency ordered by General Musharraf started in the 2000s, but the conflict escalated after the former governor and chief minister of Balochistan, Nawab Akbar Bugti, was assassinated in 2006. Unlike the past, when it had a progressive character, the insurgency turned into a proxy for the global imperialist powers; in the past, the purpose of armed resistance was not just separation but a struggle for a socialist revolution, not just for the Baloch Nation but for all workers and oppressed. Although some factions and individuals engaged in armed struggle are still fighting for socialist ideals, the overall character of the militancy has degenerated. Balochistan has turned into a battlefield for Imperialist vultures who only have eyes on its riches. Two major proxies are going on in this region right now. The first is the US-led western block, together with India to contain China, which has now heavily invested in the area because of the Gwadar Port and CPEC. The second is between Arab countries led by KSA, Qatar and Iran, who are funding different Islamic fundamentalist militant organizations to further their geo-political designs. Then there are the fascist death squads created by the state as a counterinsurgency policy. Between these humongous war machines, the innocent Baloch, Pakhtun, Hazara, Punjabi, peasants, workers, poor, and the oppressed are being used as cannon fodder.

All Baloch nationalists, socialists, and progressives who genuinely want to see an end to their suffering and the emancipation of their people, must know that Imperialism as a system is the root cause of our slavery and subjugation and as long as it exists, the masters might change, but no nation on this planet can be truly free. The entire line of argument that the Punjabi and Baloch working class has no common ground in the fight against exploitation and oppression, always ends up serving the ruling class which is clear on the fact that it will be fatal for them if the oppressed

and the exploited class get united in a common cause against their common oppressor. The uneven development of the system creates different conditions for different segments of society, leading to different life experiences for people belonging to the same class but relatively different positions on the social ladder. The state and ruling structures then use this to create a false consciousness in the working class of both oppressed and the oppressor nations, with the former aligning itself with the interests of their exploiters and later refusing to make a distinction between rulers and workers of the dominant nation or race.

Furthermore, xenophobia is constantly pushed down from the top through art, syllabus, literature, media, and reactionary political parties adding to the alienation of workers towards each other. This divide keeps the imperialist machine intact which not only exploits the working class of oppressed and oppressor nations simultaneously but also keeps them engaged in fighting among themselves. For example, the US war in Afghanistan generated three trillion dollars of profits for private military contractors during the twenty-two years of its presence in the country, apart from the theft of resources and minerals. So, on the one hand, the whole country was obliterated, destroying the poor Afghans and their society, while on the other hand, trillions of dollars were extracted from the pockets of the American working class coupled with the lives of their children wasted in this pseudo-conflict. Another example would be Pakistan, India, and the international military-industrial complex using the conflict of Kashmir to justify their mindless defence spending, thus robbing their poor and hungry working class of health, education, and livelihood and at the same time occupying and oppressing the people of Jammu Kashmir. Therefore, to end this endless cycle of exploitation, war, misery, and national and class oppression, imperialism must be ended at once and that is only possible when the working class in the different centers of the empire recognizes and extends its support to the right of self-determination and separation of the oppressed nationalities from a class point of view. The national liberation movements of oppressed nationalities denounce their local ruling class and try to reach an alliance with the working class of the oppressor nations and international workers movement.

Extra-judicial killings and abductions, either directly by the state or indirectly by their fascist death squads raised by them to counter separatist militant organizations, are a matter of routine in Balochistan. According to unofficial records, more than sixty thousand people are missing to date. Just last year, from January to November, over five hundred people were abducted, and seventy-five corpses of missing persons were found. Terrorists did not kill Balach, he was executed by the state without a hearing, lawyer, or a fair trial. It was a cold-blooded murder. But this was not something new witnessed by the children of Koh-e-Suleman. Every Baloch mother whose son is alive, is counting the days, consumed by the horror of the day when they will come for her boy. It will be a mercy if they kill him right in front of her eyes, at least she will know that he is dead, buried under tons of mud and not rotting in some dungeon getting tortured and mutilated. His father will not have to stand in line outside the mortuary in Quetta and wait for his turn to identify his son's dead body from the rest of the mutilated corpse. His sister and his fiancé who may never liked each other will at least be able to mourn him together and might someday find peace. But the oppressed Balochs cannot afford the luxury to mourn their dead. Life has been too harsh for them, and their conditions have pushed them to take another path, the path of resistance and the path of struggle for the right to life. Their funerals turn into protests, the sighs of loss are replaced with slogans for liberation, and instead of prayers, they are buried with declarations and pledges to continue the struggle to end the oppression of their people. The murder of Balach was not any different, but nobody knew that the demise of this young kid would mark a new beginning in the Baloch resistance movement. The people of Turbat decided that this long night had to end now. Like all great movements of the masses, it began with a humble sit-in at the doors of the court, it became a historic long march led by the brave Sammi Baloch, Beebow Baloch and other young brave Baloch women towards Quetta. In Quetta, they were joined by another fearless woman, Mahrung Baloch, and together, they

resumed their march towards Islamabad. It became a march unlike any other in history, wherever they went from small towns to regional headquarters, hordes of men and women oppressed like them came out to receive them and to show them that they shared their pain, they felt their humiliation and they stand in solidarity against the oppressor—at every city, town, or village that they entered, presented a shawl to Mahrung declaring her and other Baloch women as their daughters and their voices. Parallel to this unprecedented solidarity of the oppressed, the state was also gearing up to welcome them with what it knows best, violence. At the gates of Islamabad, the march was met by brutal violence. Men, women, children, elderly, Baloch, Pashtun, Chitrali, everyone was beaten, dragged, abused, and arrested. However, the state was not aware that they were not some kids playing politics, they were battle-hardened soldiers not ready to yield the struggle for the right to life. When you look into their eyes their determined eyes look back at you repeating the words of Qazi (a great Balochi Poet) *“Drag me to the gallows, A thousand times, Burn and Bury me, Again I shall rise, And speak the truth”*. It has been now more than a month since these protestors have been sitting in Islamabad with the demand to end enforced disappearances, and extra-judicial killings and produce all missing persons. The state has only responded with brute force and no serious attempts to talk with the protestors have been made. However, the protestors have won the battle and, in every nook, and corner of Balochistan people have hit the streets to protest. The solidarity protests were held in other parts of the country as well. This Islamabad sit-in has been an incredible display of solidarity of the oppressed nations, local working class, and left-wing political workers from across the country on one hand, and on the other hand the character of the Baloch ruling class which complies with the state policy and have been shamelessly established a camp right next to these protesting men and women. Although this emerging young leadership of the Baloch movement is burdened by the past but is also open to new experiences and capable enough to take the fight into its next phase. This new beginning of the movement will be marked by these words of Comrade Mahrung Baloch

“For the last twelve days people of Islamabad have been supporting us. They bring blankets, women bring soup and tea at 2 AM, and professors, lawyers, and doctors express their solidarity. Doctors are treating the protestors. We left Balochistan to convey our message to the common people of Punjab, which has not been delivered to them for the last 75 years.”

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