

# Pakistan: Here we go again

Saturday 1 September 2007, by [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 31 August 2007).

Another round of struggle against military dictatorship will start on 1<sup>st</sup> of September. The Lahore Bar Association has decided to come out again to demand an immediate end of military dictatorship of General Musharaf. This was announced on 31<sup>st</sup> August at a seminar at Awani-Adal main court room in Lahore. Imran Khan President Tehrik Insaf (Justice Movement) Dr. Mehdi Hasan, a prominent radical professor and myself along with main leadership of the Lahore Bar Association addressed the very impressive and motivated gathering of the advocates. The Hall was full to capacity with over 300 advocates.

Earlier Lahore Bar Association had printed a color poster declaring “no deal veel” referring to the ongoing negotiation of Benazir Bhottu, chairperson Pakistan peoples Party with the present military regime in Dubai and London. After the reinstatement of Iftikhar Choudry, chief justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan, the Pakistan Peoples Party went into discussions with the military regime for a power sharing formula. Many advocates felt betrayed and decided to go in public for such a deal.

The announcement of Lahore advocates came after the public statement of Munir Malik, president Supreme Court Bar Association that he will offer arrests on 3<sup>rd</sup> of September while leading a demonstration against the military regime. There is a growing expectation of masses from the radical layer of advocates who h led a successful campaign against the military regime already. They want them to go all the way. They want them to help get rid of General Musharaf. The advocates have responded to this expectation to start a fresh round of struggle for an end of military regime in Pakistan.

This move to start a second round has not come just like that. We have played a part in it. We had weeks of continues discussions with the leadership of the victorious advocates movement on the question of militarization and democracy. I was may be the only one from the political parties leadership who had gone twice to jail during the advocate movement. That has given us a good respect and they normally listen to us. The radical social organizations also put a lot of pressure on the advocates’ leaders to go further.

On 31<sup>st</sup> September, The leaders of Joint Action Committee For People Rights, a radical social network of social and political parties including Labour Party Pakistan addressed a press conference at Lahore Press Club. The JAC leaders told the press that they will fully support the second round of the movement by the advocates against the military dictatorship.

I was asked by JAC leadership including Asma Jahanghir, chair person Human Rights Commission of Pakistan to lead the press conference. Asma Jahanghir, Tehseen from South Asia Partnership, Farzana Mumtaz and Asad Rehman from Aurat Foundation, Timur Rehman from Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party, Shahtaj Qazalbash convener Joint Action Committee for Peoples Rights, Neelum Hussan of Seamorgh and Irfan Barkat of Justice and peace Commission were on the platform.

“We will lend our full support for the advocates movement and political partied who are fighting for democracy, we will not accept General Musharaf with or without uniform, he must quit, we condemn the role of intelligence agencies who are “negotiating with politicians” about the power sharing formula, we are against Musharaf policies which has resulted poverty, unemployment and price hike

to an unprecedented level" JAC declared at the press conference.

Benazir Bhottu of Pakistan Peoples Party is in discussions with some heads of intelligence agencies including Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) for a deal to return to Pakistan. Both sides have claimed that progress is being made during the discussions. Banazhir Bhottu demanded an end of corruption charges against her and other politicians. She said that General Musharaf will be support as candidate of president ship if he takes of military uniform.

General Musharaf is president and chief of the army staff at the same time. He has made it clear that he will contest the election of president in uniform. Although the date of the election for the president is not been declared but it is expected this year. The Senate, national and provincial assemblies are the electoral college for president.

The political situation is fast changing everyday. The success of advocate movement which started on 9<sup>th</sup> March when General Musharaf tried to force chief justice of Pakistan to resign has changed the whole situation. His defiance was supported initially by the 80,000 advocates and later they were joined by most o the political parties.

The chief justice was restored by a full bench of Supreme Court on 20<sup>th</sup> July. Since his restoration, the chief justice has released the prominent political prisoners. He has allowed Nawaz Sharif, former prime minister, and his family to return to Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif was deposed by General Musharaf in October 1999 and was sent abroad. These decisions were taken in opposition to the military regime.

It is a totally different political situation. It is a changed situation where masses are in favor of an immediate end of military dictatorship.

There are elements of dual power in Pakistan at present. On one side General Musharaf is in power with a much weaker basis, while chief justice is taking decisions day by day in opposition to the government. The cabinet of Shoukat Aziz, prime minister is split and ministers are voicing their difference publicly. Shoukat Aziz a former employee of Citi Bank was made prime minister by General Musharaf in 2003. There is great discontent among the middle class and a tremendous haterdness among the working class against the military regime.

The military regime is unable to control the growing incidents of individual terrorism by the religious fundamentalist against the security forces. There are daily bomb blasts, suicidal attacks and case of firing on police and military stations. American imperialism is threatening to attack inside Pakistan if General Musharaf is unable to control the growing attacks of religious fundamentalist. They are trying to put pressure that General Musharaf should make a deal of power sharing with Pakistan Peoples Party. This is to strengthen the public support inside.

The deal is not yet finalized but it is facing a lot of opposition from the public. The Muslim League Q, a split group of Muslim League, who are sharing power with Musharaf are opposing the deal. Pakistan Peoples Party activists are confused. They have been struggle for democracy and suddenly they are watching their leader to deal with the military regime. The whole process has been opposed by majority of ordinary Pakistanis.

Those political parties who fought the military dictatorship are been heard by the masses. Tehreek Insaf of Imran Khan and Labour Party Pakistan are making progress among the working people. LPP is fast growing at present. Over 500 joined in August 2007 across Pakistan. LPP is again in the making of the movement, Here we go again and till the end of military dictatorship and the system that exploit working class and society in general.

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