

Feudals snatch livelihood from poor fisherfolk through contract system

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Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum [PFF] a representative organization of fishing community of Pakistan organized a Fishermen's Convention against contract system in fisheries and occupation of the fishing grounds by some influential landlords and contractors.

The convention was held on the banks of Nareri Lake of District Badin on October 27, where PFF Chairman Mohammed Ali Shah presided over the gathering. It was attended by large number of fishers including men, women and children, journalists, politicians and representatives of NGOs hailing from district Badin. The convention announced decisive struggle against contract system and another sort of occupation on water bodies of Sindh.

The convention decided that in first phase of the campaign, a seminar would be organized on December 20th in Islamabad and a demonstration would be held in Lahore on December 21 respectively against the contract system. It was also decided that during the ceremony of the World Social Forum in January in Karachi, thousands of fishermen would march from Mazar -e- Quaid to the Governor's House.

Speaking on the occasion, PFF Chairman Mohammed Ali Shah said that fishermen are true custodians and genuine lower riparian of the country whose only source of livelihood for centuries is fishing. He said tens of thousands of fishermen had been rendered jobless due to contract system and occupation of lakes and ponds by feudal lords and other influential people. These feudals snatch livelihood from poor fisher-folk through contract system.

After the occupation of lakes of Badin by Rangers, now the influential WADERAS such as Soomar Mallah and others (with the help of black sheep of fisheries department) have embarked upon occupation on lakes, ponds and other water resources of Sindh as well as Nareri Lake of district Badin. He said that ordeal of fishermen was not over because since proclaiming of Sindh Government with regard to abolish contract system, no any official notification has been issued getting rid of the contract system. There is necessity of making a law against contract system, through which fishermen should be given their genuine rights on the water assets.

He pointed out, fishermen are deprived of their basic needs and they are most neglected among other masses of our country. The cruelty could be measured from the fact that they don't have access to the potable water to drink.

Mithan Mallah of District Badin remarked on the occasion, that even if the government, its bureaucracy and contractors have provided a support to the crumbling edifice of contract system, the fact is that the foundations of this building have shaken now. No artificial support would save this crumbling building of the contract system.

Speaking on the occasion, Ali Akar Junejo, UC Nazim of Seerani district Badin said that they would highlight the issue in district assembly and make efforts to over come the problems of fishing community of the area.

A senior journalist of Badin, Razzaqu Khatti disclosed that PFF is the only organization, which has been engaged in highlighting the issues of fishing community and it has turned out to be a model of struggle against any meanness of community.

It has emerged the revolution among the fishing community through the process of mobilization, advocacy and campaign by which fishermen are now aware about their rights, can participate in each and every campaign initiated by it.

Dr. Najma Junejo, a member of district council, appreciating the role of women in the struggle of PFF said that credit also goes to the fisherwomen who have been jointly struggled along with their men against the any form of unkindness.

Hameeda Khaskhali, Abdul Hakeem Sheedi, Sajjan Shaikh, Raffique Memon, Mohammed Khan Samo, Mama Mohammed Hassan and others also spoke on the occasion.

Prior to this, a large number of fishers' children of district Badin held demonstration against the contract system and demanded of the government to provide fresh water to drink and other basic facilities of education and health.

P.S.

* Published on the website of the PFF.