

Not arrested yet but facing dangerous situation - The day seventh in under ground life

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The day seventh passed without my arrest despite several attempt by the police. During the last three days, we were able to hold a meeting of the leading members of Labour Party Pakistan, gave interviews to private television channels and to a private team working for CNN. We were able to fax a daily news to most of the news papers in Pakistan.

Comrade Rabia Shahzadi advocate from LPP was on front pages of many papers after she threw stones on police who was tear gassing the Lahore High Court premises on Monday 5th November. A show of retaliation among the young advocates inspired many

Unfortunately, Labour Party Pakistan chairperson Nisar Shah Advocate was arrested in Islamabad on 7th November along some party activists after he led a demonstration of lawyers despite all the police threats. Nisar Shah is an advocate of High Court. He had practices for 10 years in Karachi. After the devastating earthquake in October 2005, he moved for two years to Kashmir. He originally comes from Kashmir and his village was also hard hit by the earth quack including loss of lives of his close relatives. He was asked by Labour Relief Campaign to move back to Kashmir to look after the work of relief and reconstruction. He helped successfully build 100 homes withing three months of the earthquake, the first one to be completed with the help of Action Aid International and Shirkat Ghah, a radical women NGO in Pakistan. He is in process of building the first Kashmir Labour Center at Paniola where a good piece of land is donated by locals for the construction of the first ever to be constructed labour center in Kashmir.

(Nisah Shah picture at BBC website after he led a demonstration in Islamabad, he was arrested next day)

He was recently asked by LPP to be in Rawalpindi and Islamabad to help build the social and political movement. He had started working as advocate in Islamabad to be more close to the advocates in movement. Here he is arrested after few days of public rebellion.

During the last three days of my underground life from 7TH November to 10th today till this morning , I was able to stay three nights at friend house with utmost security measures. I wan not on line from the house and did not made a single telephone contact from any number and sim from the house. I was walking to a marker around a kilometer to make telephone contacts and to open the mail for few minutes.

I would on my black berry and download all the emails at this place within minutes and then off the air.

Immediately after the first encounter on the police on 6th November, When I was just saved, I changed my name on the telephone line. I would call only very close comrades and friends from different sims within these days. This has helped to secure me for the time being.

On 8th November, while I was walking back to my place while I had covered my head with cap and to some extent my face with growing beard, suddenly one police van stopped next to me and it was red traffic signal. The police officer looked at my face with a full glimpse for few seconds. I thought he is trying to recognize my face that he might have seen some where. I was afraid that he will now come out. I had planned to run in case he comes out. In the mean time my face was just blank and I did not give him any impression of being afraid or saying him hello that I know him. I tread him with a full confidence of not knowing him at all. The drama was over in 20 seconds and I walked normally as if nothing has happened. As he moved away, I changed the route immediately and started running in the next street to move away to another street.

The area I was staying was full police petrol all the time for many reasons.. But It was only two times that I will come out of my place and walk to different net cafes for the email checking and writings. Although, my friend house had all the modern multi media facilities, but we had agreed that I will not be on line from the house.

We had also chalked out an escape plan in case of police at the house. He has told me several ways to leave the house from back doors. But I suggested that if police comes from the back sides as well, I will court arrest without resistance. We also discussed that while escaping from the back doors, I will try to do the room as no one was living here. I must tell you that I carry no bag, no cloths, wherever I go, I borrow cloths for the night from my friends and in the meantime, I get my cloth washed to wear it again next morning.

My friend knew that in many normal cases, when ever police come to house and do not find the person, they want to arrest, they take the house boss, the house made or any house adult apart from the women. My friend still took the risk and did not for a single moment tried to make me aware that he is doing something extra ordinary in my case.

The good news within three days was the changing attitude of Benazir Bhutto about the present with the present military regime. She has tried in exile to deal for a power sharing formula with military regime. But while in Pakistan, there was suicidal attack on her rally leaving over 200 dead. There was a massive negative campaign by the chief minister of Punjab against Benazir Bhutto during the time. Then Musharraf announced the emergency on 3rd November without her consent apparently. Most of the arrested advocates were from her party. It was all too much. While the first three days, arrests were made of any PPP activists but it all changed with Benazir coming openly against the military regime on emergency.

Her changing attitude was welcome by us in press releases and I announced in the media that LPP will participate with the long March planned for 13th November by PPP from Lahore to Islamabad. Although we had a severe criticism of her policies during the last months, because of soft corner about the regime, but we did go for the so-called conspiracies theories about Benazir and Musharraf being friends but hypocritically opposing each other to restore the respect of Benazir as a popular leader and the one who fight for democracy in any case.

Benazir oppositional statements against the regime have meant arrests of hundreds of PPP activists and their houses raided all over. It meant that Musharraf losing friends and the opposition is growing.

On 9th November, when we would have been holding our fourth national conference, seven of us traveled hours to meet each other for a meeting at safe place to chart out our future strategies. We faxed press releases, invited a team of television team working for several channels including CNN to interview us and film how we are working in underground. They had made a contact with a friend to make a film of the activist working in under ground. They filmed our deserted but functioning

office in the center of Lahore and they came to us. We have to take extra ordinary safety measures to bring them safely to the place we were working. After the filming of our activities within a room and a chat with us and not of the area or the house, we decided to leave the place immediately to avoid any unpleasant incident. But these two were our trusted friends for long time.

Earlier on day, I went to my home for 15 minutes after my partner Shahnaz told me that my son Abdullah is missing me very much. This was done after making sure that no one from the police in uniform or in plain cloths are around the place. I was here after seven days even I was in the same city Lahore. They were all happy and in absolute high spirit. No complaints and no hard talk. My son (7) asked me to stay home but When I explained what would happened, he still did not agree and told me that I will speak to you. But my daughter Mashal told me it will be ok and you can leave. In all seven days, I spoke once a day with my partner on telephone briefly. I changed my cloths and left happily.

I have changed my outlook after I was to a hairdressing person on 8th November after the chance meeting with a police officer. Although I had not many hairs anyhow but now it is totally different. It had not make much difference to my outlook but I had to do something, may be to satisfy myself alone..

There was some pleasant moments on 8th November afternoon when BBC and CNN were back to the air in Pakistan for the time being. I say Lucy Dousset of BBC broadcasting live programme from Islamabad. She only comes to a country with a grave situation and her arrival is an indication of the seriousness of the situation. I was happy to see LPP chairperson chanting slogans in Islamabad before his arrest. They tried to interview Asma Jahanghir at her place where is detained but only could speak for a few moment before they were whisked away by police. I got a message from Asma yesterday that I be in underground in any case and organize the movement.

Happy to see today's papers with LPP news items welcoming the long arch of PPP, condemning all the arrests, demanding an immediate release and solidarity with the striking media people. The LPP news printed in daily Waqat today is an appeal to all the trade unions, working class and peasantry to join the advocate movement. First of such appeal appearing the main news media after the emergency is imposed. We have to rely on the print media for promoting our ideas rather than on electronic media which is off the air.

I also contacted some of the main trade union leaders to be involved in the campaign. Maybe some positive response will come. Some of the trade union leaders in Karachi have already been arrested. A trade unions, left parties and radical social movement in Karachi on 7th November has condemned the imposition of emergency and decided to participate in the movement.

On 9th November, our left alliance Awami Jamhoori Thereek meeting in Lahore could not agree on a day of action but agree to mobilize the masses. One of our leading comrades attended the meeting and put forward an idea of a day of united action across Pakistan. Two of the main leaders and members central committee of AJT, Yousaf Masti Khan (National Workers Party) and Nisar Shah (Laour Party Pakistan) are already in jail. Police is raiding the houses of many AJT leaders. Bilal Minto, son of Abid Hassan Minto the president of National Workers Party and convener of AJT has spent three days in jail before he was released alongside with other 70 social activists. He is teacher at elite university Lahore University of Management and Sciences (LUMS). The arrest of the three radical teachers alongside with him sparked a movement of students at the university.

According to one press report, over 5000 have been arrested so far in the movement. There are not enough places in the jails to accommodate all the political prisoners. Temporary camps have been set up in different jails. Many private houses have been declared as sub jails to put the prisoners.

The prisoners are not been allowed visits by their relatives. No private food allowed for these prisoners. While I had been a recent guest at different jails during the last three months, I could imagine very well the plight of these arrested ones. Our hearts are with them. Sacrifices for democracy and socialism will not go in vain. We will get rid of the military dictatorship soon ; I am convinced by the recent developments. How ? We do not know but we will do it through our mass movement and sacrifices.

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Farooq Tariq

general secretary Labour Party Pakistan

40-Abbot Road Lahore, Pakistan

Tel : 92 42 6315162

Fax : 92 42 6271149

Mobile : 92 300 8411945,

labourpartypk yahoo.com

www.laborpakistan.org

www.jeddojuhd.com