

Fulfill the promises of landownership: Pakistan Peasant Conference on 17 April 2008 at Military Farms Okara

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Pakistan Peasant Conference will take place on 17 April at village 15/4L Military Farms in Okara district. Anjuman Mozareen Punjab (AMP) organizes the conference in coordination of Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (PKRC). AMP has led the peasant movement in different Military Farms for land rights during the last eight years.

The conference is organized on the International day of Peasants to be celebrated all over the world on 17 April.

Thousands of peasants are expected to attend this conference. The main demands of the conference will be

- Ownership rights for all tenants at Military Farms and other public farms
- Withdraw all charges against peasant leaders and activists during the movement
- Restore the right of ownership for those tenants kicked out of their land
- Reinstate all civil employees of Military Farms who were kicked out
- Ownership rights of the homes that peasants are living

The conference is taking place in a village that is known for its militancy to fight against the repression of the Military Farms administration. Many from this village has been to jail and many dozens still facing charges.

A meeting of the leaders of AMP and PKRC held in Lahore on 7 April to finalize the details of the conference. It was decided to invite the elected representatives to this conference alongside with the main leadership of the peasant organizations. It also decided to invite the electronic and print media from Lahore to attend this conference. This will enable to highlight the peasant issues at national level.

It must be noted that AMP was the first organization in Pakistan to challenge the Military dictatorship in a mass level. Seven peasants died of police and Rangers firing, several hundreds arrested and over 100 false cases were registered against the leaders of the movement. The military dictatorship was unable to throw the peasants out of their land and was unable to collect the half of the crops that were the customs earlier. The movement started with a slogan of Death or Ownership.

The AMP decided to pay no more as they have paid enough. Since 2002, no peasants in Okara district Military Farms are paying anything to the military farms administration. It was the most successful outcome of the movement.

Benazir Bhutto and Mina Nawaz Sharif, both former prime ministers promised to grant the ownership rights to the struggling peasants at the time. Now the conference will demand that the time has come to implement on those promises.

It is expected that over 5000 peasants will come together from different districts of Pakistan to attend this conference.