



Pakistan: Three student leaders released, now release all those abducted!

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On January 3, members of the Balochistan Students' Organisation and the families of Zareef Rind, Changez Baloch and Aurangzaib Baloch could breathe a sigh of relief, as the three leaders of the BSO were released alive after a month of forceful, criminal and unofficial abduction by the secret service. The past month saw a wave of solidarity after Zareef, Changez and Aurangzaib went missing after a protest in Quetta. This victory belongs solely to those leftists and the social and workers' movements who stood up for these courageous student activists. The Quetta protest itself, on December 5, was held for their comrade Jiand Baloch who went missing a week earlier on November 30 together with his 10 year old brother, Husnain, and his father, Abdul Qayyum.

No thanks of course can go to the Pakistani secret service for releasing those it had abducted and at least mentally tortured for a month, solely because they spoke up for their missing comrade, and the thousands of others who have gone missing since the early 2000s. No thanks either to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, PTI, led government of Imran Khan. The 'Naya Pakistan' the PTI promised is clearly not about delivering democratic rights. Government ministries have kept silent about the crimes carried out by the secret service, if they did not actually order them. There was no sign of any protest from the overwhelming majority of bourgeois society, by their courts, media outlets and liberal intellectuals. The National Assembly also kept its silence, including those bourgeois parliamentarians who hold their seats in Balochistan. That makes it clear that we can place neither trust nor hope in these 'high' institutions and representatives of bourgeois society. They are all intrinsically connected with the ruling class and its state.

To no one's surprise, support from Members of the National Assembly came mainly from leftists like Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir, who are associated with the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement, PTM, and Manzoor Pashteen who was denied the right to participate in the ongoing protest in Quetta. They answered the call for solidarity even though they themselves had been threatened by the military in mid-December. The military took action because of their activism in supporting the democratic rights of the Pashtun people and the political crystallisation process that encouraged Pakistanis across the country to become active. Shamefully, we also have to record that with only a few exceptions, many socialist organisations in Pakistan did not speak up. Theirs is not the socialism for which the League for the Fifth International stands. Ours is a socialism that recognises that speaking up for the most oppressed in society is the duty of every socialist.

Today, we celebrate the release of Zareef, Aurangzaib and Changez. But it should not be forgotten that on the same day those three were released alive, a fourth was recovered dead. It was the corpse of Ilahi Bakhsh that was found near Hub. Ilahi was abducted three years ago during a military raid on his hometown, and stands for the thousands of abducted people whose bodies were only returned long after their names had vanished from public consciousness. Jiand Baloch, Abdul Qayyum Baloch and Husnain Baloch are still missing, so are many others.

In fact, since the government of Imran Khan came into power in August, the number of daily abductions has increased. Now people, sometimes several a day, disappear on a regular basis. Many disappear in Balochistan, but the people of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and nowadays even Punjab, are not spared. While this is surely a very frightening development, we should also remember that it is a symptom of the instability within Pakistani society. The Pakistani ruling class is obviously afraid of the chaos and crisis it has created, both on the economic and political level. It is

afraid of the social movements and political reorganisation this could generate. Therefore it tries to stamp out every spark of dissent.

The government and state become ever more authoritarian, even trying to suppress different political factions of the ruling class, as can be seen from the pending corruption cases against PML-N or PPP leaders. While we should be aware of these contradictions, and make good use of them in building social resistance, such political forces can never be allies of ours. How could they be, especially for the oppressed people of Balochistan, considering they have dispersed every local government which dared to implement even the most basic bourgeois democratic rights. When Bilawal Bhutto now calls himself the defender of democracy, he does not do so to defend the people who are actually hit by repression. He does so to gather popular support in the face of corruption charges against his father, Asif Ali Zardari. The whole clique of corrupt bourgeois politicians can be no ally for us. Their interest is not liberation, but consolidation of their own power against the other opposing factions of landlords and industrialists.

We hope that the mobilisations since Jiand Baloch went missing have strengthened the bonds of solidarity amongst the comrades of the BSO. Difficult times put every movement under immense strain but they can also be the best teacher to develop the politics and organisation that will bring liberation tomorrow. Such an organisation is needed today more than ever. The social and political movement of the oppressed needs to be revitalised.

Thanks must also be expressed towards the socialist and left wing parties who gave their support to the comrades of the BSO. We hope to contribute to the forging of stronger links of international solidarity between leftist organisations and the Pakistani workers', youth and women's movements.

Now, as the economic and political crisis is deepening, what is urgently needed is a revolutionary socialist party that sinks deep roots within the working class as well as amongst the people of the nationally oppressed provinces. The resurgence of socialist ideas amongst many students is a glimmer of hope in that regard, and we are looking forward to working with the comrades of the Baloch Students' Organisation and everyone else who wishes to develop that in the future. A central task in that will be to fight for the speedy release of Jiand, Abdul, Husnain and all other missing persons!

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