

Pakistan: Solidarity with the Pashtun Protection Movement, PTM! Free Ali Wazir and all political prisoners!

League for the Fifth International Sun, 26/05/2019 - 15:32

League for the Fifth International

After weeks of hostile agitation and fabricated lies against the Pashtun Protection Movement, PTM, the military escalated the situation still further on 26 May, by attacking a sit-in. This left three protesters dead and up to 45 injured. At the same time, they arrested Ali Wazir, a Member of the National Assembly, and six others. The League for the Fifth International condemns this criminal attack on the PTM and gives its unconditional support to the civil rights movement and its democratic demands.

Since Saturday, residents of North Waziristan's Miranshah district had been holding a sit-in, condemning assaults on local women by security forces. On Sunday morning, Members of the National Assembly Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir, together with a group of PTM supporters, attempted to join their peaceful protest. A video, which subsequently went viral, shows how military personnel at a checkpoint attempted to stop peaceful citizens joining the larger assembly in the background.

In the light of the video, the non-violent politics of the PTM and its leaders, as well as the contradictory statement of the military's Inter-Services Public Relations, ISPR, it is clear that the army escalated the situation. No socialist, indeed no democrat, would trust one word of a statement from an institution that has unleashed a media campaign against the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement in recent months.

On April 19, the prime minister, Imran Khan, slandered the PTM, claiming that the way in which it raised its demands was 'not good for the country'. Two weeks later, ISPR spokesperson Major General Asif Ghafoor claimed that the PTM was 'playing into others' hands', and warned its supporters that 'their time is up'. While Pakistani media have kept quiet about the PTM and its demands, rarely even reporting major protests, they were keen to broadcast and comment on these lies. In this way, they helped to prepare the ground for the brutal crackdown on the PTM which is now under way. Manzoor Pashteen rightly characterised the ISPR's social media campaign as a means to create an atmosphere which would 'justify' today's attack.

We confirm our unconditional support for the PTM and its demands for the de-mining of the tribal areas, an end to the repressive checkpoint system and to the practice of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and unlawful detentions. We welcome the quick response of the Awami Workers' Party and other groups of the Pakistani left. We agree with the demands for a withdrawal of the army, an immediate lifting of the current curfew and provision of the best possible medical aid to the PTM workers. We call for the unharmed and immediate release of all protestors.

Furthermore, an extraordinary commission, elected by the local population and independent of the military,

should investigate the incident, with the right of uncensored publication of its outcomes in all major media outlets.

Lastly, we propose a meeting of leaders of the PTM, the Awami Workers' Party, Trade Unions, the students' movement, in fact, all organisations that agree on the need to build a united front against the attacks on democratic rights and state authoritarianism as well as the neoliberal and anti-working class attacks that the government aims to implement as a result of its deal with the International Monetary Fund.

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