

Pakistan: For a United Front against Clerical Fascism and Dictatorship

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Pakistan: For a United Front !

The last weekend of November was a nightmare. Recognising the weakness of the government after the corruption scandals, clerical fascists used the pretext of the Election Bill to mobilise their forces on the streets. Their agenda is not just directed against religious minorities, they are merely the scapegoats. Their programme is for a mass movement to destroy all the democratic, legal and political rights of the population and is a direct threat to the interests and organisations of the working class and peasant masses, particularly the youth and women.

The military then used the anti-government mobilisations to demonstrate their real control of the forces of the state by requiring the government to accept the humiliating demands of the Islamist ?Tehreek Labaik Ya Rasool Allah?. By effectively siding with the Islamists, the generals hope to secure a mass base for a military dictatorship, should they ever deem that necessary.

Against this storm of reaction, the government was shown to be helpless. We cannot trust the capitalist cabinet of Panama ministers to defend the few remaining democratic rights we have. These people are more concerned with keeping their riches safe than with the lives of the Pakistani masses.

Just imagine if workers, peasants, youth or oppressed minorities had dared to protest in the way the Maulvis did. The government would not have hesitated to authorise the use of the most brutal force, including live ammunition, to crush such demonstrations. Certainly, the army would have helped. The Maulvis would have applauded, too. They are ultimately all in the camp of those who want to push the Pakistani masses into the dirt.

Nevertheless, right now, the immediate danger is not the government but the threat of a dramatic shift to the right, possibly even a military dictatorship with support from the Maulvis. Since we certainly cannot trust the existing government to prevent this, we must rely on our own strength.

Therefore, we call on all Trade Unions, the progressive student and women organisations and the Pakistani left to form a nationwide united front. These organisations need to hold local and regional preparatory meetings to analyse the specific situation. On this basis, the supporters of such a united front call should agree to form joint committees of action in every campus, workplace and working class district where they are present.

The task of these committees should be to launch an information campaign, to strengthen working class

organisations and to strengthen our defensive capacities. The workers, of whatever sect or nationality, need to be prepared to defend their communities against violent mobs such as those we have seen on the 25th and 26th of November. They also need to be prepared for mass strike action in case of an attempted military coup. For this purpose, slogans and materials need to be prepared and street meetings in workers' districts, in or near factories and campuses, need to be organised.

We propose that those organisations that support the call for a united front should agree to defend each other against all attacks from reactionary forces. We should aim for the utmost unity in action when it comes to defending our class and its democratic rights. At the same time, we call for an open and vital debate within the united front to revitalise our movement and to train a new generation of working class activists. We might have strategic differences but it is the duty of every working class activist, and every working class organisation, to close our ranks in such times of danger. Therefore, we call on you to distribute the following document and to commit your organisations, trade unions or initiatives to signing it and acting accordingly.

For a United Front against Clerical Fascism and Dictatorship

1. We, the signatories of this statement, call on the trade unions and left parties, on all progressive student, women and peasant organisations to form a United Front against Clerical Fascism and against any attempt by the military to gain more power or establish a new military dictatorship.
2. As signatories, we commit ourselves and our organisations to the building of a nationwide United Front.
3. This will require the formation of committees of action on the national, regional and local level.
4. The task of these committees is to launch a campaign, raising our voices against clerical fascism and military rule from a working class perspective.
5. It also includes the agreement of mutual self defence against threats and attacks, and the goal of organising the working masses so that they can defend their districts and communities, their factories and schools from sectarian and fascist attacks. It also means organising and training our class to be able to take mass strike action in the event of any attempt at a fascist or military coup.

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