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Pakistan

Ali Wazeer; A Marxist in the parliament dominated by feudal and capitalists

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Ali Wazeer, a central committee member of The Struggle group, has won a seat in the national parliament with 23530 votes and his closest rival from religious alliance MMA got 7515. Thus winning the seat with a majority of 16015.

Ali Wazeer was one the main leader of Pashtun Tahafaz Movement and during this year, mass meetings were organised in major cities to raise voices for the fair compensation to the victims of the war on terror” and to demand the release of all “missing” persons or to bring them to the courts if they are guilty.

Two other leader of this PTM also contested for the national parliament and one of them Muhsin Dawer also won the seat after a close competition. Mohsin Javed Dawer got 16526 votes while Aurangzeb of Imran Khan PTI got 10422. However the MMA candidate Mufti Misbahudin MMA got a close 15363.

These two PTM leaders contested from South Wazeeristan, an area dominated by religious fanatics. However, a strong movement for civic rights of Pashtuns had cut across the influence of the fanatics and Pashtuns voted despite all the threats to elect their mass movement leaders.

Two main leaders of PTM presence in the parliament has given a hope to many in Pakistan that at least there would be peoples voices in a parliament dominated by feudal lords, corrupt capitalists and stooges of the military and judicial establishment.

Who is Ali Wazeer

Ali Wazeer is a very special person. His personal ordeal best illustrates what prompted his demands. Ali Wazeer was pursuing a degree in law at the turn of the century when his hometown, Wana, the headquarters of South Waziristan agency, became the epicenter of global terrorism when a host of Taliban-allied groups sought shelter in the communities.

No doubt the terrorists had some individual local facilitators, but ultimately it was the state that failed to prevent them from using the territory. When his father, the chief of the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe, and other local leaders complained of their presence, government officials ignored and silenced them. Instead, Islamabad spent years denying the presence of any Afghan, Arab, or Central Asian militants.

By 2003, the funamentalist militants had established a foothold in South and North Waziristan tribal agencies and were attempting to build a local emirate. Ali Wazeer elder brother Farooq Wazir, a local political activist and youth leader, became the first victim of a long campaign in which thousands of Pashtun tribal leaders, activists, politicians, and clerics were killed with near absolute impunity. Their only crime was to question or oppose the presence of dangerous terrorists in our homeland.

In 2005, Ali Wazeer was in prison when his father, brothers, cousins, and an uncle were killed in a single ambush. He was there because a draconian colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) law holds an entire tribe or region responsible for the crimes of an individual or any alleged crime committed in the territory.

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Ali Wazeer had committed no crime, never got a fair trial, and was not sentenced, yet he was prevented even from participating in the funerals for his family.

In the subsequent years, six more members of his extended family were assassinated. The authorities have not even investigated these crimes let alone held anyone responsible.

Ali Wazeer and his family faced economic ruin after all of the notable men in the family were eliminated. The government failed to prevent the militants from demolishing his family owned gas stations. They later used the bricks to build bathrooms, claiming they were munafiqin (hypocrites) so even the inanimate materials from his businesses were not appropriate to build proper buildings.

His family-owned apple and peach orchards in Wana were sprayed with poisonous chemicals, and tube wells were filled with dirt to force them to surrender to the forces of darkness.

In 2016, his family-owned market in Wana was dynamited after a bomb blast there killed an army officer which was an accident. They nevertheless destroyed their livelihoods under the FCR. After the demolition, the government prevented the local community – mostly members of the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe – from collecting donations to help them. They were told it would set an unacceptable precedent because the government cannot let anyone help those it punishes.

So all together 16 members of his family, including his father, two brothers were killed by Taliban during these years.

He was one of the main leader of Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, a civic rights movement for the rights of the victims of war on terror. Recently he toured around the country and organised mass rallies in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Swat. Lahore Left Front was the host of Lahore public meeting which was formally not permitted by the authorities, we were not allowed to campaign, no posters stickers were allowed to be spread in the city, Ali Wazeer and seven more were arrested a night before the public meeting and after a massive immediate response, they were released before the rally. Yet, over 10,000 participated in this public meeting.

In April this year, dozens of of Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) supporters were injured and 10 were killed as a result of an attack on PTM leader Ali Wazir by the “pro-government militants”, also known as Peace Committee.

However, the PTM sympathisers gathered to welcome Ali retaliated, upon which the militants fled, leaving Ali’s cousin and a Voice of America VOA journalist injured among others.

In an interview during April 2018, Ali Wazeer said,

“The past few months have transformed my life. Amid the agonies I have endured and the threats, suspicion, and accusations I face, the love, support, and respect I receive is overwhelming. Since February, when we began protesting to draw attention to the suffering of ethnic Pashtuns – among the worst victims of terrorism – I have learned a lot about the potential of ordinary Pakistanis. Their thirst for change is inspiring and heralds a peaceful, prosperous future we must build for generations to come”.

During those difficult years, he didn’t lose faith in mass movement and remained committed to politics of class struggle. He ran in the parliamentary elections in 2008 and 2013.

In 2013 general elections, his victory was changed into a defeat at gunpoint. He lost the election for just over 300 votes after the Taliban intimidated voters and tortured his supporters and campaign volunteers.

Amid the volcano of violence, thousands of civilians have disappeared, and thousands have fallen victim to extrajudicial killings. The leaders of PTM are profiled as suspected terrorists across the country, face humiliation at security check posts, and innocent civilians face violence during security sweeps and operations. As the world's largest tribal society, the Pashtuns are known for their hospitality, commitment, and valor, yet they were falsely reduced to terrorist sympathizers despite the fact that they are their worst victims.

Ali Wazeer belongs to The Struggle Group, of Pakistan Marxists.

The group has joined Lahore Left Front, a united platform of several Left groups and parties. However, Lahore Left Front has organised some mass activities where Ali Wazeer participated.

The general election of 2018 was the most rigged election in the history of Pakistan. The society has moved further to the right with Imran Khan Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf coming to power. Imran Khan called Ali Wazeer prior to the elections and offered him PTI nomination from the area which Ali politely refused. However such a respect of Ali Wazeer that Imran Khan told him that in any case we will not put up our candidate against you.

Prior to the general elections, a whole sale rigging took place on the behest of the Establishment. PMLN candidates were threatened, forced them to change loyalties and so on. PTI had an open support of the most of the state institutions.

In this background when a more right wing party PTI, than the previous ruling party PMLN has come to power, a Marxist in the parliament will be a wave of fresh air from the stinking parliament.

Although other Left groups also contested including Awami Workers Party and had launched a tremendous election campaign, however, the election campaign of Ali Wazeer was of some special characteristics. He addressed every day few public meetings, went door to door with his meagre resources. Thousands cheered him all the times. We were all sure that he will win but were afraid of any incident that could cancel the elections from this constituency.

Ali Wazeer has opened the gates for the entire Left. He is loved by most of social activists as well, a sober person who is always down to earth in his presentation in workers' meetings but speaks like a lion when he is addressing the ruling class. A fearless class fighter who has emerged as the one of the most respected Left leaders in recent working class history.

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