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Pakistan

Free Baba Jan and all political prisoners!

- News from around the world -

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Last August 11, Pakistani police used live bullets against people demanding payment of compensation allowances following a devastating landslide which had happened a year before in the valley of Hunza, on July 4, 2010. This landslide, in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, destroyed several houses and important roads. The local administration abandoned the affected community and pocketed compensation payments intended for several affected families.

When villagers demonstrated on August 11, on the occasion of the arrival of the minister for the province, police responded with lethal violence, killing Afzal Baig (22 years old), and his father, Sher Ullah Baig (50 years old). In reaction, the population of Aliabad and other localities of Hunza rose up, and for four days the population took control of the city. To calm the people, authorities claimed that prosecutions had begun against the police officers responsible for the killings and granted financial compensation to the grieving families. This was only a manoeuvre to prepare a new wave of repression. On August 19, 36 people were arrested, among them ten members of the Labor Party of Pakistan (LPP), six of whom remain in detention. A new wave of arrests began on September 16, with 33 arrests.

Baba Jan, a member of the federal committee of the LPP and a leader of the Progressive Youth Front, was very involved in the popular protests. He initially escaped arrest on August 19 and went underground. However, he was in danger of being summarily executed ("disappeared") if found by the police. The area of Gilgit-Baltistan is well-known for violations of Human Rights by the authorities. Baba Jan chose to give himself up to the authorities, a month after going underground, but not before holding a press conference so that no one could be unaware of what might happen to him. According to information obtained by the LPP, Baba Jan was removed from his cell by the Pakistani secret services – the ISI - and tortured for two days: suspended by ropes, and severely beaten.

Jan Baba and others are the targets of repression because they played an important part in making known the scandal of July 4, 2010 and its sequels. The authorities are now using violence and repression to try and cover up their abandonment and cheating of the victims of the July 4 landslide and the killings committed by its police.

We strongly condemn the Pakistani government for using violence, arrest and intimidation as a method to try to silence people's just demands and the people's protest against its repressive policies.

We demand:

That the government of Pakistan immediately and unconditionally releases Baba Jan and all other political prisoners.
That the government of Pakistan compensates the victims of the July 4 landslide and police violence.
That the government of Pakistan prosecutes the police and intelligence officials responsible for Human Rights violations.

We call on all socialist and progressive movements and Human Rights organisations, in South East Asia and the world, to give solidarity to the political prisoners and condemn the Human Rights violations committed by the Pakistani security services. We fully support the people's movement in Gilgit-Baltistan in their struggle.

Signed by:

Free Baba Jan and all political prisoners!

1. People's Liberation Party of Indonesia (PLP)
2. The Centre of Student Movement for National Liberation (PEMBEBASAN) Indonesia
3. Partido ng Manggagawa (Labor Party Philippines)
4. Indonesian Labor Movement of Unity (PPBI)
5. Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) / Socialist Party of Malaysia
6. Democratic Association of the Youth (SDK) Philippines
7. Perempuan Mahardhika (Free Woman) Indonesia
8. International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE) Manila Philippines
9. Revolutionary Workers Party-Mindanao (RPM-M), Philippines
10. Nouveau Party Anticapitaliste (NPA – New AntiCapitalist Party), France
11. Socialist Alliance, Australia
12. Socialist Resistance, Britain

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