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**Afghanistan/Pakistan**

# **Pakistan Afghanistan Progressive parties conference joint declaration**

- IV Online magazine - 2011 - IV443 - December 2011 -

Publication date: Thursday 29 December 2011

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**The Pakistan Afghan Progressive parties two days conference ended December 22 in Lahore. It was first time after decades that a formal meeting was organised between the progressive groups of the two countries. It was attended by 10 political groups from both countries, four from Afghanistan and six from Pakistan. Almost all the main Left groups of Pakistan attended this conference. It was chaired by three young activists, Sonia Qadir, Ammar Ali Jan and Aman Karriaper. This is the joint declaration it agreed.**

The progressive and democratic forces of Pakistan and Afghanistan met here in Lahore for two days in the first ever joint conference. This is a historic step for the progressive forces of both sides to sit together and share the sufferings of our people at the hands of US-led NATO forces as well as the religious extremists in the form of the Taliban. We also vehemently condemn the military establishment and the governments of both countries who use different excuses to justify the occupation by foreign forces as well as tacit patronization of religious extremism.

We resolve to launch a sustained campaign against the forces of imperialism and religious extremism. We plan to organize coordinated days of action and other initiatives at the political as well as the cultural and educational levels. We plan to broaden this movement and include other left and progressive forces who share the common goals of establishing a just peace and of progress in the region. We resolve to also include the progressive movements in India and Iran in order to build up a broad regional alliance to secure a just peace.

We agree that by occupying a sovereign country under false pretences, in blatant violation of all accepted norms of international law, then cynically deploying the smokescreen of “human rights” and “democracy”, NATO’s active promotion of criminal, misogynist warlords has exposed the myth of bringing democracy and freedom to the people of Afghanistan. The policies of the occupation forces have resulted in the country being hijacked by medieval warlords, who are as adamant in their rejection of democratic processes and denial of civil liberties and equal rights for women as the Taliban regime they have replaced. This has resulted in Afghanistan regaining its ranking as the biggest producer of opium in the world, adding another potent element to the lawlessness that is destroying the fabric of Afghan society.

The violent, theocratic movement of the Taliban is deeply anti-people and promotes the ideal of rule by an elite clergy. The Taliban claim to defend the sovereignty and freedom of Afghanistan, yet they are unable to guarantee basic freedoms and protection to their own population, and their policies make Afghanistan an easy target for foreign interference (e.g., from Pakistan or Iran) and even outright occupation.

It is commonly portrayed in the Western media that the situation of women in Afghanistan has drastically improved since the NATO intervention with the protection of women being used as an excuse to justify the occupation of Afghanistan as well as military operations in Pakistan. We reject these claims as false and point out that after 10 years of occupation, Afghanistan has been awarded the rank of the most dangerous country for women with Pakistan in the top five.

Looking at the effects of the American War on Terror on Pakistan, we note the consolidation of the links between the CIA and sections of the Pakistan Army, resulting in drone strikes inside Pakistan, the abduction and selling of Pakistani citizens to the United States, the continued transit of military supplies to ISAF from Karachi to Khyber, the use of Pakistani military bases by American forces. We also observe that the closing of ranks between the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban and the Pakistan Army – as part of the Pakistani Establishment’s policy of dealing with both the Taliban and NATO – has led the Army to adopt a more belligerent attitude in public, and seeking to

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capitalize on the peak in anti-American feeling in the country, to attempt to derail the India-Pakistan peace process (or at least tarnish the patriotic credentials of the elected representatives) and even, it is feared, attempt to dislodge the government altogether.

We condemn military action in Balochistan and demand the Pakistani government that repressive measures of the establishment in the form of disappearances must be stopped with immediate effect.

Given this history, we reject any military solution to the problems of Pakistan and Afghanistan and pledge to devote all our energy to constructing concrete alternatives to the false choice between NATO and Taliban, a genuinely pro-people, pro-freedom alternative.

The immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops along with measures aimed at achieving socio-economic justice are what we believe can alleviate the suffering of the people of both Afghanistan and Pakistan and lead to a just peace in the region. However, let us be clear that none of these people-friendly measures will ever be given to the people, but will have to be extracted from the impending alliance of local and foreign powers that is planning to dominate Afghanistan even after the withdrawal of NATO troops (the recent Bonn conference is the latest example of attempts to make such alliances). And this can only be done by a genuine movement of the masses of Afghanistan and Pakistan working together with a clear identification of their common enemies: US imperial power, the neo-colonial Pakistan Army and the Taliban and various allied groups. We recognize this struggle as part of the larger fight against the economic colonization of the region in the name of globalization and neoliberal agenda.

We support the enhancing of trade ties between the South Asian countries to promote trade and creating more business and job opportunities.

Afghan Labour Revolutionnary Organization

Solidarity Party of Afghanistan

Afghan Revolutionnary Organization

Malalai Joya Defense Committee

Labour Party Pakistan

Awami Party Pakistan

Workers Party Pakistan

Pakistan Trade Union Defense Campaign

Awami Tehreek

United Kashmir Peoples National Party