

Winter 2013

Bulletin

Sponsored by the Punjab Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers Alliance, the National Railway Workers Union, the United Labour Federation, National Union of Postal Employees and many others

Campaign Aims

- 1 Defence of trade unionists from the physical attacks of the employers and the state.
- 2 To defend the workers right to organise in unions
- 3 Stop the privatisation and economic plunder of state industries.
- 4 For a minimum living wage or unemployment allowance for all.
- 5 For complete abolition of child labour.
- 6 The abolition of anti-trade union laws.
- 7 The abolition of fundamentalist laws against women and an end to gender exploitation.
- 8 Struggle for Women right to organise in all workplaces.

Pakistan Trade Union Defense Campaign

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Re-launch of Pakistan Trade Union Defense Campaign

For almost two decades Pakistan has been in the international media for the wrong reasons. Each day, during this period, Pakistan has been engulfed by a new wave of uncertainty, turmoil and carnage this include militant attacks, suicide bombings and the onslaught of American drones killing and maiming hundreds and thousands of

innocent people including children, women and the elderly. However, there is another Pakistan that is going through rampant corruption, crime, unemployment, price hikes, disease, illiteracy, and poverty. Government is doing nothing to provide relief to its people. Every government is imposing anti-workers policies. *Continued on Page 3*

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) workers under attack

Under the dictations of IMF, World Bank and western corporations, Pakistani government have embarked on privatisation of nationalized industries over the years resulting in devastating effect on workers in relation to redundancies, cuts in wages and longer working hours. The newly instated government of Nawaz Sharif is pushing ahead the privatisation of the national carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). Initially, it is proposing to sell 26% of PIA shares to Private companies. PIA was the most well managed organisations in Pakistan before it became under vicious attacks by government bureaucracy and private companies in the last 10 years. The workers have successfully resisted



attempt made by the previous military regime of General Musharaf to privatise PIA.

Recently, PIA unions have launched a nationwide campaign against this latest attack on the livelihood of their workers. PTUDC is now organising solidarity of international trade unions against these latest vicious attacks. Please send messages of support to the PIA workers via PTUDC UK address.

Super exploitation in Pakistani and Bangladeshi garment factories in by high street fashion brands

The death toll from the fire that ripped through a Karachi garment factory last year stood above 300, making it the largest number of casualties in a single industrial incident in Pakistan's history. Putting profits over worker safety is a universal problem, and can be seen in sweatshops throughout the developing world. But the scale of this tragedy has shone a light on the lax oversight and flagrant disregard for human life that runs riot in Pakistan. Authorities overlooking factory standards, building control, and fire safety have failed at every level.

Textiles are big business in Pakistan, a major export that employs 38% of the manufacturing work force, accounting for 55.6% of total exports and provides 7.4% of GDP in 2011. This incident has raised many questions about safety standards and the authorities' role in providing basic safety to workers. Textile factories are particularly at risk due to the lethal combination of chemical dyes and stacks of cotton often stored next to each other - ensuring a deadly result.

Similarly we witnessed a horrendous accident in Bangladesh with the collapse of Rana Plaza resulting in over 1,127 workers being killed in April. In a second incident, eight people were killed in a fire at a factory in the capital that was producing clothes for western retailers including Primark. It is estimated that at least 1,800 garment industry workers have been killed in fires or building collapses in Bangladesh since 2005. Bangladesh is the world's second biggest supplier of clothes. More than 80% are exported to Europe or the US. The £13bn industry employs about 3.5 million people, mainly young women, and is a major foreign currency earner for Bangladesh.

The link between cheap fashion in Britain's shops and shockingly poor worker conditions has been repeatedly highlighted by these horrific accidents. It has exposed unsafe conditions for workers turning out British stores' clothes, but the pittance on which they struggle to survive. It is high time UK retail chains, and other companies sourcing from Pakistan and

Bangladesh, matched ethical claims with action to lift their suppliers' workers out of poverty.

According to IndustriALL, the international union group more than half of clothing factories inspected in Bangladesh and Pakistan failed to meet fire safety standards. This is only a tip of the iceberg. In both countries safety issues such as blocked fire exits or a lack of alarms were the biggest single problem identified by inspectors, ahead of long working hours, low wages and the use of child labour. IndustriALL has facilitated a legally binding building safety agreement with over 50 brands, pledging to contribute up to \$500,000 (£325,000) a year towards rigorous independent factory inspections and the installation of fire safety measures. Trade unions should continue to pressure clothing companies into binding agreements on health and safety for workers in other countries in South Asia and the developing world. Only strong union organisation can fight to improve workplace health and safety and drive up wages to acceptable levels.

Pakistan Postal workers struggle

Pakistan Post Office Directorate General Employees Union elections were held on 11 March 2013. The Broad Left within the postal union won a landslide victory and got over 70% of the votes. The right wing group in the union, supported by the Pakistan Peoples Party's leadership, had to

face a humiliating defeat. This victory has come at a time when the right wing had the overt support of PPP's Federal Information Minister and the People's Labour Federation and had been making extensive use of various organs of the state, such as the judiciary through which assorted injunctions against

the left within the union during the last two years had been sought. The intervention of the PTUDC in this left movement attracted many workers, resulting in the election of four members and sympathizers of the PTUDC onto the central panel, all with big majorities. Now the fight against the attacks of the bosses is building up.

Child labour a scourge of human bondage on the increase in Pakistan

Pakistan is ranked the second worst country of the world boasting of having the most school-going age children out of schools the staggeringly high number of 25 million. Only Nigeria has worse figures. More than 6 million Pakistani out-of-school children are of primary school age.

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Under these circumstances, Pakistani workers and trade unionists are struggling to achieve and maintain basic fundamental rights. With fewer than 5% of the workforce actually organised in the unions, trade unionists are facing assassinations, assaults, kidnapping and illegal detentions by the employers and the coercive state apparatus. There has never been a greater need for international solidarity and support for the Pakistani trade union movement as there is today. Pakistan Trade Union Defense Campaign (PTUDC) was set up in 1995 by workers leadership in various industries.

The PTUDC is working with different workers groups, trade unions and national federations in enabling and strengthening workers democratic structures, engaging workers in trade unions especially women, building unity and ultimately bringing trade unions together in a unified national body similar to the Trade Union Congress. The PTUDC is a broad-based campaign, established to build international solidarity between the Pakistani workers and the trade union movement worldwide. The PTUDC organises public events, attend trade union meetings to highlight conditions for the trade unions in Pakistan and

Rising food and fuel prices and a struggling economy have forced many families to send their children to search for work instead of to the classroom. Up to 10 million children are estimated to be working in Pakistan, says Mannan Rana, child and adolescent protection specialist at the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF).



promotes international solidarity between Pakistani workers and workers around the world. At the present, PTUDC publish quarterly bulletin to highlight the Pakistani workers struggle at workplaces.

Conditions of the workers

The official minimum wage is just £50 a month. The pension and social security systems are dysfunctional in the public sector and non-existent in the private sector. There is no health and safety standards within workplaces and many workers are killed and maimed in accidents each year without any compensation to them or their families.

Campaigns

Over the years the PTUDC has waged many campaigns against the cuts, privatisation and the exploitation of women and children. More recently we have had major campaigns against the so called Public-Private Partnership, which is another name for ruthless privatisation. Trade unions are practically forbidden in many important sectors of public and private industries. Some of the major victories for the PTUDC against privatisation have been in Pakistan Railway, Pakistan Steel, Karachi Electric Supply Corporation (KESC), Pakistan International Airlines, Pakistan Telecomm (PTCL), etc. Presently, PTUDC is playing a leading role in the struggle of the

Doctors, Airline workers and many others throughout Pakistan.

Relief Work

The PTUDC over the years has been in the forefront of organizing relief work for workers affected by natural disasters such as the earthquake in 2007, the massive floods in 2010 and 2011, and given support to displaced people trapped in the war zones in North-West Pakistan.

Sponsors of the Campaign

In Pakistan, the PTUDC is sponsored by the Punjab Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers Alliance, the National Railway Workers Union, and many others. Internationally, PTUDC support groups have been established in Spain, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Sweden, USA and Canada. In Britain, the PTUDC has had support from Unite, NUJ and UNIFI and many other trade union bodies across the British labour movement. Tony Benn, Jeremy Dear - former General Secretary of the NUJ, John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn (British MPs), have all kindly added their support for the aims of the PTUDC.

Now we are re-launching the work of the PTUDC in the UK, giving it a new impetus as the need for solidarity in Britain becomes ever more necessary. Please help us and become a part of the workers struggle. Get involve and lend your support to the campaign.

Workers protest at Awan Sports Industries Limited Sialkot

Factory workers staged strike in Awan Sports Limited for bad working condition that includes harsh working environment, continuous threat of redundancies, layoffs and low wages. Over 127 workers have already been sacked without benefits. Awan Sport Industries Limited is manufacturing sports equipment such as hockey, pad, table tennis, soccer balls and sportswear. They manufacture products for the world famous brands including Puma, Adidas, Wilson, Vision, Regent Sports and Nike. Around 1,200 workers (600 regular and 600 daily wages) work in this factory.

Victory for Young Doctors in Punjab

The young doctors in Punjab have achieved a great victory. More than 22,000 young doctors in Punjab have organised, to push their demands for better wages and service structures, under the united banner of a new organisation called the Young Doctors Association (YDA). After taking strike action earlier this year, which involved a hunger strike, the YDA have now won a number of important concessions from the authorities - an unprecedented result for these workers. Health is one of the most neglected sectors in Pakistan. Less than one per cent is allocated for this sector in the budget. More than 500,000 women die every year during child birth. Around 50 per cent of children have stunted growth due to malnutrition amongst



other causes. This is what has prompted the struggle. The struggle for better health facilities will and must continue but this victory is an important milestone in the fight against cuts and low pay in the Punjab.

Pakistani Journalists struggle

This spring, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists organized a protest demonstration in front of Multan Press Club to press their demand for implementation of the wage board award. The demonstration involved the Multan Union of Journalists, Journalists Rights Association of Pakistan and the Pakistan Trade Union Defense Campaign. The protesters urged the federal as well as provincial governments to take immediate steps to implement the Wage Board Award. The protesters stressed that the delay in the execution of the award, after getting approval from the four provincial assemblies, the National Assembly and Senate, was unjustified.

Join Pakistan Trade Union Defense Campaign (PTUDC)

To get involved and get your organisation affiliated, here are the recommended affiliation contribution. If you wish to affiliate but would like to discuss affiliation contribution, please feel free to contact us by email on iqbaljaved@hotmail.com or phone 07971057346.

National trade union	£500	These are the affiliation fees for individuals:	
Regional bodies	£250	Waged	£10
Branches / trades councils	£100	Unwaged	£5.00
Others	£25		

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode:

Phone: Email:

Trade union / organisation:

All correspondence and donations to: The Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (PTUDC), 65 Gristhorpe Road, Selly Oak Birmingham B29 7TD

All cheques and online transfers payable to:

Account Name: Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (PTUDC)

Account No: 35 73 33 60 Sort Code: 30 - 92 - 99

Post to: 65 Gristhorpe Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 7TD