

# Pakistan Trade Union Solidarity

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## Pakistan Steel Mills - Story of Neglect and Destruction

Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) is the largest single industry of producing raw iron and finished steel products in Pakistan. If this fact is put into figures, it translates into production capacity of 1.1 million tonnes of iron along with 5.5 million tonnes of iron finished products.

The PSM is facing bankruptcy and the lives of 13,000 workers and their families are at stake. Dozens of industries affiliated with steel mills are facing closure. The workers have not been paid for months while the government in 'coalition' with the man-

agement has plundered Rs. 45 billion (£354 million) of workers welfare funds. This money is intended to be spent on workers and their families. Pakistan Steel Mills has been in a loss for the eight years continuously and currently with the decrease in the supply of natural gas is not able to produce the required steel. It should be remembered that the steel mills paid its dues back in 2002. The destruction of steel mills started in 2008 in the government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Destructive and ill-conceived policies by then Prime Minister



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## Railway Workers Continue Struggle for Their Rights

Today the condition of workers in all sectors and institutions across Pakistan is miserable. Railway is not prone to this. Constant decline real wages combined with adverse working conditions is widespread in Railway. The workers have been struggling for the last many years for their decent working conditions. At one side the government is constantly cutting budget of Railway and on the other side there is a contin-

uous threat of privatisation to private profiteering companies. The demands put forward by the railway workers include:

- 100% increase in wages and allowances.
- TLA workers in gangmen staff must be made permanent.
- Every worker must be given six annual increments.
- TA budget (travelling allowance) must be given in all the departments according to work and the TA budget must be increased.
- Jobs should not be given under TLA but every worker must be made permanent in all the departments.
- All the workers in engineering, gangmen, carriage and wagon works, loco shed works, traffic signals, electrical works, telecom and commercial staff must be paid operational/ maintenance/ com-

mercial allowance equal to 65% of wages.

- Technical staff must be paid technical allowance equal to 40% of wages.

- The announced payment of Rs.6,000/month (£44/mo) must be implemented immediately.

- The redundant 50% quota of jobs for railway workers off-springs and descendants must be reinstated immediately and increased to 75%.

- The 25% technical allowance which has been approved by the High Court must be released immediately to the shed staff. Two scale up gradation which has also been approved for loco shed mechanics and electrical must be implemented immediately.

- TA (travelling allowance) has not been paid in long time and must be released immediately.



### Steel mills .... Continued

Yousaf Raza Gillani have destroyed the steel mills. A management backed union rep was made a member of the board of directors due to his loyalty to the PPP regime and remained a member from 2008-2013. Massive and rampant corruption results in huge losses. Corruptions include allotting of lands and houses to sold out union reps and providing private contracts to favourites against the procurement policy shooting up the cost to the company up to 400% from previous years' contracts. In the last two years, a retired general has been put at the helm of affairs with the dubious target of making the steel mills profitable again with the highest salary, perks and privileges in the history of the steel mills. All this barbaric exploitation of steel mills is going on while the workers have not been paid for the last many months. The workers and management associated with the steel mills have not had a pay increment since 2012 while the government and senior management in collusion has millions of rupees in worker's gratuities and provident funds. The workers who retired in 2013 are still waiting for their end of employment benefits while the fami-



lies of workers who have died after 2015 are still waiting for arrears and benefits. The propaganda in the mainstream media is that the steel mill has always been in a loss. The reality is opposite. Steel mills paid their dues in 2002 while in June 2013 they paid Rs. 113 billion (£0.8 Billion) in taxes. The importance of steel mill can be seen from the fact that after its establishment, the industries of slag cement, billet steel bars, twist bars and metal

wires flourished in the country which was a marvellous achievement in making construction industry competitive. The government and management are clearly hell-bent on the destruction of steel mill so that its hundreds of billions of rupees worth property can be plundered and the steel imports business can flourish freely through their favoured contractors.

## Quetta: Protest Rally of Railway Workers

On 23rd of May 2017, Railway Workers Union organised a protest rally for increase in wages, permanent jobs for contract workers and other demands from Quetta railway station to the

Press Club. The rally was attended by a large number of workers. The rally was led by the union's Quetta leadership President Atta M. Baloch, Sameen Gul Kaakar, Raheem Lango, Afzal

Bungalzai and Majeed Zehri. The workers raised slogans against the government's inaction to their demands. The leaders addressed the protest criticising the officials. Balochistan is a large province with poor infrastructure. Only railway serves as an affordable means of transport for many people. Continuous erosion of the service due to government's inaction is detrimental to both workers and people using the service.

The workers demanded that contract workers must be given permanent jobs with all benefits in all public sector departments. Wages must be increased in accordance with the prevalent inflation. Other demands included the inclusion of 50% ad-hoc allowance in basic pay, technical allowance must be 25% of the basic pay and all workers scale up gradation must be done without further delay.





## Report: Privatisation Attacks and the Workers Movements in Pakistan



Last year in February, a new chapter opened up in the workers movement history of Pakistan. PIA (Pakistan International Airlines) workers carried out a complete strike for eight days during which not a single flight flew inside or outside of the country. The strike started after the barbaric murder of two workers in Karachi who had been protesting against privatisation of the airlines. The strike raised many questions which have yet to be answered even after one year of the incident. The first question is on the labour leaders. The government under the dictate of IMF and World Bank has been carrying out brutal attacks on PIA workers, rolling back reforms which were won by the workers after decades of struggle. but the labour leadership has been retreating continuously in face of this onslaught. For petty gains and fear of reprisals, the whole struggle is liquidated while the common worker is desperate to sacrifice his life for a few gains. During the anti-privatisation movement of PTCL (Pakistan Telecom Company Limited), thousands of common workers fought heroically (in 2005) but the cause was lost due to the betrayal of a handful of political leaders. Today the conditions have changed and there is severe resentment, anger and the will to struggle in the workers but the leadership has nothing to offer except tactics of delay and despair. The leadership is afraid of a decisive battle. The struggle of teachers of Punjab is another example. The teachers of

52000 schools facing privatisation were preparing enthusiastically for a decisive battle with the government against privatisation by boycotting exams on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 but the boycott was called off at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour by the leadership on sham promises of the government. It is clear from government announcements and budgetary plans that the government has finalised all plans for the complete privatisation of education and healthcare sectors. The process has been put on the fast track for quite some time now. The PIA movement also suffered a tremendous loss because of leadership's inactions and a fresh struggle against privatisation is still not being organised even when the common workers are willing to put up a strenuous fight. Along with labour leadership, questions have also been raised on the role of political parties. It is abundantly clear now that no political party is willing to raise a voice against poverty and unemployment, while all the parties are in full agreement on the economic road map worked out by international financial institutions. That is why not a single voice was raised for the murdered workers of PIA by any party or organisation and no demand for any kind of punishment for the responsible has been put forward. In these conditions, questions are arising in the minds of workers but there is no one available, political party or organisation to address these questions. The coming days will bring an increase in

the ferocity of attacks by the government and international financial agencies on workers. The interests on debt from different international and local financial institutions have become unbearable while the interests and debt of \$62 billion is now also added to this pile of misery. Exports are continuously falling while remittances of exported workers from the Middle East and other countries are also decreasing day by day. The imports of China are threatening to shut down whatever local meagre industry was functional. 40% stocks of the stock market have been bought by a Shanghai based consortium. All this investment is not going to create any new jobs but will bring a flood of unemployment with it. Only steel imports from China are enough to destroy the local steel industry. Textile, cement and other industries will also suffer the same fate. Chinese businessmen are already notorious worldwide for the brutal exploitation of its workers. Along with the state plunder, the local leaderships of different parties in the provinces are also looting the people to their heart's content. But there is also resistance against this plunder. This resistance is scattered and not organised but the immense pressures of poverty and need will forge them together into a single united struggle. These scattered movements will inevitably express themselves politically while regional and international changes will also have a direct effect. Example of privatisation of essential services in UK for example



NHS, Railways and energy, brought miseries to employees and customers. The menace of privatisation should end and public ownership should be protected at all costs by workers. PTUS is seeking support from international organisations to support Pakistan's trade unions struggles against ruthless privatisations.

## Trade Union Report

### Silver Line Textile Workers Protest against Non-Payment of Wages

A protest was organised by workers of Siler Line Textile Mill against non-payment of wages from the last two months which was led by Red Workers Front. The wages amount to Rs. 8,000,000 (£60,000). A couple of days ago the mill owner suddenly closed down the mill without notice. The only reason given was that there is no profit to be had from running of the mill. The district labour officer was warned to help in peaceful resolution of the

issue while the mill owner was warned to pay the arrears immediately or the national highway will be blocked and a protest camp will be organised outside his house. Rs.2,000,000 (£15,000) wages were paid on the same day while a couple of days relief was asked for payment of the remaining amount. This in fact was a tactic to break up the protest and workers unity. The workers after conferring with each other decided to give a few days for payment.

Now a few workers have been paid wages to break up the unity of the workers. Other tactics are also being enforced including non-availability of cold water, dirty canteen, no annual vacations and zero bonuses. When a worker decides to leave the mill under such conditions, he is not paid his dues. Solidarity from international textile and retail sector is sought in this regards. Please contact PTUS to support struggle of Silver Line workers.

### FATA Headquarter Hospital to be privatised by government,

Medical staff protested with full community support

The FATA Secretariat has finalised plans for the privatisation of Agency Headquarters Hospital in Landi Kotal which has infuriated the local people and the medical staff. Doctors and paramedics have announced a strike against the decision. A hunger strike camp has also been organised. Details have come out of the plans under which the hospital will be run under public-private partnership which will mean a hospital made with people's taxes will be handed over on contract basis. The hospital staff has announced a boycott of services. Already educa-

tion, health and infrastructure facilities in FATA are meagre. Rest was taken care of by the so-called war on terrorism. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced from their homes. After privatisation, workers will be unemployed, work time will increase drastically, permanent employees will be kicked out and low wage contracts will be offered. Against this onslaught all the workers of the hospital will have to unite with workers from other industries and fight this barbaric attack. The location of this hospital is very significant as it not only offers services to the

local people but also a large number of patients from Afghanistan. The government want to take away the last vestiges of facilities from the workers. AHQ hospital has been categorised as B category while nothing was done over so many years to upgrade its facilities. Now after privatisation it will be downgraded to C category. The only way forward for the staff and workers of the area is to stand united and struggle till the government roll back their privatisation plan. Local community is fully supporting workers in their struggle against the privatisation.

## Support Pakistan Trade Union Solidarity Campaign

Please provide your details and support the campaign

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Trade union / organization (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

#### Suggested support contributions

National Trade Union: UK £500  
Regional Bodies: UK £250  
Branches: UK £100  
Individual Worker: UK £10  
Individual Student: UK £5

#### Campaign's account details

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