

Pakistan Trade Union Solidarity

Bulletin

Suggested price: 50p
Solidarity price: £1

English Edition

Volume No. 3 Issue No. 1, 2019

Rawal Asad arrested by police and charged with sedition **Bailed after a strong international campaign**

Rawal Asad, a leading activist in youth and workers movements in Pakistan, was arrested by police and charged with sedition on 11 February 2019. He was arrested along with many workers and student activists,

but others were released immediately within a day. However, Rawal remained in jail. Rawal's arrest sparked national and international protests demanding his immediate release and ending sedition charges. Rawal Asad

was part of an anti-privatisation campaign, and was also at the forefront of every peaceful workers struggle, protests and rallies held in different cities across Pakistan. Police detained him in jail so that he could not partic-



Image: Fightback Canada

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Massive Privatisation !

Imran Khan selling 200 state owned enterprises **Workers braced for retaliation**

In a recent move by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government, Prime Minister Imran Khan on the behest of International Monetary Fund plans to sell 200 state-owned enterprises in Pakistan. The announcement was made by the current Finance Minister Asad Umar even before the government had taken the oath. His Finance Minister Asad Umar highlighted a plan of creating a wealth fund which would be controlled by private business owners and would be responsible for the all strategic affairs of the state-owned enterprises. The roadmap of privatisation has already started with renewed



Image: Wikimedia

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Rawal Asad Continued

ipate in workers struggle and could not organise workers against privatisation which the government is planning in the coming weeks. Recent cases revealed the brutality of police whereby, on the order of company bosses and state, they arrest workers and activists later put fake charges against them. In other events, police kill innocent people including children. After the arrest of Rawal Asad PTUS initiated a worldwide campaign through its supporters, activists and trade unionists around the world including USA, UK, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, Russia, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and Nigeria. People sent solidarity messages on websites and social media. Motions were presented different trade union branches and rallies were held in front of Paki-

stan embassies in various countries. A petition was initiated in change.org that attracted more than 1500 signatures. Workers at students and activist hold placards and organise gatherings for Rawal Asad's release. They demanded Pakistan government end all charges of sedition against Rawal Asad. After a successful campaign, Pakistani state was forced to release Rawal Asad from jail through bail. However, he still has to face the charges of sedition. PTUS will continue to struggle through coordinating with supporters and trade unionists around the world demanding Pakistan government to end the case of sedition against Rawal Asad. Furthermore, the Pakistani state would also be asked to stop arresting activists and worker organisers on fake cases including sedition.



Image: PYA Pakistan

Privatisation Continued 1

attacks on the workers and their organisations. They are banning workplace organisations, restructuring and breaking down enterprises into different units for quick sale. The state-owned enterprises that are listed for privatisation include railways, electric supply companies, national airline PIA, gas energy companies, national oil and gas companies such as PSO and OGDCL, Pakistan Post, public hospitals, government schools and many more. Different governments of Pakistan have been following a program of planned privatisation of state-owned enterprises since 1988. The reasons given have ranged from servicing the foreign debt and 'reforms' to providing quality services to the public and economic revival. All claims have proven false over the years. The result of hundreds of enterprises has been horrific unemployment, destruction of unions and closure industries while their lands have been used for urban and commercial property development for heavy short term gains. Enterprises

still operating have only deteriorated in service provision while their profits have skyrocketed. The only gains have been made by prospectors, speculators and investors while workers and the general public are largely deprived of employment and access to essential social services. Privatisation renders government incapable of accumulating enough resources to fund further development in the social and infrastructure related sectors for public. Pressure is mounting from international Banks and IMF to speed up the privatisation process, but the government is carefully acting to avoid

any backlash from workers. Hence measures are being taken by the government to adopt anti-worker and anti-trade union policies. This also includes arresting trade unionists, worker activists and workplace organisers on fake police cases and putting them behind bars. The only way forward for the workers of the public enterprises on the hit list is to organise inside and outside of their sectors, in public and most importantly international workers and trade union support against government attacks in the form of privatisation.



Pakistan State Oil



PAKISTAN STEEL



Islamabad Electric Supply Company

Report: Ship recycling industry in Pakistan

Pakistan ranks third in the world for shipbreaking and recycling. It is famous for recycling large vessels particularly oil and cargo. It is a dangerous work where workers manually use different iron welding machines to break down the vessels. The cut-out iron and parts are then removed by large cranes onto a beach scrap yard, which is then made into appropriate sizes to fit in trucks for onward transportation to recycling plants. The port of Gadani houses the largest shipbreaking or ship recycling industry. Every month there is a huge incident whereby workers are killed or severely injured due to the lack of safety measures. The shipbreaking business owners spend no money on workers safety in this dangerous work. The government labour department is also ignoring the fate and plight of workers working in the shipbreaking industry. In the latest incident happened in February 2019, two workers were killed. The largest one was in November 2016 when 26 workers were killed and 58 wounded when an oil tanker exploded. A year after in November 2017 the same oil tanker exploded again in 5 workers and 50 injured. The government rather than ensuring proper safety measures, ban gathering of two or more workers to avoid potential worker organising. Shipbreaking business is a multibillion-dollar venture, but in Pakistan, it is conducted like a mafia whereby a mafia boss a.k.a. the business owner is operating in a hidden manner without registering his company with the government offices and hiring workers from other provinces through labour contractors on slavery wages. Neither the boss

nor the labour contractor is interested in the safety of the workers. The worker dies or is injured (considering that injury is severe in this work often resulting in amputations), then they just replace the worker with another one from hundreds of miles away.

International NGOs are taking huge money from foreign donors and are doing nothing except producing reports and summaries including dissemination events in luxury hotels. The only hope for the workers of the shipbreaking industry is an organised force in the form of a trade union to defend their rights. However, mafia bosses of the shipbreaking industry are operating with the local police to abduct or arrest any worker who is trying to organise and form a trade union. In a recent incident the worker Babu Karim, who try to set up a trade union among shipbreaking workers was arrested by police and tortured

brutally, and he died in police custody on 18 February 2019. These are the conditions and circumstances of the shipbreaking industry. PTUS along with other organisations and trade unions are standing with the workers of the shipbreaking industry, and PTUS will highlight the issues on all international forums particularly in trade unions active in maritime. We demand proper health and safety assurance to all workers working in the shipbuilding industry, provide them with living wages and proper pensionable employment contracts and safe living conditions. We also demand the government to regularise the shipbuilding industry and properly register all activities and businesses operating in the shipyard. Also, the families of dead and injured workers should be compensated, and those responsible business owners should be put behind bars.



Image: Wikimedia

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Trade Union Reports

Punjab engineers yellow vest protest

On 19th December 2018 engineers from all government departments of Punjab gathered at the call of Punjab Association of Government Engineers in front of Irrigation Secretariat building and reached in front of Provincial Assembly building in the form of the rally and started a sit-in. There were 600 engineers in the rally. All the engineers wore yellow vests in solidarity with the Yellow Vest Movement of France which shows that not only the workers of Pakistan are aware of the workers' struggle in France but are also inspired by it. The

police to sabotage the rally not only threatened the engineers but also warned of dire consequences in the event of a rally on Mall road but the engineers paid no heed. Engineers from all over Punjab are demanding a technical allowance equal to one and half times the basic pay which the engineers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa engineers have achieved after heroic struggles. The engineers also organised a rally on the 14th of November for their demands. Due to governments negligent attitude towards engineers' demands they were forced to

go on strike on the 26th which culminated in the sit-in in front of the provincial assembly in Lahore. Two provincial ministers came initially for dialogue which failed. A delegation of the association met with the Provincial Chief Minister where the technical allowance demand was agreed upon, and a deadline of compliance for February was finalised. This is a small victory but gained with a struggle. PTUS is in complete solidarity with protesting engineers and seeking international support for their continued struggle.

Jammu and Kashmir : Brutal victimisation against workers for raising genuine demands

Electricity workers of Azad Kashmir region organised a protest against the illegal arrest of President of non-gazetted (contractual) workers Ejaz Shahsawar in which a large number of union workers participated. Electricity workers and staff in Azad Kashmir and neighbouring regions condemn this act of barbarism and threaten to strike if Ejaz is not released. According to details, one month ago, the head of operations of

the electricity department Rawalakot transferred some of the skilled workers without following proper administrative procedures. Ejaz requested the operational head to reconsider his action and to follow appropriate procedures and rules which require workers consultation. The operation head filed a police complaint against Ejaz and his work colleague Nadeem Butt which resulted in their arrest, and they were put behind bars. It is

normal for bosses to use police in Kashmir to harass, suppress and victimise workers. However, this time, all electricity workers were furious and went on strike. Immense pressures by workers forced the management to get both workers leaders out from Jail on 11 January 2019. The release of their leaders was a victory for electricity workers of Kashmir.

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Suggested contributions

National Trade Union:	UK £500	USA \$1,000
Regional Bodies:	UK £250	USA \$500
Branches:	UK £100	USA \$200
Individual Waged:	UK £10	USA \$20
Individual Unwaged:	UK £5	USA \$10

Campaign Account

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