

# Letters from our readers

17 July 2012

*On daily life in Lahore, Pakistan*

Life has never been easy for ordinary Pakistanis. However, recent years have seen the situation of the working class and rural poor steadily worsen, with at least 62 million people living below the poverty line. The soaring cost of food is forcing the poorest families to spend up to 70 percent of their income on food. Economic growth has slowed considerably and there are nowhere near enough jobs for the millions of young people entering the labor force, and this causes frustration all over the country.

The extremely hot weather has made power cuts unbearable for the masses. Lahore has seen an average of about 10-14 hours of load shedding each day while rural parts of Punjab are experiencing up to 20 hours of power cuts each day. While most middle class and upper-middle class people can afford back-up generators to keep their air conditioners running, workers and toilers are forced to endure the heat without any fans. This has led to many violent protests against the continuing power cuts.

There are campaign posters and billboards all over the city. The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Imran Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are expected to get the most seats from Punjab. The vast majority of workers are not enthusiastic about the elections and do not expect any change no matter what the next government looks like. Middle-class youth rally behind the PTI, with many seeing it as the "last hope for Pakistan." It's impossible to find a single person who supports the current Pakistan People's Party-led government.

The so-called "Trotskyists" in this country such as Lal Khan still believe the PPP can be reformed and transformed into a genuine workers party. And while it's clear that workers are willing to fight for their social rights, the trade unions have no interest in leading a struggle against the capitalists. It has become more urgent than ever to build a section of the ICFI in Pakistan.

Ali  
Lahore, Pakistan  
12 July 2012

*On "Stop the assault on public employees and social services!"*

Jerry,  
Thank you for such a clear explanation of the use of the 2008 meltdown to attack public workers. As a public employee in California, I appreciate such a strong and clear voice speaking out against this abolition of public and social services and the destruction of the living standards of public sector workers everywhere. Like many of my co-workers, I chose public sector work out of a strong ideological belief in the importance of a social safety net for the least

fortunate in society. I was willing to accept a salary that was well below average for my profession in exchange for the opportunity to do good, and for job security and the ability to have a decent standard of living upon retirement. Now, in the fourth year of this financial crisis, I still go to work every day wondering when the austerity axe will eliminate my job and knowing that the pension and health care benefits that I was promised will not be there when I reach the end of my career. It is time for all public employees to shrug off the false hope of the likes of AFSCME and join hands with workers everywhere to fight for a world where a decent life is possible for all. Again, thank you for your support; you and Phyllis already have mine.

Richard W  
California, USA  
13 July 2012

*On "UK Twitter joke conviction appealed at High Court"*

Prosecuting this case was nothing short of a joke. If all the Leeds United fans I have heard saying they wished Old Trafford would blow up or Man United's plane would crash (which amounts to the same kind of humour) were brought before the courts, they would have to start a whole new court network to deal with the influx of cases.

The so-called incitement convictions and the grossly disproportionate sentences are no better. Yes, the individuals were stupid, and misguided, but were their actions any different to prominent politicians calling for the army or live bullets to be deployed against unarmed civilians?

Of note—one case I heard of collapsed, as the judge threw it out saying the person was joking. The defendant (19-year-old Holly Bentley of Wakefield) was in the early stages of pregnancy when the alleged offence took place. She spent three months on tag awaiting trial, only for the case to collapse on the first day. Had the case not collapsed, she would have faced potentially a five-year term and having her child behind bars.

It is the hypocrisy that gets me. Young kids making one foolish mistake finding themselves on the receiving end of politically instructed repression. All this while the real looters in our society walk away with jobs for the boys and golden handshakes.

Eddie  
11 July 2012  
*On "London Olympic missile sites confirmed despite protests"*

Yes, I suppose the missiles are needed to shoot down the doves that are usually released during the Olympic Games opening ceremony.

Jennifer H  
11 July 2012

*On "The police state 2012 Olympics"*

Patrick here highlights many important issues regarding imperialism's drive to war and the crushing of all internal dissent—which go hand-in-hand. Any nation that oppresses others will also suppress its "own" people.

From my understanding of these Olympics, every major imperialist power will send a contingent of its own security forces, many of which will be armed. Therefore, as well as MI5 and MI6, there will be possibly thousands from the USA, plus Mossad, etc.

Possibly the inclusion of the fact that the British ruling class are the oldest and have centuries of experience in divide and rule and a huge body of knowledge in drowning in blood all challenges to their system would have strengthened it.

Yours,

John

16 July 2012

*On "Clinton stirs tensions with China ahead of ASEAN summit"*

After the Vietnam War, China and Vietnam engaged in a brief military conflict that involved the use of tanks. Now, tanks travel over land, and their journeys advertise the fact that none of the countries of South East Asia that have land borders with China can be protected by the US navy. So whatever the rhetoric of the elites in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, etc., they are likely to be extremely circumspect in their engagement with the power plays of US politicians. A land war along the Chinese border could not be won by any conventional force deployed by the US. So will the elites of South East Asia sign up to be nuked by the US for the sake of US political/military hegemony?

Chris

12 July 2012

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"Young Hillary Clinton Used to Think Kissinger Was Criminal and Immoral: Now in Laos, She Follows In His Footsteps" – Fred Branfman ends his Alternet article on Hillary Clinton with this:

"If our civilization cannot protect these Lao rice-farmers who pose no threat to anyone, how can it protect any of us? And if U.S. leaders cannot even now act to heal their pain, how can we regard them as legitimate leaders?"

The rhetorical answer implied here is "for god's sake, Hillary, please act like the decent person we know you were as a kid in college!"

A more proper answer would be: "Bring criminal charges against both Clinton and Kissinger immediately, and begin organizing workers internationally to claim political power." If we read the WWSWS enough, it finally sinks in.

Randy R  
Oregon, USA  
12 July 2012

*On "Foreclosures rise after bank settlement"*

"Under the terms of the deal, 750,000 foreclosed homeowners might receive a check for \$1,500 to \$2,000, if they can show that they were

improperly evicted."

That "settlement" will last about as long a breath mint for the average homeowner, as the banks get away with roughly 750,000 \* \$150,000 = \$112,500,000,000 worth of real estate, assuming \$150,000 average market value per unit.

Charles H  
Texas, USA

13 July 2012

*On "Voting rights in America under attack"*

The only thing fraudulent about the issue of voter fraud in the US is the issue itself and the true reasons behind the push for voter ID legislation. As your article pointed out, the proven instances of voter fraud are virtually non-existent and most of these laws would do nothing about any possible fraud that would occur through absentee balloting. These laws are about voter suppression, pure and simple, and the further disenfranchising of poor and minorities in order to give the elite an even freer hand in running the country. Also, these laws beg the question that if voter fraud is such a threat to democracy, then why won't the states spend the money to provide easy access to free photo ID, especially when the states are more than willing to spend millions of dollars to defend these laws in court.

MZ  
Maryland, USA  
14 July 2012

*On "Suicide crisis mounts for US soldiers and veterans"*

Thank you for writing on this issue. I would like to point out that missing from nearly every article on military suicide is the unknown "hidden and unreported" number of reserve, guard and inactive reserve component members of the military who are at much higher risk. Active duty members can access care on or off base 24/7 and it is paid for. Reserve members are more frequently uninsured due to high unemployment and nearly always isolated from their military peers (a very important support group).

The Military Suicide Report  
16 July 2012



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