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H.E. Pervez Musharaf
President of the Republic
Islamic Republic of Pakistan
President House
Islamabad
PAKISTAN

Fax: 92-51-922.14.22

TUR/JS

19 November 2007

Arrest and detention of trade unionists during the state of emergency

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the Council of Global Unions representing all Global Union Federations (GUF), the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD, and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), we protest against the arrests of several trade union leaders in their homes and on the streets since the declaration of a state of emergency on 3 November 2007.

Trade unionists have been arrested since they and their unions have joined other civil society organisations in calling for the immediate restoration of the rule of law, the country's constitution and the fundamental rights of its people.

According to our information **Liaquat Ali Sahi**, trade union leader at the State Bank of Pakistan and the organiser of the Karachi Pearl Continental Hotel Workers' Solidarity Committee, was involved in organising a protest held at the Karachi Press Club against the declaration of a state of emergency. During the protest on 5 November, he, **G. Fareed Awan**, Assistant General Secretary of the All Pakistan Trade Union Federation (APTUF)-Sind Province and **Ayub Qureshi**, member of Pakistan Trade Union Federation (PTUF) were among the arrested. We have also received information that members of the Pakistani Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Union were arrested. According to some reports the police used batons and arrested journalists and press photographers also, although they were released shortly after. Others, including the trade union leaders, were ordered to stay in police custody for two days. We are aware that Liaquat Ali Sahi and four others were later charged with treason, an offence that carries the death penalty.

We have also been informed that **Rana Ayub Aki Khan**, leader of the ICEM affiliated WAPDA Labor Union (PWLU) was one of the first rounded up after the state of emergency had been declared, when he and four other colleagues were arrested on 5 November. He and his union have protested against mismanagement at public utility services and other WAPDA official have had to go into hiding. Rana Ayub Aki Khan and his four colleagues were released from the Gujranwala prison, Punjab Province, on or around the 12 November.





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Waheed Ahmad Ch, Advocate President of the youth wing of Pakistan Labour Federation (PLF), **Ch Tariq Javeed**, Advocate Legal Advisor of the PLF, members of the Pakistani Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Union, were arrested on 5 November in the Lahore High Court building. On 6 November they were reportedly brought before an anti-terror court and imprisoned. We are not aware that any sentence has been pronounced.

Mohammad Ashiq Bhutta, Information Secretary of the National Federation of Food Beverages and Tobacco Workers, an affiliate of the IUF, was arrested at his home at 3 am on 4 November 2007 and detained 14 hours before being released.

We have also had information that many members of the IFJ affiliated Federal Union of Pakistan Journalists have been detained fighting for restoration of the rule of law, democracy and the freedom of expression.

The ITUC, the GUFs, and the entire international labour movement support the legitimate struggle of trade unions in Pakistan for the restoration of the rule of law, civil liberties and proper democratic processes. Under the jurisprudence of the ILO it has repeatedly been emphasised that the right to freedom of assembly, freedom of opinion and expression are essential for the normal exercise of trade union rights. It is therefore against the principle of freedom of association as enshrined in ILO convention 87 to arrest trade unionists carrying out peaceful protests to maintain fundamental civil rights. The Government of Pakistan has ratified this convention and is therefore under an obligation to refrain from such arrests.

I therefore urge you to order the immediate release of all detained trade unionists and that all charges against Liaquat Ali Sahi and all other trade unionists be withdrawn. I also call on you to take immediate steps to lift the declaration of a state of emergency and restore the rule of law and civil liberties.

Yours sincerely,

Chair
Fred Van Leeuwen

Secretary
Guy Ryder

