

Who are we ?

● The International Workers Committee Against War, Exploitation, for a Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the World Conference held in Mumbai (India) on November 19, 20, 21, 2016 gathering delegates from 28 countries.

● The IWC was set up on the basis of the Mumbai Manifesto against war, exploitation and precarious labour which was endorsed by labour activist and trade union and political organisations officers from 46 countries (*)

● Its continuations committee is composed of labour activists from all political/ trade union backgrounds:

Innocent Assogba (Benin),
Alan Benjamin (USA),
Colia Clark (USA),
Constantin Cretan (Romania),
Berthony Dupont (Haiti),
Ney Ferreira (Brazil),
Daniel Gluckstein (France),
Rubina Jamil (Pakistan),
Apo Leung (China),
M.A. Patil (India),
Mandlenkosi Phangwa (Azania),
Sergio Pineda (Mexico),
Klaus Schüller (Germany),
Jung Sikhwa (Korea),
John Sweeney (Great Britain),
Mark Vassilev (Russia),
Nambiath Vasudevan (India).

(*) Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Azania, Belarus, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

On October 2nd 2020, the International Workers Committee against War and Exploitation, for the Workers International proposed to conduct an international working class fact finding survey concerning the consequences, for working people, of the COVID 19 pandemic in relation to the policies of the governments and the positions taken by the labour movement in each country.

An 8-point questionnaire was drawn up (published in our letter n° 164, and available on request).

This survey will contribute to the preparation of the 2nd International Conference against War and Exploitation, for the Workers International, which will be held in 2021.

We are publishing the first results of this survey:

Report n° 1 PAKISTAN

Author: All-Pakistan Trade Union Federation (APTUF) - Date: 5 October 2020

Capitalists and pro capitalist government harshly attacking on Working class

The ruling party PTI was took in a power with close allies Pakistan Army and some extremists groups too. With the help of Pakistan Army they will able to win election, got bogus votes put all opposition in Jail whether they belong's to PML-N or PPP. NAB actively started work, arrested politicians and PUT it in NAB custody, trial started not end till politician didn't accept that no prove and reason to put in the custody of NAB.

Pakistan is on the cusp of a political storm after most major opposition parties demanded the country's powerful generals surrender their stranglehold over politics and withdraw support for Prime Minister Imran Khan's administration, which the opposition has vowed to oust through street agitation.

The newly form Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) announced it would kick off a nationwide protest campaign on October 11, now they postponed the date on October 18th. The announcement came a day after the showdown between the government and the opposition reached a fever pitch following the arrest of opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif in a money-laundering case that he says is politically motivated. Asif Ali Zardari, a former president and leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), was indicted in a separate money-laundering

case the same day. The Awami National Party in KPK is still silent, because during election and before election the genuine voice of the party person were killed in terrorist attack.

The ruling elite along with huge support from Army chief is fulfilling imperialist and capitalist agenda, they are not bother about the suffering of the common people. Inflation is growing day by day, suicides and crime rates are increasing. People and the working class are unable to buy basic house hold commodities.

The sectarianism and extremism is increasing, very recently in Karachi Sunni Ittehad hold a protest assembly against Shia community. The government is with the help of army constantly pushing a people movement on the wall. Opposition parties and even so called left parties are not playing any key role in this worst political situation when working class and poor masses grievances are not solving.

The current situation is all around the globe is really worst situation, worst in a sense that the workers, the women, the youth always facing harsh challenges by the capitalists by the pro capitalist government in all around the world and of course in Pakistan too. Corona a pandemic, in its essence, might be a global health crisis but its repercussions

vary locally. The coronavirus has altered the sense of normality and exposed the structural economic and social inequalities of the world in unimaginable yet horrific ways.

In Pakistan after a pandemic, capitalists very close to the ruling government started harsh and brutal attitude towards workers not only in private sector, transnational companies but also the public own companies too, the garment sector where women workers mostly worked, they are not unionized hit by the corona, suddenly we have seen the effects of layoffs, no salary given to the workers, daily wagers, contract workers. I have seen the insult of the working class pre corona and after corona it is on the peak. The pro capitalist government announce program to give money and register people through advertisement but no salary given to those who are the back bone of any nation, no measure taken by the pro army led PM.

Since 73 years of formation of Pakistan, the pro capitalists and pro

imperialist government ruled in Pakistan always relies on Imperialist policies, even budget preparation process completed with IMF/world bank, put more sanctions, restrict rulers to increase the price of Petroleum, medicines, basic commodities which is out of the reach of common people, our economy trampled with foreign debts, an unemployed youth bulge hovering over its head and an already overburdened healthcare, a global pandemic is likely to wreak havoc on its people. In 2019, Pakistan has 24.5 % of its 220 million population living below the poverty line. The pandemic push millions more towards extreme poverty soaring the poverty rate as high as 33.7% in case of low-impact scenario while 58.6 % in case of high-impact scenario. The corona resulted enclosure of industries and businesses have enormously affected. Schools were totally closed and the teachers, the health workers the working class, the domestic workers, the contract and daily

wagers and youth stayed at home, no salaries even government announce that if employer did not give the salary to the workers, the government should fine to the employers, unfortunately the employer the capitalists is always close to the politicians, they are goons man, giving bribe to member of parliament to run their election campaign, so no authority fine to the owner of the companies.

Working class including teachers, clerical staff, workers in railway, banks, Pakistan International Airlines, WAPDA, Pakistan Works Department (PWD), postal office shipyards workers face layoffs, mostly the garment workers where the supply chain exist stop its work and thousands of women workers lost their jobs in Garment industry, there is no union. In, Domestic workers, home based workers, in health sector the paramedics faces huge problems. In Pakistan we witnessed massive layoffs causing job disruption for around 21 million workers.



Textile workers in US apparel, Lahore agitating

The totally work even business were closed during pandemic, the most significant was the textile and garment industry, employs the 45% of the total industrial work force in the country. Most of the laborers were fired permanently while some were told that they are temporarily suspended and their wages were given to them a withheld. Layoffs was further exacerbated by the disruption in global supply chains with global clothing brands cancelled orders even for the products that

had been produced. The real problem, however, remains the government's failure to enforce labor laws and provide adequate legal protections to workers.

80% of the garment factories are not registered. Around 85% workers in these factories are usually hired indirectly through contractors without any written appointment letters which deprive them of their constitutional safeguards as they are not registered with provincial social security institutions.

Moreover, on the top of unfair wages, many workers do not get paid sick leave, social security, health insurance or job protection, leaving them particularly vulnerable during any shutdown.

The economic shutdown also disproportionately affects women workers, especially home based and domestic workers who usually remain invisible within the system: "informal economy". As soon as the lockdown was announced, the majority of the domestic workers

were laid off and asked to leave the household of their employers, often without wages. Many of them were migrant from far off villages. On the other hand, home-based workers are usually kept in the economic loop through a middle-man who provides them with work from the industries. With the shutdown of industries and transportation, this link between home-based women workers and factories broke off as intermediaries cannot reach them. The situation for women factory workers is also not much better. Only four percent are unionized and 93 percent are receiving less than minimum wage which is 17,500 (Rs. Dollar Rate is 168)

The pro capitalist government has sought to strengthen the social security program by creating a labor relief fund to support the daily wagers and unemployed, but these programs remain out of reach for most of the workers. For instance, of the 31% women workers who lost their jobs. Mostly women workers are unaware whether they are register under the social security or not. These women workers are not unionised.

After a seven weeks-long shutdown, the government had allowed many sectors of the economy to reopen e.g. textile, construction, fertilizers, chemical industries and small businesses etc. with the condition that all health and safety

SOPs directed by the World Health Organization are met. And the capitalists took advantage of unfortunate situation by negotiating new terms with the government around the contractual rights and obligations. For instance, as manufacturing resumes, only a small fraction of workers might be hired back since global supply chains have been disrupted, these workers will likely be forced to accept lower wages, longer hours, and without any proper overtime. With 80% of the factories unregistered, there is a huge compromise on safety as it leaves little possibility for the government to monitor health and safety conditions, putting the lives of these at risk.

Pro capitalists & Imperialists government closing workers institutions on the name of corruption:

Now the government is on the name of corruption arrested some officers and staff from Workers welfare board and closed this institution provide Marriage grants, death grants and scholarships to workers, under workers welfare board Labour colonies established

in all over Pakistan. All grants are stop.

Workers children's future are on stake.

Same is happening with social security and EOBI.

Group meetings were organized with laid off workers, including

women workers in informal economy, domestic and home based workers and health workers, teachers too and bring them all in protest for the reinstatement of their jobs with the slogans of "social security for all, no to privatization, yes to secure job's.

Health workers struggle against privatization

A powerful movement of health workers is going on against privatisation in Pakistan. The government is snatching the basic right of healthcare from the working class in a country where already more than 80 percent of the population has no access to basic health provision. Rather than building new public hospitals and spending more on health services, the government has planned to close the health department altogether and hand it over to the private sector.

This means that hundreds of thousands of people will die across the country from minor injuries and treatable diseases due to the lack of any treatment. This also means that tens of thousands of health workers will lose their jobs and pensions

and will be thrown into a life of extreme poverty and misery. The gravity of the situation has multiplied with the absence of any political party that stands against privatisation and supports the right of free healthcare for all. **The members of APTUF give full support to the protest organizing by health workers.**

In this dire situation, health workers of the Punjab and PakhtunKhwa province have come out in large numbers and have started a movement against this draconian measure of the Pakistani state. Red Workers Front, APTUF/APWC is at the forefront of this struggle and has helped to bring together various unions, associations and groups of health workers in Punjab on the

platform of Grand Health Alliance (GHA) to forge a united struggle against this oppressive measure. This strategy has also been replicated in PashtunKhwa, as well and GHA there is also carrying forward this struggle against the present regime.

Health condition in Pakistan

With a population of 220 million, Pakistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. It ranks among the lowest in the human development index. The country is a nightmarish example of the horrors of capitalism and imperialist plunder. With an ever-widening gap between rich and poor and crumbling physical and social infrastructure, the country is a living hell for its working class.

More than half of its population lives on less than one dollar per day. Although the masses have to suffer daily in every aspect of their lives, poor-quality and insufficient healthcare delivery is one of the most disturbing aspects of their existence.

The country spends less than two percent of its GDP on healthcare and a large portion of this spending is done by the private sector. This is not a problem for the rich and upper-middle-class, because they can afford the costly healthcare delivered by the five-star, hotel-style private hospitals - but the poor suffer and die untreated in hellish conditions. For 220 million people, the country has only 5,800 basic health units, 950 secondary care hospitals and just 22 tertiary care hospitals in the public sector. The extremely poor quality of these facilities notwithstanding, the sheer lack of quantity speaks volumes about the condition of healthcare available. There is only one bed for every 2,000 people in public hospitals. The patient-to-doctor ratio is 1:1500, and the patient-to-nursing-staff ratio is even worse. The country has one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world. Every year, some half a million children under five years of age die due to treatable diseases like dysentery, malaria, typhoid and RTI, because they don't have access to free or affordable healthcare. Every year, more than 50,000 women die during childbirth, because of the absence of maternal and child health facilities. Every year, more than 40,000 women die of breast cancer because they cannot even dream of affording the cost of treatment for this disease. More than 200,000 people die every year in road accidents because of the lack of public healthcare facilities. All this happens in a country where working masses bear one of the

highest indirect tax burdens on their shoulders and around 75 percent of the annual federal budget is spent on debt servicing and military.

Privatization:

Pakistan's meagre public healthcare facilities have been a shambles for years due to the lack of government funding, but under the recent IMF loan programme the government is trying to privatise even these dismal services for the poor. One of the basic motives lying behind this privatisation drive, on the part of the IMF and the government, is to reduce state expenditure for achieving so-called fiscal consolidation. That simply means that the government should be able to pay back its debt and interest to international and domestic lenders, while crushing the working masses under its heel in this process. Secondly, its purpose is to open up a profitable avenue of investment for private capital. For the privatisation of public hospitals, the government has proposed a draconian law called the MTI act, which it has imposed upon the Punjab Province through an undemocratic governor ordinance. In the province of PashtunKhwā (KPK), this MTI act was already partially imposed in 2015 by the then-PTI provincial government. Now, in KPK too, it is to be fully implemented and extended to all the public hospitals through a newly proposed RDHA act.

According to these acts, the status of public hospitals will be changed from public welfare to corporate institutions, which will be responsible for generating their own finances through elimination of free healthcare services and utilising the services of private health insurance companies. For this purpose, all public hospitals will be outsourced to private healthcare companies and contractors. Furthermore, the government will also receive a share of profits

generated by these outsourced hospitals. While on the one hand, these brutal measures of capitalist exploitation will deprive millions of poor people from access to basic healthcare (as they are totally dependent on these public hospitals, whatever their shortcomings may be), on the other, this privatisation will also cause financial ruin for thousands of junior doctors, nurses and hospital workers working in them. A great majority will simply lose their jobs. The rest will lose their permanent employee status, along with their pensions, and will be converted into contractual, temporary or daily waged employees.

Movement against privatisation

It is under these circumstances that a powerful anti-privatisation movement of public sector health workers has arisen in Punjab and KPK. All the associations and unions of junior doctors, nurses and health workers of these two provinces have joined to form the Grand Health Alliance (GHA) in order to effectively fight against this onslaught of privatisation. Starting from roadside protests, anti-privatisation conventions and mass awareness campaigns, the GHA of both provinces was compelled to go for a strike in outpatient departments, elective radiology and laboratory services because of the repressive acts of the government, in which some workers were brutally attacked by police in KPK. The strike has now entered its 32nd day in KPK and 19th day in Punjab, and is still going strong despite all the state repression, intimidation, arrests, job terminations and poisonous propaganda through state-influenced media. Besides observing the strike, there have been repeated huge protests across all the major cities of both provinces in the past three weeks, in which tens of thousands of health workers have regularly participated despite all the measures of the state. After failing in crushing the movement through

repression, the government has now resorted to the age-old, dirty tactics of trying to break the unity of health workers, and deceiving the

movement through sham talks – but the workers are conscious enough that, for now, all these manoeuvres have failed.

We stood shoulder to shoulder with the health workers throughout the movement.

Domestic violence increased during Covid 19

A statistics shows a tremendous rise in domestic violence during Covid-19 lockdown. The statistics are based on the calls received on two emergency helplines: Emergency line has the data of the whole province except Lahore, has collected separate data of Lahore.

The statistics shows that 17,478 calls reporting domestic violence were received on 15 helplines from Lahore only between January and May 2020. 2,096 calls were received in January, 2,360 in February, and 2,853 in March. The helpline received 3,079 calls in April and 3,090 calls in May. The statistics clearly indicate an alarming surge in domestic violence cases during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The statistics shows a 32 percent rise in domestic violence reports during lockdown across the province. 2,581 cases of domestic violence were reported in the month before lockdown (February 22 to March 22). After the lockdown was imposed the number of reported cases rose to 3,217 (between March 23 and April 23). There was a 10 percent decrease in complaints during the partial lockdown (from April 24 to May 23) with 2,889 cases.

According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) most common forms of domestic abuse are shouting or yelling (76 percent), slapping (52 percent), threatening (49 percent), pushing (47 percent), punching (40 percent) and kicking (40 percent).

Member APTUF women wing considers these statistics fairly high. She tells that “Men are at home during pandemic and it would be very challenging for women to report and seek any

relief. According to my experience, women used to report such cases usually at night or when men were away from home. Now, most of the private and public services are disrupted, therefore, it is really hard to know the accurate statistics and magnitude of the specific nature of these crimes.”

In addition, women with various types of physical disabilities would be facing more challenging situation if they want to seek any relief against domestic violence, she adds.

The Ministry of Human Rights has issued a Covid-19 alert that provides a helpline, 1099, and a WhatsApp number, 0333 908 5709, to report cases of domestic violence during lockdown. Nevertheless, the Toll-Free Helpline, functional from 10am to 10pm, is receiving a smaller number of domestic violence-related calls from across country. The statistics indicate that the number of calls to report domestic violence has dropped from nearly 3 calls a day to 1.

APTUF a women’s wing has reported that state-operated women shelters (Dar ul Amaan) in the Punjab are not prepared to take up new residents. This is due to their lack of financial, infrastructural and technical capacity to deal with victims. Some of the shelter homes have been converted into quarantine centres due to which domestic violence cases cannot be entertained. The head office of Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) is also closed for public due to lockdown but their Helpline 1043 is functional.

It is crucial to focus on better services for women facing domes-

tic violence, says Khalida Ashraf female member. “Based on my experience, when services are more gender-sensitive and readily available, the call reporting ratio rises considerably”, she states.

Violence against women has been consistently on the rise in Pakistan. Rubina Jamil said that Pakistan was ranked as the sixth most dangerous country for women after coming third. Pakistan was named as the fourth worst nation when it came to discrimination in the workplace, access to economic resources such as land, and risks to their safety owing to cultural, religious and traditional practices including so-called “honour” killings. Pakistan ranked fifth when it came to non-sexual violence including domestic abuse.

The World Bank data shows almost one in three married Pakistani women report facing physical violence from their husbands. Informal estimates are much higher. In the 2019 Women, Peace and Security Index, Pakistan ranked 164 out of 167 countries, only above Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen, and worst among nine South Asian countries on access to mobile phones, financial inclusion, and discriminatory norms for women.

Violence against women is highly prevalent, and intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence, Samina Fayyaz (APTUF member). During health emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic, violence against women tends to increase.

In “Pakistan is an exceptionally patriarchal society and aggressive behaviour against women at home is an endemic social issue. Such abusive behaviour at home is often

viewed as a private family issue and no suitable intervention and relief is provided. Unfortunately, social and cultural values of our society are also major sources of domestic violence against women.”

This is unacceptable, that the effects of violence are often long-lived. The risk of violence for women and their children during the Covid-19 crisis must not be ignored.

Since the 18th Amendment to the constitution of 1973 that has empowered provinces, the Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan have introduced laws to empower women and ensure gender equality. Sindh enacted its Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act in 2013. Balochistan passed a similar law in 2014.

The Punjab has introduced a few important legal steps towards

women empowerment. These include the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2016; Punjab Protection of Women against Harassment at the Workplace Act, 2012; Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, 2014; Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2015; and Punjab Women Protection Authority.

Unfortunately, there is no law in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the moment to protect survivors of domestic abuse “due to push back from religious authorities” says in 2020.

It takes a long time to introduce certain laws for the protection of women. She says the laws are not result oriented in terms of ensuring women’s safety. “There are many forms of violence against women, which have potential health consequences for women and their children. Still many cases unfortunately

go unreported, and many of the reported cases go unprosecuted”, she says.

The UNDP report indicates that only 0.4 percent of women take their cases to courts and 50 percent of women who experience domestic violence do not respond in any way.

“Violence against women is a grave violation of women’s human rights, no matter when, where, or how it takes place”, she says, “Our state faces serious challenges to tackle such acts of violence because of lack of coordination among stakeholders and public departments. There are few campaigns to create awareness and challenge societal barriers. Accurate statistics are really hard to collect. Also, public departments have limited resources and capacity to tackle violence issues.”