

# International Aid to Pakistan : Issues of Human rights, Equitable Development, and Peace in Sindh

Wednesday, 08 November 2006

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International Conference on Sindh, &ldquo;International Aid to Pakistan : Issues of Human rights, Equitable Development, and Peace in Sindh,&rdquo; September 24, 2005 , London , UK.

The aid that Pakistan receives from the USA and the European Union strengthens the country&rsquo;s authoritarian military government. The USA and EU are therefore legitimising laws and policies that promote religious intolerance and extremism at the peril of democracy and the rights of minority provinces. This was the consensus view at the 17th International Conference of the World Sindhi Congress (WSC), a human rights advocacy group for Sindh and Sindhis, held in London on 24 September 2005.

Several distinguished scholars and activists from Sindh, Balochistan, Geneva, India, the USA and UK gathered to present speeches on the theme of &lsquo;International Aid to Pakistan: Issues of Human Rights, Equitable Development and Peace in Sindh.&rsquo;

The Conference was very well attended by Sindhis, Balouchs and people of other nationalities from Sindh, Spain, America and of course the UK. UK attendees came not only from London, but also from cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Preston, Rochdale, Reading and many others. Attendees filled the conference hall to capacity.

The proceedings started with an introduction by Dr. Hidayat Bhutto, who also read messages and apologies from prominent American and British politicians. US Senator George Allen of Virginia sent a message of support to WSC and wrote, 'I value the work you are doing for the Sindhi people of Pakistan. It is my hope that through your efforts, Sindhis will gain the recognition that they so greatly desire.'

US Congressman Gregory Meeks of New York praised WSC in his letter and wrote, &lsquo;I support your organization&rsquo;s pursuit of democracy under your advocacy and action banner, and I also support your fight against fundamentalism and fundamentalist ideologies in your struggle for the rule of law and human rights in Pakistan.&rsquo;

Roger Godsiff, an MP from the UK, also wrote and agreed that Sindhis should be heard.

Many other UK MPs and Secretaries of State sent their best wishes and apologies for being unable to attend.

The introduction was followed by the Secretary General&rsquo;s report, delivered by Dr. Lakhu Lohano. He summarised the role of WSC and its activities over the course of the past year. He said that 2004-05 has been a very hectic year for WSC. Apart from the AGM/Conference and Saeen G. M. Sayed&rsquo;s birthday, WSC organised three demonstrations highlighting the plights of Sindh, Balouchistan, women and religious minorities. Through leaflets and speeches, WSC focused on issues such as water access, unjustified resource distribution in Pakistan, military action in Balouchistan, Gwadar Port, Dr. Shazia Khalid, the political murder of Shaheed Samiullah Kalhoro and the plight of other Sindhi and Balouch activists in prisons.

The speeches and other business of the day were conducted in two sessions. The first session was moderated by Dr. Haleem Bhatti, Senior Vice Chairman of WSC. The speakers in this session were Vishu Bhatia, Ali Rind, Dr. Saghir A. Shaikh, Dr. Ahmed Hussain Makhdoom, Kadir Bux Jatoi and Ms. Claire Galez.

The session started with a well-received poem recited by a UK Sindhi. In this poem Vishu lamented the plight of Sindh and wondered whether Sindhis were taking care of the motherland they had to leave.

Ali Ahmed Rind, editor of the Sindhi news magazine *Affair*, said that Sindh has no say in Pakistan at federal or provincial levels.

WSC Chairman Dr. Shaghir Shaikh delivered a detailed paper on issues of human rights and the role donor countries. &lsquo;In order to ensure long-lasting peace and justice in the region and to reduce the menace of terrorism, global powers must act to neutralise Pakistan and its proliferating nuclear capability,&rsquo; Dr. Shaikh said.

He concluded that it may actually be counter-productive to act as an ally to Pakistani President Musharraf in the coalition against terrorism.

In his paper entitled 'SOS' (Save Our Sindh), Sindhi intellectual Dr. Ahmed Makhdoom discussed general deprivation in Sindh and concluded that we ourselves must fight for the restoration of our rights.

Mr. Qadir Bux Jatoy of WSI London said that Pakistan was created for the military in order to serve the interests of imperialism.

Ms. Claire Galez, director of the South Asian Research Center, Geneva, highlighted the inherent clash between economic liberalism and prosperity under the Pakistani military regime and said, 'The liberalisation of economic markets has posed a positive impact globally, but in the case of Pakistan, it has ironically posed a reverse, negative impact on human welfare.'

The second session was conducted after a sumptuous lunch and was moderated by Suraiya Makhdoom, a founding member WSC and currently its UK/Europe Organiser. The session had a heavy agenda, as there were speeches, resolutions and a question and answer session.

The session started with the announcement of the G. M. Sayed Award, which is awarded annually at the WSC conference to people who have served the Sindhi cause. The awards programme was conducted by Shahzad Wadhio of Sheffield. The Lifetime Award was given to Comrade Sobho Gianchandani. His award was received by Dr. Banu Chaudhury, a close associate of the Comrade. Earlier in the year, Comrade Sobho was nominated by Suraiya Makhdoom and supported by Dr. Haleem Bhatti, Dr. Lakhu Luhana, Farhan Soomro and Dr. Hidayatullah Bhutto. The Advocacy Award was given to Azad Kazi, and his award was received by Ali Rind, as he could not come himself.

The award ceremony was followed by a speech session. Suraiya opened the session by reciting verses from Shah Abdul Latif, Ayaz and other poets. He occasionally offered authentic translations of the verses, as well.

The first speaker was distinguished Sindhi social worker and literary figure Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Alasti, who spoke about the Sufi traditions of Sindhi people.

Dr. Naseer Dashti, a Balouch intellectual and journalist, said that Balouchistan was conquered and is now being ruled by force.

Dr. Banu Chaudhury of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, UK chapter, touched upon some key issues including education and revealed that in current Pakistani curriculum, children are taught bigotry and intolerance right from the beginning.

Sudhamo Lal Ahuja, a renowned socio-political worker from Sindh, focused on the plight of religious minorities and women in Pakistan. He asserted his allegiance to Sindh and insisted that Sindhi Hindus are not a religious minority, but rather the indigenous residents of the land.

Praising the peace-loving and Sufi beliefs of Sindhi culture, Dr. Charles Graves, director of the Geneva-based NGO Interfaith International, said, 'Religion must be separated from state in Pakistan, and the Sindhi people's Sufism must prevail over forces of bigotry to save the global community from the emerging threat of religious intolerance sponsored by State elites.'

Akash Ansari, a well-known Sindhi poet, spoke about the element of resistance in Sindhi poetry. He also read several of his poems. He was quite popular with the audience, who rolled their cameras when he took the floor and asked for more poems.

Finally, Dr. Saghir Shaikh thanked the audience and concluded the speech segment of the session. He started in English but then reverted to Sindhi and quoted heavily from Sindhi poetry. He stated that he has a dream to achieve the objectives of WSC for which he has committed himself. His remarks were very well received.

The conference passed 27 resolutions concerning human rights and distributive economic and political justice in Pakistan. Mr. Umed Laghari, Organiser, WSC USA chapter, presented the resolutions. There were some amendments from the audience and some fresh resolutions were tabled.

In the evening there was a musical programme, which was moderated by Mss Hafeezan Wadhio of Sheffield. Her beautiful recitations of Sindhi verses added to the richness of the programme. The principal artist was the famous Sindhi singer Ms. Kajal Chandiramani. Mr. Saeen Bux Patujo and Mr. Awais Mahar also captured the audience's attention. Dr. Anwar Balouch played a famous Sindhi musical instrument, the 'Gharo' with the singers.

Press Release:

Unconditional aid is legitimizing the authoritarian military rule in Pakistan

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 25, 2005, The aid that Pakistan currently receives from the USA and the European Union strengthens the country's authoritarian military government. The USA and EU are therefore supporting the legitimisation of laws and policies that promote religious intolerance and extremism at the peril of democracy and the rights of minority provinces. This was the consensus view at the 17th International Conference of the World Sindhi Congress (WSC), a human rights advocacy group for Sindh and Sindhis, held in London on 24 September 2005.

Several distinguished scholars and activists from Sindh, Balochistan, Geneva, India, the USA and UK gathered to present speeches on the theme of 'International Aid to Pakistan: Issues of Human Rights, Equitable Development and Peace in Sindh.'

'In order to ensure long-lasting peace and justice in the region and to reduce the menace of terrorism, global powers must act to neutralise Pakistan and its proliferating nuclear capability,' conference participant and WSC Chairman Dr. Saghir Shaikh observed. He concluded that it may actually be counter-productive to act as an ally to Pakistani President Musharraf in the coalition against terrorism.

Dr. Charles Graves, Director of the Geneva-based NGO Interfaith International, praised the Sindh's love of peace and Sufi beliefs and said, 'Religion must be separated from state in Pakistan, and the Sindhi people's Sufism must prevail over forces of bigotry to save the global community from the emerging threat of religious intolerance sponsored by state elites.'

Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Alasti, a distinguished Sindhi social worker and a prominent literary figure, discussed the Sufi traditions of Sindh people.

Dr. Banu Chaudhury of the Communist Party of Bangladesh revealed that through current Pakistani curriculum, children are taught bigotry and intolerance right from the beginning.

Udhamo Lal Ahuja, a renowned socio-political worker from Sindh, focused on the plight of religious minorities and women in Pakistan. He asserted his allegiance to Sindh and insisted that Sindhi Hindus are not a religious minority, but rather the sons and daughters of the land.

Ms. Claire Galez, Director of the South Asian Research Center, Geneva, highlighted the inherent clash between economic liberalism and prosperity under the Pakistani military regime and said, 'The liberalisation of economic markets has posed a positive impact globally, but in the case of Pakistan, it has ironically posed a reverse, negative impact on human welfare.'

Dr. Naseer Dashti, a Balouch intellectual and journalist, claimed that Balouchistan has been conquered and is now being ruled by force, and Qadir B. Jatoi of WSI said that Pakistan was created for the military in order to serve the interests of imperialism.

Ali Ahmed Rind, editor of the Sindhi news magazine *Affair*, said that Sindh has no power in Pakistan at the federal or provincial level.

In his paper entitled 'SOS' (Save our Sindh), Sindhi intellectual Dr. Ahmed Makhdoom discussed the general deprivation in Sindh and concluded that we ourselves must fight for the restoration of our rights.

Akash Ansari, a well-known Sindhi poet, spoke about the element of resistance in Sindhi poetry. He also read several of his poems. UK Sindhi Vishu Bhatia also read a Sindhi poem that was very well received.

Conference Chair Dr. Hidayat Bhutto read the responses and apologies of prominent American and British politicians who wished to offer their support to Sindhi resistance movements. US Congressman Gregory Meeks of NY praised the role of WSC and wrote, 'I support your organisation's pursuit of democracy under your advocacy and action banner, and I also support your fight against fundamentalism and fundamentalist ideologies in your struggle for the rule of law and human rights in Pakistan.'

US Senator George Allen also sent a message. Roger Godsiff MP from the UK wrote that he agreed that the voice of Sindhis should be heard.

Many other UK MPs and Secretaries of State sent their apologies for not being able to attend the WSC conference.

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Resolutions passed:

Resolution Passed Unanimously by the Delegates at the International Conference on Sindh, September 24th, 2005, London

WHEREAS the Pakistan resolution of 1940 furthered the principles of sovereign, autonomous, secular and democratic federating units,  
 AND WHEREAS during successive regimes, the democratic and civil rights of Pakistani peoples and nations in general and those of the Sindhi, Balochi, Saraiki and Pakhtoon people in particular have remained subjugated,  
 AND WHEREAS since its inception until now, Pakistan has suffered under the domination of civil and military bureaucracy,  
 AND WHEREAS Pakistan has been ruled directly or indirectly by dictatorial regimes since the partition, and recently by the self-appointed president of Pakistan,  
 AND WHEREAS the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights ensures the civil and human rights of the people, while the present military-controlled regime usurps the rights of the federating units of Pakistan in the name of devolution of power,  
 AND WHEREAS all oppressed nations in the world have an inalienable right to self-determination,  
 AND WHEREAS there is an acute need for solidarity between the oppressed nations and peoples,  
 AND WHEREAS Pakistan has violated all the treaties on the distribution of Indus Water,  
 AND WHEREAS women, Sindhi Hindus and other religious minorities are subjected to social and political discrimination,  
 AND WHEREAS General Musharraf's government is a dictatorship, working with a racist agenda against the people of oppressed nations including Sindhis and Balouchs,

Be it resolved that:

- The right to self-determination guaranteed by the 1940 Resolution, which states that "all the nations of Pakistan are to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, secular, social and cultural development," should be ensured to all the nations of Pakistan.
- The construction of the Greater Thal Canal must be stopped without any further delay, and the federal government must withdraw its authoritative stand on the Kalabagh Dam project and all other controversial projects. The unanimously-passed Sindh Assembly resolutions to this effect should be honoured and implemented.
- The National Finance Commission (NFC) should be an independent body, and its resources should be distributed according to a new formula based on consultation with the federating units.
- Sindh should be given authorization to make independent agreements with international finance institutions (IFIs), and the federal government must seek advice and consultation prior to making such arrangements.
- National and multinational corporate companies operating in Sindh, especially oil and gas exploration companies, must ensure employment of Sindhi personnel from local areas.
- The controversial construction of Gwadar Port should be stopped immediately, as the project has been initiated without consulting the elected representatives of Balouchistan and has no programme to benefit the people of Balouchistan.
- General Pervaiz Musharraf must apologise publicly for his racist statements against Sindhis. In August, the General said that Sindhis are inefficient and incapable to be posted to higher government offices. Despite Sindhi protests, the General has still not apologised.
- Pakistan's self-imposed "president's" General Musharraf should also apologise for the comments he has made against rape victims. In an interview with the Washington Post on 13 September, he said, "This has become a moneymaking concern. A lot of people say if you want to go abroad and get a visa for Canada or citizenship and be a millionaire, get yourself raped." The world community, including the Canadian Prime Minister, have condemned this statement.
- General Musharraf should resign, since he has been abusing his own countrymen and women and speaks against Sindhis and women.
- The Pakistani military must go back to barracks. The military should play no role in political decision-making or in civil governance. Defence expenses should be cut and be reallocated to the social sector with a special focus on education.
- Pakistan should sign up for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).
- Women and minority groups should be included in policy-making apparatuses at all levels. Equal opportunities should be promoted, incorporated and implemented at all levels.
- Increased violence against Sindhi Hindus should be stopped. The government has failed to provide them security and justice.
- Sindhi Hindus, who were forced to leave Sindh, should have the right to return to their motherland and visit their holy shrines, family and friends.
- Current discriminatory laws such as the Hudood Ordinance and blasphemy laws must be repealed. Measures should be taken to end the state-patronised custom of karokari (honour killings), and legislation should be introduced to this effect
- Required finances should be earmarked to promote the national languages of Sindh, Balouchistan, Pakhtoonkhwah, Punjab and Siraikistan, and their culture and related institutions must be given due importance.
- Sindhi print and electronic media houses should be state supported. Sindhi newspapers should be given an equal share of adverts.
- The policy and practice of closing down Sindhi medium schools in Karachi should be immediately stopped, and all closed schools should be re-opened. Indeed, more Sindhi medium schools should be established in Karachi and other major Sindhi metropolises.

- Undeclared military operations in Balouchistan should be stopped.
- The persecution of Sindhi and Baloch nationalist political activists should be stopped immediately. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are currently the order of the day. Scores of activists are behind bars or in special torture cells.
- MQM, a Karachi-based ethnic group and now a part of the government, must stop its discriminatory policies against indigenous Sindhis. MQM, with state support, is firmly committed to serving the narrow interests of Urdu-speaking people at the cost and peril of Sindhi people. MQM has passed laws that allow the registration of aliens as permanent citizens of the province, which adversely affects the political representation of indigenous Sindhis. MQM has divided Sindh districts on ethnic lines for gerrymandering. They have passed laws that exclude Sindhis from jobs and education opportunities in Karachi.
- The military's continued torture and solitary confinement of Balouch political activists Dr. Allah Nazar and Mr. Abdul Nabi Bungalzai must come to an end immediately.
- Construction of army cantonments in Balouchistan should be immediately stopped.
- The British Petroleum Company Incorporate Pakistan, which has been denying the rights of people indigenous to the Badin district in Sindh, should comply with the demands of the People's Rights Action Committee in Badin and fulfill its role in local community development.
- The United Nations and other international organisations should declare the overthrow of a democratically-elected government by military personnel a crime against humanity. Those indulging in such heinous crimes should be punished according to the norms of democratic governance and international law.
- The word 'minority' attached to Sindhi Hindus in Pakistan's official documents (such as the constitution) should be deleted. Sindhi Hindus are sons and daughters of the soil, just as Muslim Sindhis are.
- Pakistan should accept the proposal of a 'No War' and 'No Nuclear Use First' treaty with India in the context of ongoing peace process between the two countries, so that the people of Pakistan may live in peace.