



About the campaign

The Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign has been initiated by the Punjab Labour Federation, which is one of the biggest trade union federations in Pakistan, after the murder of its president, Arif Shah, on 19th January 1995, at the hands of hired assassins. This criminal act was a reprisal by the employers, after a successful strike against privatisation, for a minimum wage and the abolition of contract and child labour. 20,000 workers attended Arif Shah's funeral.

Because of his dedication and courage the workers had total trust and confidence in him. He responded by giving his life in their cause. He dedicated 27 years of his life to the cause of labour.

We will not let his death to be in vain. The Punjab Labour Federation is committed to continue his work. The bosses can murder our members, they can never murder our determination to fight for our own liberation.

As a result of the assassination of Arif Shah, leading trade union activists have established the 'Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign' by the Punjab Labour Federation, the United Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers' Alliance, the National Railway Workers Union and the National Union of Postal Employees, among others.

People are forced to live under bad health conditions, lower education, insufficient clean water supply, bad electricity supply, broken roads, polluted environment, prevailing diseases. They are facing higher taxes, ever increasing unemployment, drug addiction is common among youth.

Arif Shah's murder is not an isolated act. Iqbal Masih, a 12 year old trade unionist campaigning all over the world for the abolition of child and bonded labour in Pakistan was also assassinated. 6 million children are forced to work in Pakistan and there are 20 million bonded workers.

Another trade unionist in the banking sector, Usman Ghani, from the staff union in the Muslim Commercial Bank Ltd., has been assassinated in September for fighting for workers rights.

These brutal murders show the difficulties facing trade unionists in Pakistan to defend their democratic rights.

- 1) Defence of our trade unions from the physical attacks of the employers. Defend our right to organise!
- 2) Stop the privatisation and plunder of state industries.
- 3) For a minimum wage for all.
- 4) The abolition of child labour.
- 5) The abolition of anti trade union laws.
- 6) The abolition of draconian fundamentalist laws against women. Equal rights for women.