

Dear Comrades,

This is to thank you for your support and solidarity during my election campaign for Punjab Assembly PP 86 Toba Tek Singh. I lost the elections despite a outstanding campaign that we organized in the constituency. I got 1860 votes which is just over 2 percent of the total votes. This does not reflect the support we had.

In fact I became victim of the Election Commission of Pakistan code of conduct. I did not organize any election camp or transport on the polling day and it was according to the rules and regulations of the ECP. All other candidates, 26 of them did. So our absence from polling stations in shape of camps and transport gave a wrong signal to our voters. I went to the returning officer several times to complain about these violations in writing but there was no effective response.

I contested election by not violating any single article of the prescribed ECP code of conduct. I did not cross the line of election expenditure. For Punjab Assembly, a candidate total expenditure was restricted to a maximum of one million Rupees (\$10,000). While several candidates mainly from Pakistan Muslim League, Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf, Pakistan People's Party and Jamaat Islami crossed this limit by many fold. This was evident from the massive expenditure on advertisements, camps, transport, free food stall and above all buying of votes directly.

We had confirmed reports that PMLN and PTI candidates gave cash ranging from Rupees 1500 to 5000 to a family in exchange of promise for votes. The group belonging to these two parties had Quran in their hand and you have to swear on the holy book to fulfill your promise. I got almost every day several telephone calls asking me to buy votes; I flatly refused and tried unsuccessfully to convince them not to sell votes.

Where ever, I had bigger public meetings, the rate of the votes in those working class areas went up. I can report this with proud record that Awami Workers Party has become a household name in my constituency and no one matched the enthusiasm of our rallies and public meetings. We organized a total of 60 public meeting during one month election campaign. In the last 10 days of the election campaign, I spoke on average three public meetings a day where from 100 to 500 participated. Over 20,000 participated in these public meeting.

We also had a team of women comrades doing door to door campaign in the constituency. There were helped by few women groups from outside Toba Tek Singh who came to help us.

I said again and again that my election campaign is about strengthening social, peasant and labour movement of the city. And we did that. A new rickshaw union was formed during the election campaign and many working class and peasant issues were raised in all public meetings.

We polarized the city on class lines. However, this was not translated into the votes. It was during the last one week that we were taken seriously by PTI and PMLN. And they did what was necessary to harass, and buy votes and it did work. On 9th May, two days before the election, in one working class area of the city, three public meetings were taking place next to each other. It was PTI and PMLN and ours AWP. We did not organize any transport, nor did we ask all our supporters from the villages to come to the city for this meeting as was the case with the other two. But all estimates, our public meeting was far more crowded. People came to listen me, I had become the most popular speaker of the election campaign by simple arguments in Punjabi language.

However, in two days, many of our supporters were surprised to see the very low level of our votes. One thing, that we learnt is that the most important day of the elections are the Election Day itself. We had not violated the rules and paid the price. Our votes could have been over 5 to 10 percent of the votes if we could have done the same as the others did, provide transport to your voters and install camps in front of polling station to facilitate the voters to give them their vote numbers.

I had told my close friends before the elections that we will not win and never said in any of our public meetings that we will win. I knew that we will not. We are passing through an anti revolutionary period, Right wing forces were on the offence. Toba Tek Singh is one district where almost in every village there are martyrs during Afghan Jihad.

To contest election from a district where I had not lived for more than four decades was anyhow a difficult election. Although this was my home town but I had left it for studies, spent 8 years in exile and settled in Lahore to lay down basis for our party. I had introduced myself with reference of my family and also by the revolutionary traditions of the seventies. But the revolutionary traditions of seventies did not result in any votes for me.

Another weakness was that I was contesting elections from a party which was hardly known to anyone. Established in November 2012, we did not have the time to popularize the name. I was asked this question all the time, are you contesting independently? "We never heard the name for your party" was another comment. Our previous party, Labour Party Pakistan was more known in the district than AWP.

It was only the last days of the campaign that we were able to defeat this awkward question about the name of our party. AWP Toba Tek Singh did not have the infrastructure in terms of members and contacts in the whole constituency to contest election effectively. Then why we decided to go ahead to contest?

The answer is simple. We had to start from somewhere some time. We started at a bid time for revolutionary ideas but with the sheer force of our election campaign; we became known and were in the top list of those who would do some good results

according to all intelligence surveys.

I must say that apart from AWP activists locally and nationally who came to help us and good response to my election finance appeal, it was my family who did what they could. My four brothers and three sisters, their wives and husbands, their children, all were running day and night for my election campaign. My cousins also came to help. My younger sister husband, Dr Afzal, a child specialist, had organized 10 free medical camps in different areas of the constituency and gave free medical advice and medicine to over 2000 patients. My younger sister dr Rubina, a known gynecologist came from Gujrat to organize two free medical camp for women and children and gave me 300,000 Rupees donation for the election campaign, the largest single donation of my finance appeal.

One of the highlight of my election campaign was arrival of Jawad Ahmad, Pakistan famous singer, with his team to Toba Tek Singh to sing for my election campaign. He also sang International. Over 5000 turned up to listen him in one of the hall that was given to us free of charge. Jawad Ahmad also came voluntarily.

Then came my old friend and comrade Dr. Timur Rehman of Laal Band with his team and presented a splendid performance in front of over 3000. He also came voluntarily and paid from his pocket all expenditure for musicians. Famous singer Ali Aftab of "Begahirat Brigade" also came for the last meeting and had a brief presentation.

From AWP, the president Abid Hasan Minto came to speak to the lawyers and to one of our public meeting, with him came Akhtar Hussain former vice chairman of Pakistan Bar Council, Choudry Naeem Shakir, Dr. Farzan Bari, Ismat Sahjehan, Azra Shad, Shahnaz Iqbal, Riffet Maqsood, Javed Akhtar, Asim Sajad Akhtar, Dr Ali Jan, Hashim Bin Rashid, Agha Abdul Sattar, Nisar Shah, Niaz Khan, Mehmood Butt and several other leaders of AWP came to help in the campaign.

Young comrades from National Student Federation were there all the time including Irfan Choudry, President NSF Punjab, Alia Amir Ali secretary NSF Punjab, who became one of the most known speakers of the election campaign.

Although, I got disappointing numbers of vote, but that is not end of the story. I am not disappointed by the numbers of vote. Getting vote's means that you have to do all the dirty tactics, I never did, did not do in these elections and will never do in future elections as well. I have laid down some revolutionary tradition of contesting elections in a highly corrupt society of not going along the bad habits. I have empowered a small section of working class people of my constituency and will continue that process.

I have lived a life of not doing any business or job for any commercial purpose. This is difficult but has done that and will do that. I work full time for AWP on volunteer basis after working full time for Labour Party and Struggle group since 1980. The taking part in this election was one aspect of our revolutionary activities in Pakistan against the

capitalist, imperialist and religious fanatics.

As follow up of our elections, we have held two meetings of supporters and contact within three weeks, several dozen joined Awami Workers Party. On 6 June over 60 members and contacts of AWP attended a follow up meeting with a pledge to build the party and working class movement in the city.

Several explained the reasons for our low numbers of votes that included mainly the missing link on Election Day, but not a single person was in mood of disappointment.

One commented that I was in Jaaat Islami till I heard comrade Farooq. In my community, there was only one vote for AWP and that was mine. Now I will do my best to bring more people in AWP. Others commented that a revolutionary process have restarted in a city that was once a hub of Left activism. However, Left had been absolutely marginalised, now it has remerge in big manner.

One of the main feature of the follow up meeting was that we did not loose any one who supported us in election. A small office existed in the city for some time, it was decided to organdie a proper office and secretariate for social and political assists of people of the city.

Farooq Tariq
General Secretary
Awami Workers Party
0300 8411945