

Document

Declaration at Pen for Peace Conference

Pen for Peace Conference was held in Karachi in December 2000. It was an initiative of Pakistani writers, poets, artists, journalists and academics from all over the country to promote peace and harmony among nations and the people of the subcontinent. Its inaugural session was attended by over 1,000 people and 300 delegates from areas as remote as Turbat, Quetta, Multan, Loyalpur, Gujranwala and Peshawar including Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Lahore. The topics discussed in the conferences ranged from the historical and psychological analyses of war mongering and hostile isolation to the study of political, social and economic implications of the arms race between India and Pakistan and the consequences of a nuclear war between the two countries. The conference rejected the 'war option' in settling the disputes between India and Pakistan. The rulers of the two countries were urged to put a stop to macho politics and take a rational view of their situation. The rise of obscurantist and fascist tendencies was ascribed to the state patronage and support of war mongering and armed militias. Discrimination on the basis of religion was strongly condemned and the need for enlightened and secular values was highlighted. The conference put its hopes in the people of India and Pakistan and urged them to force their rulers to create an atmosphere of peace. The conference resolution is being presented here as an important document on Peace in the sub-continent.

Conference Declaration

We the writers, poets, artists, academics and journalists from all over Pakistan have gathered together in Karachi on the platform of "Pen for Peace" Conference-2000 to jointly proclaim 'Yes to Peace and No to War'.

This conference has been convened at a time when the sub-continent has become a powder keg due to the induction of nuclear arms and the belligerent and close-minded approach of the rulers in the two countries. The forces of fundamentalist obscurantism have overwhelmed not only the civil society institutions but the state machineries of the two countries also, and are browns beating the people with their armed might and strong arm tactics.

We firmly believe that:

-war does not solve any problems, it exacerbates them,

-the main cause of our national, regional and the world problems and the misery of the people in general, is the 'war option' adopted by the ruling classes the world over-of Pakistan and India in particular- to settle disputes,

-the only beneficiaries of war are the few profiteers, mainly those of the industrially advanced countries, who control the military-industrial complexes and the misanthropes who manipulate themselves in the social and state power structures, while all peoples of the world are the losers,

-the disputes between Pakistan and India, like any other world disputes, can never be resolved through 'war' and the only alternative is peaceful negotiations,

-the recourse to 'war option' has only helped the rise of intolerant, fundamentalist, sectarian and militaristic ideologies in the country that have torn the whole society apart and sapped the will to live together,

-the glorification of the nuclear weapons of mass destruction through state controlled and profit oriented mass media has reinforced the unhealthy militaristic mind-set and caused the proliferation of armed militants in the name of religion, sect, region and language, resulting in polarisation of the society into exclusive and paranoiac segments,

We demand that:

- the governments of Pakistan and India must eschew their mutual antipathy, give up the unrewarding 'war focussed' policies that they have been pursuing for the last half a century and give the alternate 'peace focussed' policy a chance and adopt the tool of peaceful negotiations for resolving their mutual disputes
 - including the Kashmir dispute,
 - the states of Pakistan and India must abolish the weapons of mass destruction they have acquired; cease to produce and deploy such weapons and the means of their delivery, totally halt further research in this direction; sign, ratify and adhere to CTBT, FMCT, NPT and other related international agreements, irrespective of what other states do or not do in this regard, because the creation and possession of such weapons is morally indefensible, economically debilitating and of little strategic significance,
 - the governments of India and Pakistan must engage in serious negotiations to make South Asia a region of peace and a nuclear free zone through concluding a no war pact and committing themselves to the total abolition of nuclear arms, halting the missile race, gradual reduction in conventional arms, armed forces and defence expenditure,
 - the governments of Pakistan and India should ease up on the visa rules and allow the common people of the two countries to meet freely and evolve mutual trust and understanding. Visa restrictions for the writers, academics and artists should be totally lifted to allow the culture of peace to spread and take roots,
 - all restriction on the exchange and import/export of books, newspapers, periodicals and magazines between Pakistan and India should be lifted,
 - Indian government should stop gross human rights violation in Kashmir, and both India and Pakistan should withdraw their armed forces from Kashmir,
 - the state patronage and support of 'war-mongering' armed militias, and their training camps masqueraded as 'religious seminaries, must be stopped,
 - the Pakistani state must desist from discrimination on the basis of religion and must become a secular and impartial dispenser of social and economic justice among its citizens rather than an instrument of coercion and discrimination
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- Pakistan must stop its interference and involvement in Afghanistan

- The N5 states (USA, Russia, Britain, France and China) must de-alert fully their nuclear weapon systems, accelerate the process of destruction and final elimination of the weapons of mass destruction that they have stock pile, unequivocally pledge 'No first Use', and they must resolve to totally forsake any further research and development in this direction,

We want a world free of wars and violence for our children and the coming generations and support all efforts in pursuit of this goal,

We commit ourselves to the global nuclear disarmament movement and in particular, to the South Asian nuclear disarmament movement,

We appeal to all conscientious writers, artists, academics, journalists, and peace loving people to join and strengthen the movement for peace and denuclearisation in South Asia and the World.

[Courtesy: The News (Sunday Edition) 10 December 2000]