

**Press Release - 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

National Fishworkers Forum – India (NFF) &  
Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace & Democracy (PIPFPD)

**Condemn the firing on fishworkers by Pakistan's maritime security agency that  
resulted in the death of Shridhar Ramesh Chamre –  
Put an end to the violence inflicted on fishworkers by armed forces**

On Saturday, the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, around 4 pm off the coast of Gujarat, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) troops converged on two Indian fishing boats. The Pakistan government statement claim they were in Pakistan's territorial waters, while the fishworkers have negated that claim. One of which has been taken into custody by PMSA and the other which was trying to turn away was fired upon. The second boat- "Jalpari" managed to return to the Indian coast with 6 crew members and the dead body of Shridhar Ramesh Chamre.

The PMSA issued a statement on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, denying firing on the boat and using lethal weapons against fishworkers.

Shridhar Chamare was 32 years old. He was shot in the chest multiple times. He had been working as a khalasi (helper) on the boat He is survived by his parents, wife, and two daughters aged 6 and 8. The boat's tandel (captain) Dilip Solanki aged 34, who hails from Diu, managed to escape with bullet injuries.

NFF and PIPFPD collectively express shock and disbelief at the incident that has resulted in the death of Shridhar. We have consistently demanded a 'no arrests policy' of fishworkers - whose livelihood is based on the sea and have repeatedly warned both the governments against any lethal action including firing. Yet these incidents continue to happen.

Every year hundreds of Indian and Pakistani fishworkers are arrested by the neighbouring country's naval armed forces. And every year, some of them are released as confidence-building measures by the governments. Once arrested, these fishworkers spend anywhere between 4 months to a few years in jail. Some people have also passed away in the jails of India and Pakistan for want of nationality verification.

This incident, terrible as it is, has brought the spotlight back on the fishworker arrests between the two countries. The mechanisms available for faster release of fishworkers are no longer effective in securing their early release or ensuring that they are not mistreated in jails. We have repeatedly requested the release of jailed fishermen. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of August

2021, we organized a press conference in Rajkot, Gujarat demanding the release of fishermen arrested on both sides as part of the 75th year of independence of both countries. As per the United Nations Convention on Law of Seas (UNCLOS), those who encroach upon waters, cannot even be arrested, let alone be fired upon by either security forces.

These arrests not only take away the dignity of their work but also push the families of these fishworkers to the brink of poverty with very little support coming from anywhere. Eventually, the family members have to find daily wage work to support themselves which keeps the circle of desperation-led livelihood options guaranteeing oppression through bonded labour for 8 - 9 months of a year if not further arrests.

Many factors are responsible for cross-border fishing including the depleting resources in the Arabian sea as well as the increasing industrialization across the coasts of India. Prime minister Narendra Modi had made a public announcement way back in September 2013, at Palghar that once elected, his government will end arrests and killing of fishers. He has done nothing on the issue. This is despite PIPFPD and NFF sending several memorandums and petitions to the Government.

PIPFPD, in 2017 had suggested a practical solution that would suit all parties concerned including the State of Pakistan, the State of India, the Fishworkers of Pakistan, and the Fishworkers of India & the marine habitat. It was proposed that both countries agree to become signatories to a 'Maritime Economic Cooperation Agreement' between both countries and a 'no arrest policy' between both countries. This would mean that countries are compensated for the marine resources extracted from their sea while ensuring the sustenance of the said resources. We are proposing that both countries sit to discuss these ideas at the highest level to ensure that we can find a solution to the issues at the earliest.

Pakistan side has been using non-lethal weapons mostly, as the statement by PMSA rightly states. But that does not mean that the maritime security officers did not fire at the two Indian boats on 6th November 2021. The survivors have given evidential interviews regarding the same.

The jingoistic clamour between the fundamentalist forces on either side of the border has a lasting impact even in the minds of the forces meant to safeguard the fishworkers and the right to their occupation. National Fishworkers Forum along with Pakistan India. People's Forum for Peace and Democracy (India and Pakistan Chapter) calls upon the fishworkers and concerned people of Pakistan and India to come together and be heard on the issue of maritime border violence & arrests and demand that the Indian and Pakistani Governments act urgently to adopt a solution to this four-decade-old conflict so that not another soul is lost to this mindless violence.

On behalf of,  
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