

Declaration of the National Convention, April 18–19, 2026 held at New Delhi, India

Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace & Democracy

'Ishq, Siyasat, Awam: Why Peace Matters'

We, the members of PIPFPD – people from across the country, gathered in New Delhi on the 18th and 19th of April 2026, under the PIPFPD National Convention's call of *Ishq, Siyasat, Awam: Why Peace Matters*, return once again to a shared historical responsibility.

We assemble in the memory and spirit of **Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sahir Ludhianvi, and Avtar Singh Pash** - poets who refused the violence of borders, who spoke against hollow nationalism, and who placed love, dissent, and people at the centre of politics. We also carry forward the unfinished conversations of last year's gathering, which remembered **Fahmida Riaz and Amrita Pritam** - voices that insisted that the subcontinent's history cannot be reduced to division, nor its future to hostility.

This Convention was also held in the memory of Professor Vijay Singh, a long-standing member of PIPFPD, a teacher, historian, and committed Marxist intellectual, who passed away on the very day of the Convention. It had then been declared that this National Convention would be held in his name and as a tribute to him. We honour that commitment here, and carry his memory into the Forum's renewed struggle for peace, democracy, justice, and people-to-people solidarity.

This Convention is not just a cultural event. It is a continuation of a people's archive of resistance and hope. It carries our commitment to people's counter-culture against hegemonial regimes.

I. The Political Moment: Against War, Against Silencing

We meet at a time when the subcontinent and the world stand once again at the edge of deepening militarisation, authoritarian megalomania, and the shrinking of democratic spaces. War is being normalised under frivolous excuses. Borders are being weaponised. Hate is being manufactured. In the name of patriarchal honour, women's bodies are instrumentalised as in 'Operation Sindoor', when a symbol of a ritual became a war cry.

We reject, unequivocally, the logic of war and violence. We reject nuclear nationalism in both India and Pakistan. We reaffirm our foundational commitment to peace, denuclearisation, and demilitarisation in South Asia.

The sessions of this Convention - from *'Memories of Peace in Geographies of Conflict'* to *'Voices from Borders, Prisons, and Militarised Regions'* - remind us that war is not an abstraction. It is lived in broken families and peoples, incarcerated bodies, displaced communities, and silenced histories. We therefore assert: Peace is not a slogan. It is a political demand rooted in democracy, human rights and justice.

We demand that the people of Naga areas, the minority communities in violence torn Manipur and the Adivasi people resisting violence and corporate takeover in central India, be not

criminalised – that their right to dissent is not branded as terrorist and Maoist violence, and that their repression be immediately stopped.

II. Jammu & Kashmir: Respecting People's Aspirations

We reiterate, without ambiguity, our long-standing position on Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. We recognise the region as one of the most urgent democratic questions confronting the subcontinent. We assert that the region consisting of Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh or Pakistan administered Kashmir, are not a real estate tussle between India and Pakistan, that the right to self-determination of the people of undivided Jammu & Kashmir is central to addressing this question, standing firmly against all forms of occupation, militarisation, and repression.

We reject the erasure of political voices, the criminalisation of dissent and civil action, and the fragmentation of the region's identity. We demand the release of all Kashmiri political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. We reject the abrogation of Article 370 and the removal of the statehood of J&K. We stand with divided families, parents of the disappeared persons, with those incarcerated, with those silenced and violated, and with those who continue to assert dignity under extraordinary conditions and as undertrial political prisoners. Peace in South Asia is impossible without justice in Kashmir.

III. Palestine: Naming the Violence

We express our unwavering solidarity with the people of Palestine. We recognise the ongoing violence against Palestinians as a systematic denial of their right to land, life, and self-determination. We condemn the Zionist military occupation, the Israeli siege of Palestinian land, the genocide in Gaza and the everyday brutality inflicted on Palestinian lives.

We reject the complicity of global powers and the silence of regional states. We condemn Indian government's complicit silence on Palestine and friendly overtures to Israeli and US administration. We call for a sustained Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against Israel and against all corporations, products, institutions and cultural platforms that enable, profit from, or normalise the occupation, apartheid, genocide and oppression of the Palestinian people. We affirm that Palestine is not a distant question - it is a mirror to all struggles against imperialism, occupation and dispossession. And the sustained resistance of the people of Palestine is the icon of revolutionary progressive politics of the 21st century.

IV. Against War and Imperial Aggression: Iran, Lebanon, Ukraine, Venezuela, Cuba

We strongly condemn the US and Israel war on Iran, the escalation of war, the targeted decapitation of Iranian leaders, brutal attacks on Iranian and Lebanese people, infrastructure and threats of dismantling Iran's civilisation. We welcome the ceasefire, initiated as part of the political resolution efforts by Pakistan, China, Turkey, Russia and others.

We reject the American and Zionist logic of Iran being a global threat, 'harbouring terrorism'. We reiterate that the militarised and jingoistic USA and Israel are the real threat to humanity and Mother Earth. We assert that the people of Iran, like all peoples, have the sovereign right to determine their own political future without external coercion. We believe that the strength the Iranian people have shown will extend to greater human rights of the peoples of Iran.

We demand the government of India to maintain real strategic autonomy without sacrificing our historical relations with the people and governments of Palestine and Iran. War on Iran is not about democracy. It is about oil power and global supremacy games.

We reject all forms of imperial intervention, sanctions regimes, and militarised aggression that seek to destabilise regions under the pretext of security or geopolitical control. We condemn the criminal action of the USA to violate the sovereignty of Venezuela and 'kidnap' the elected President of the country to effect regime change. We are against the systematic campaign to choke the lifeline of Cuba and destabilise its government. We urge the end of war in Ukraine and are opposed to Russia's militarised territorial aggression.

V. Against Imperialist Capitalism and the Political Economy of War

We recognise that war is not merely ideological - it is economic. The expansion of militarisation, extractive development, and corporate control across South Asia is deeply tied to **imperialist capitalism**. The same forces that profit from war also profit from the dispossession of workers, peasants, agriculturists, unorganised workers and fisher peoples.

We condemn the political economy that thrives on conflict, displacement, and ecological destruction. We assert that peace cannot exist alongside systems that perpetuate inequality, exploitation, and ecological collapse.

VI. Working Peoples, and the Question of Land, Livelihood & Ecological sustainability

This Convention places at its core the lives of workers across the subcontinent. We assert the rights especially of the migrant workers, who have had to flee their homelands for livelihood and employment and live as dispossessed citizens in hostile territories in their own country or outside. We place special significance on the struggle of those sent in exile by militarised conflicts and structural caste and gender violence.

We stand in solidarity with working people's struggles - from industrial labour to informal sectors, from agricultural and forest workers to fisher peoples who continue to bear the burden of borders and conflict. We stand by the demand for democratic implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 in India and demand that the historical ocean communities and indigenous coastal people be legally recognised as the rights holders of marine and coastal resources.

We demand the immediate release and repatriation of **fisher and civilian prisoners** incarcerated across jails of India and Pakistan. These people are not enemies. They are fishworkers and people caught in the violence of nation-made borders.

We assert that **livelihood is a right**, and that no worker should be criminalised for crossing invisible lines drawn across shared waters. We demand the passing of a No Arrest policy for fisher peoples and the implementation of the 2008 Consular Access Agreement between India and Pakistan.

VII. Women, Gender Justice, and Bodily Autonomy

We reaffirm that peace without gender justice is hollow. Gender justice is not a

mere, sectional demand: it encompasses all dimensions of human existence. We condemn patriarchy in all its forms - state violence, militarised masculinities, religious conservatism, and everyday gender oppression. We affirm it is time for the subcontinent to not only talk about zero tolerance against sexual violence, but also follow through with laws and policies that address the issues of prevention, redressal and accountability of the perpetrators and state.

It is also time for us to recognize the evolving forms of commodification of women, enabled by global neoliberal capitalism, wherein human trafficking has now become just one more means of doing business globally: sexualizing and criminalizing women and children has become acceptable. We have to recognize the absolute moral collapse and deadening of human values in interpersonal relationships that this implies. To confront this, we must understand the rot that has infected humanity in its entirety. Pakistan and India now exist in a world in which there is an unholy alliance of political power, finance and corporates, which is bereft of any basic moral conscience. In such a situation, the quest for gender justice has become both more challenging and more essential.

We assert the centrality of women's leadership in movements for peace and democracy. The voices heard in this Convention, from testimonies of resistance to political articulations - have made clear that women are not victims or 'survivors'; instead, are leaders, organisers, and visionaries. We uphold the principles of bodily autonomy, gender justice, and freedom from violence as non-negotiable foundations of a progressive democratic future.

VIII. Against Casteism, Communalism, and the Politics of Hate

We recognise caste oppression and communal polarisation as structural violence that fracture the possibility of democracy, justice, human rights and peace. We reject the deliberate construction of hate - through media, education, and political discourse - that seeks to divide peoples along religious, caste, and ethnic lines. While communal polarisation is the greatest obstacle for peace between Pakistan and India, caste-based divisions have been endemic to social structure in the entire subcontinent for centuries, thereby fracturing civil society in multiple ways. This prevents the emergence of universalistic solidarities

There can be no peace without annihilation of caste.

There can be no democracy without resisting communal fascism.

IX. Affirm Secularism, Plural Democracy, and Social Justice

We affirm secularism, plural democracy, and social justice as the core commitments of this Forum and as the only worthy vision for the future India, Pakistan and the rest of South Asia. Against the grinding machinery of war, manufactured hostility, patriarchal domination, caste hierarchy, and economic systems designed to serve distant powers, we insist that ordinary and diverse people must stand at the centre of any democracy.

X. Climate Justice and the Future of the Subcontinent

We acknowledge that the climate crisis is no longer a future threat - it is a present continuous catastrophe with unimaginable consequences for future generations.

From coastal erosion to floods, from displacement to livelihood collapse, from avalanches and forest fires to complete loss of mountainous regions and forests, the most marginalised communities are bearing the heaviest burden of disasters and climate crisis, which was not created by them. It is ironic that the very industrial capitalism rooted in imperialist conquests, is today talking about climate crisis as a Anthropocene outcome and not as Capitalocene induced disaster.

We reject capitalist false solutions that commodify nature while displacing people. We condemn the repression unleashed by state-corporate nexus against Adivasi communities protesting against reckless mining. We assert the need for **climate justice rooted in community rights, ecological sustainability, and traditional people's customary rights over natural resources.**

XI. Economic Justice and Wealth Inequality

We recognise that the crisis of peace in South Asia is inseparable from the crisis of economic justice. Inequality in both India and Pakistan has reached levels that are not merely unjust, but structurally corrosive to democracy itself. Recent analyses, including global inequality focussed studies indicate that the top 10% in both countries control between 40% to over 60% of national wealth, while the bottom 50% remain trapped in conditions of precarity, informalisation, and declining access to basic services.

In India, estimates suggest that over 80% of the population struggles with vulnerability to poverty, with significant sections lacking secure employment, social protection, and access to dignified livelihoods. In Pakistan, comparable data reflects that over one-third of the population lives below or near the poverty line, with deep regional and class disparities exacerbating exclusion. These are not marginal failures—they are systemic outcomes of policy choices.

Access to education and healthcare further exposes this structural divide. Across both countries, a majority of the population relies on underfunded public systems or expensive private alternatives, resulting in exclusionary outcomes. In India, various national surveys have indicated that over 50% of children do not have access to quality foundational learning, **while** public health expenditure remains among the lowest globally as a share of GDP, forcing millions into debt due to out-of-pocket medical expenses. In Pakistan, literacy rates continue to hover around 60%, with stark gender gaps, and public health systems remain critically under-resourced, leaving large populations without reliable care.

These inequalities are deepened by a global economic order shaped by neoliberalism and, more recently, by the expansion of digital monopolies. Big Tech and financial capital have intensified wealth concentration, while labour across the global South - including South Asia, has become increasingly informal, insecure, and disposable. At the same time, the climate crisis reflects similar injustice: the global North continues to dominate carbon space, while the global South bears disproportionate ecological and livelihood losses.

Within our own countries, this has produced islands of extreme wealth amidst vast landscapes of poverty, where corporate consolidation, crony capitalism, and policy capture continue to marginalise workers, peasants, and small producers.

Equally significant is the economic cost of hostility between India and Pakistan. Despite geographical proximity and complementary economies, bilateral trade remains artificially

suppressed. Studies have repeatedly shown that formal trade between India and Pakistan could expand to between USD 20–30 billion annually, compared to the current negligible levels routed indirectly through third countries such as the UAE. The absence of direct trade leads to inflated costs, lost livelihoods, and reduced access to essential goods.

The subcontinent loses substantially by not **trading** agricultural produce such as vegetables, fruits, and dry fruits; essential commodities like salt; and a wide range of low-cost manufactured and industrial goods. Farmers, small traders, transport workers, and consumers on both sides bear the burden of this political impasse. What could be a shared economic corridor of mutual benefit has instead been turned into a zone of great loss.

The blocking of overflight access across each other's territories has imposed a significant financial loss. The disruption in access of Pakistan nationals to medical services in India is a denial of humanitarian care and a loss of revenue in the burgeoning sector of medical tourism.

We affirm that bleak economic outcomes are not inevitable. As highlighted by the G20's Independent Experts on Global Inequality, **extreme inequality is the result of policy choices—and can be reversed through progressive taxation, wealth redistribution, and strengthened public provisioning.**

Yet, across the region, there is a disturbing silence around wealth taxation, corporate accountability, and redistributive justice.

This Convention therefore resolves:

- To demand **progressive taxation, including taxation of the ultra-rich and large corporations**, to generate resources for public welfare
- To call for **universal access to quality education, healthcare, and social protection** as fundamental rights
- To oppose policies that deepen privatisation and exclusion in essential services
- To call to account labour codes that oppress and not protect interest of workers
- To advocate for the resumption and expansion of India–Pakistan trade, especially in agriculture, fisheries, and small-scale industry, as a step towards both economic justice and peace-building
- To challenge corporate monopolies, crony capitalism, and policy regimes that concentrate wealth while dispossessing the majority

Economic justice is not separate from peace.

Without redistribution, there can be no democracy.

Without equity, there can be no lasting peace.

XII. Culture; Youth and the Reclaiming of Imagination

This Convention has been shaped by the emphasis on culture and cultural exchanges; presence and participation of young people – through art, dialogue, and political engagement.

From the painting initiatives to youth-led solidarity cultural sessions, it is evident that the future of the Forum lies in intergenerational, participatory, feminist exchange and renewal.

We commit to building sustained platforms for youth engagement across borders, recognising culture not as ornamentation, but as a site of resistance and political imagination.

As the poets remind us, the struggle is not only against what exists, but for what must be created.

XIII. Rebuilding Cross-Border Solidarities

We reaffirm the founding spirit of the Forum: people-to-people engagement across India and Pakistan. We reiterate that as unconditional political stance of the Forum.

We commit to strengthening **cross-border exchanges** – among workers, women, youth, students, artists, journalists, writers and academics. We call for the resumption of dialogue, trade, and cultural exchange as essential conditions for peace. We demand the reopening of the borders by road , rail and air, and by foot, between India and Pakistan, the re-opening of trade and demand active and sympathetic resumption of visa services for ordinary citizens, including across routes such as Munabao, Kartarpur, Wagah, Uri and Poonch. We also demand the resumption of train, bus and air services – in order to enable ordinary Indians and Pakistanis travel to each other’s countries and understand and learn from each other.

We reject hostile visa regimes, surveillance structures, and political barriers that prevent peoples from meeting, speaking, and building solidarities. The borders may divide states. They cannot divide peoples. The peoples of the two Punjabs demonstrated this in July 2025. East Punjab areas were flooded following the opening of the gates of the river Sutlej gates and would have devastated vast tracts of land had the peoples of West Punjab not opened the gates of the Suleman dam and allowed the waters to flow downstream , flooding villages on the Pakistan side. No official appreciation was expressed, but the bond between people on both sides was memorialised in song

We call for withdrawal of the unilateral suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty which has stood the test of time through wars and disruptions in Pakistan -India relations.

XIV. The path ahead

This Convention has not merely reflected—it has resolved.

As discussed in the members’ assembly and organisational sessions , we commit to:

- Strengthening the organisational base and membership of the Forum across regions
- Expanding youth and women’s leadership within the Forum
- Building sustained campaigns on peace, democracy, human rights social justice and people’s unity – including about Kashmir and war
- Setting up a Film and Media Intervention Committee to examine the role of films, propaganda, and the audio-visual medium in shaping public opinion, and to develop timely cultural and political interventions against hate, militarism, communalism, casteism, patriarchy, and war-driven narratives
- Preparing for the next joint convention with renewed political clarity and reaffirmation of the principles enshrined in the PIPFPD Charter
- Deepening engagement with movements across South Asia and beyond

Time has come...!

As Avtar Singh Pash wrote, "*Waqt aa gaya hai*", the time has come.

The time has come to refuse war.

The time has come to dismantle hate.

The time has come to reclaim politics – of the people, by the people and for the people.

We leave this Convention not with closure, but with a renewed beginning.

Hum ladenge saathi.

We shall fight, comrade.

Not for nations.

Not for power.

But for **Ishq, Siyasat, and Awam...**

for love, for politics, and for the people....

Adopted at the New Delhi National Convention of PIPFPD on April 19, 2026