

Pakistan Peace Coalition
P.O. Box 2342, Islamabad, Pakistan

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PRESS RELEASE

Pakistan Peace Coalition wants military sales to be scraped

Pakistan Peace Coalition has welcomed the government announcement that, in view of the gigantic task of reconstruction and rehabilitation of the unfortunate quake victims of Kashmir and Hazara, it is going to revise the F-16 fighter aircraft purchase deal. It said that at a time when the task of reconstruction and rehabilitation was going to cost several billion dollars, it would be mindless and obscene to continue to spend billions of the people's hard earned money on defence purchases and yet shamelessly extend the begging bowl before the world for more aid for earthquake relief.

The Coalition has, however, expressed its dismay at General Musharraf's statement that the deal would only be postponed, not cancelled. It was also dismayed that even in the face of this calamity, the government had chosen to finalize a deal to buy early warning SAAB aircraft from Sweden. The Coalition urged that in the interest of alleviating the suffering of the people of the country, the entire plan of purchasing expensive defence equipment be scratched, and the earmarked money be spent solely on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the earthquake affected people. "With our own money thus available, the government should stop shamelessly begging for international assistance. The people of Pakistan have already opened their hearts and pockets to aid the quake victims. If the nation can do this, it can live without a worthless shining armour. The government's begging is a serious affront to the noble spirit of the people, the Coalition said. PPC has demanded that the plan to buy F-16s be cancelled, and the deal to buy SAAB aircraft be revoked. It has also demanded from India to revoke its purchase of F-18 from the USA. PPC has informed that in collaboration with its sister peace organizations in India, it will jointly start to lobby with the leading arms manufacturing countries of the world to stop selling arms to the poverty stricken South Asia so that the hard earned resources of the region could be used to improve the quality of life of the peoples of the region.

The Peace Coalition has welcomed General Musharraf's offer to India to demilitarize Kashmir. However, it believed that the offer would work and would look credible only when it is accompanied by Islamabad seriously reigning in the groups in Pakistan engaged in militancy in Kashmir. It urged the Government of Pakistan to persuade Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, and other groups and their reincarnates to announce that they would respond

positively to a possible Indian offer of demilitarization by abandoning their militancy. PPC underscored that demilitarization should naturally include non-state actors also.

The Peace Coalition has also urged India to reciprocate by announcing the release of all political prisoners in Kashmir, an end to impunity for perpetrators of torture and rape, and a credible effort to account for the people who have disappeared during the period of military crackdown and insurgency. But even if India does not do this, PPC has urged Pakistan to go ahead and do what is in its own interest and in the interest of the people of Kashmir.

Dr. A.H. Nayyar, President PPC

B.M. Kutty, Secretary General

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