

Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD): Reflection and Resistance against Dictatorial Regime in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

The Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) emerged when General Zia-ul-Haq could not fulfill the promise of conducting elections and prolonged his dictatorial regime instead of fulfilling his promise. He drew his power from a controlled system of government. In those circumstances, the democrats formed an alliance against the martial law administration. They neglected their internal differences and focused on their goal to achieve freedom of expression and liberty which was snubbed by the regime. MRD main demands were the restoration of democracy, under 1973 Constitution, conduction of election and handing over the system of administration to representatives of people. MRD continued struggled till the end of dictatorial regime in 1988.

Key Words: MRD, Punjab, Resistance Reflection, Dictatorial Regime

Introduction

The alliance in the form of M.R.D was formulated against Zia-ul-Haq when the political activities were banned and all political parties had become weak. In such scenarios, political alliances have formulated been throughout history and the same was the situation in Pakistan during the Third Martial. There was no difference between right and left. Such an alliance was the necessary step for the survival of democracy. Many people were involved in the political activities of the alliance in Punjab, such as Salman Taseer, Aitzaz Ahsan, Malik Muhammad Qasim, Ahsan Wayen, Abid Hassan Manto, and Farooq Laghrai. (Afzal, 2015:59) The formation of an alliance in the form of M.R.D was the initiative of lawyers, who played a vital role and the most important personality was Mian Mahmood Ali Qasoori who announced the formulation of the political alliance in the bar meeting. (Afzal:74) When political activities were limited, the result was a change of strategy, and creating an alliance was the best option during the dictatorial regime.

MRD formulated four points' agenda for future planning in the movement against the military hegemony. The main points of MRD initially were;

- End of Dictatorial Regime
- Renewal of the 1973 Constitution with its actual spirit

- Conduct of free and fair election
- Transfer of administrative powers to the elected representatives. (Shafqat,1997:211)

The MRD got a positive response from after its formation and using means of processions, protests, and agitations to protest against the dictatorial regime of Zia-ul-Haq, while strict steps were taken in form of new orders (Brohi:184) to curb the movement of resistance. Afterward, the incident of plane hijacking occurred and the government blamed it upon the political activists who wanted to remove the CMLA General Zia-ul-Haq and many of the political workers were arrested under the pretext of the hijacking incident. (Shaukat: 288) The incident provided a golden opportunity to the dictatorial it in its favor by prolonging the regime and defaming the MRD in Punjab. Also, this incident was used negatively against those who were actively participating in the political arena for the restoration of democracy. Farooq Laghari, General-Secretary PPP, during a press conference expressed that no PPP worker could be a member of the AZO and also that Murtaza Bhutto and Shahnawaz Bhutto had not been members of the PPP. There was no terrorist group in the PPP and that the main target of the MRD was to restore democracy under thirty-one points' agenda. The rift between masses and the government was increasing with time. (Jang (Lahore),17th April 1983)

The workers of JI, who were actively supporting the CMLA in Punjab, targeted and defamed after the occurrence of plane hijacking incident. Ch. Muhammad Ahmad, Secretary General of defunct JI, condemned the incident of plane hijacking and blamed it on the MRD activists. It was said that they do not desire to see the state in the peace and prosperity. Afterward, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan clarified in an interview conducted by Nazir Naji that the MRD was based upon ideology of nonviolence resistance against the dictatorial regime. The MRD leaders condemned the incident individually and collectively, however, despite the clarifications MRD labeled as the culprit behind the incident. The hijacking incident badly damaged the position of MRD (Nasrullah, Jang 1982) as a resistance movement against the dictatorial regime in the political arena of Pakistan.

The MRD was affected badly after the hijacking incident and the regime had taken stance to take severe action against the workers and leadership of the MRD. General Zia-ul-Haq left no stone unturned to declare the MRD as a terrorist organization both by speech and action, so the MRD could not play effective role with the concern of its objectives at the very beginning in its struggle against the dictatorship. General Zia-ul-Haq took advantage of the situation and through agencies prepared lists of political leaders and workers and detained them in jails. (Farrukh,2020) When the MRD summoned a secret session in Lahore on 27th February 1981, the reaction of the dictatorial regime was quick and majority of the leaders were arrested up to 21st February 1981, whereas others were detained under the MPO in their native towns and were barred from entering Lahore. (Shaukat, 2005:293)

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The PNA was an artificial alliance and majority political parties were limited up to the newspaper columns.(Mehdi,1996:207) The MRD was formulated and Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan played a vital role in the formation of a genuine alliance and after its formation jails were filled with the activists of MRD including Mahmood Ali Kasuri, Aitzaz Ahsan, Muhammad Ali (Actor), Shuaib Hashmi (son-in-law of Faiz Ahmad Faiz), and Habib Jalib were imprisoned in *Kot Lakhpat* Jail while Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan was detained in Bahawalpur.(Pervaiz,2009:153-154) Afterward, Habib Jalib was shifted to Mianwali Jail where he was kept in death cell as punishment. It was said that it was a terrible jail for the prisoners. Later on, Rao Rashid, Chaudhry Asghar Khadim, Amin Mughal, and Janghir Baddar were also arrested.(Pervaiz:156) The MRD was a political platform that was formed with the coordination of PPP and other political parties with the aim to launch a nonviolent movement on the pattern of staging protests, processions, strikes, hunger strikes, rallies, marches, and processions with placards against the dictatorial regime.(Brohi:183)

There were three instances when the CMLA had to face the resistance movement. The first occasion was in 1981 when the MRD was launched as a movement after unification of nine political parties for the common goal of ousting Zia from the office. Afterward in 1983 when the MRD again tried to force Zia out of power. Finally, the third occasion was in the summer of 1986 when Benazir Bhutto challenged the civilian setup of Zia-ul-Haq during a public meeting at Lahore and declared to continue struggle till the restoration of democracy. (Burki, online:1091).

MRD in Punjab and Military Iron Hand Policy

Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan was detained due to his influential role in the matter of MRD. When PDP Central Committee and General Secretary Sheikhpura Syed Arshad Hashmi met him in jail his health was in critical condition and there was no proper arrangement for medical treatment. Nawabzada expressed that the government had given him option to expel PPP from the MRD and that a caretaker set up would be formed under his supervision. However, Nawabzada clearly denied by saying that his struggle for democracy was bound by ethics and morality and he also expressed that his grievance on the matter of student unions. Another member of the MRD, Maulana Shah Muhammad Amuti, expressed in a statement that the military administration had offered me five billion rupees to leave the MRD and join the government block. (Burki: 1091) Hence, every method was opted against the MRD to create hurdles and obstacles in the process of restoration of democracy. The prominent leaders of the MRD were banished from the premises of Punjab to demoralize the supporters of the resistance movement. The main figure was Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, he was banished from Punjab for three months on the occasion when he had reached

Lahore from D.I. Khan on 1st April 1984 to attend the central committee session of the party. Before departing back to D.I. Khan, he expressed in a press conference that the democrats fought for the people and that the MRD had covered a long distance towards their destination i.e. democracy. He further pointed out that the conduct of elections on a non-party basis would only support the dictators (Jang 3rd April 1984) who get benefit from the situation and cause damage to the political system of the country.

The MRD leadership was at the center of the movement against Zia's dictatorial regime. The most important figure from Punjab was Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan. When Nawabzada took initiative against the regime, military administration detained him in his native town of Muzaffargarh. The District Magistrate, after offering *Eid* prayers, ordered Nawabzada to remain at his residence for fifteen days. Nawabzada was already scheduled to meet various workers. (Jang 1st September 1984) The objective of detaining the MRD leadership was to create hurdles in the resistance movement. The resistance movement was a reflection that the people of Pakistan, especially Punjab had become politically conscious. Their only target was to restore democracy in the country at all costs by rooting out the regime which had strengthened its roots in the political system of the country, Punjab being the center of this entire struggle.

The regime sentenced severe kinds of punishment to those who resisted against the referendum. The JUI convener of District Multan, Muhammad Saleem Laghri, was sentenced by the Summary Military Court with one-year R.I. and ten whiplashes on the charge of distributing pamphlets against the referendum. (Jang 13th December 1984) Furthermore, five persons affiliated with the MRD were arrested on the charge of opposing the referendum, they were: Syed Haider Ali Zaidi, Syed Haider Hussain Shah, Sheikh Muhammad Saleem, and Chaudhary Ahmad Khan Davka Advocate under the Section 171 and all the arrested persons were sent to Jhang Jail. Also, two PPP leaders, Syed Salamt Shah and Sarwar Butt were arrested by the local police and sent to the Lahore Fort Cell. (Jang 15th December 1984)

Presidential Referendum and MRD in Punjab

The referendum was an eye wash that was designed to prolong the rule of an individual, General Zia-ul-Haq in the country. The opponents of the referendum proclaimed that statement was designed to obtain results according to his expectations, by using sentiment of religion in favor of a person with special focus to the illiterate people who had no political awareness of what could be the impact of their vote. On the legal grounds, the conduct of the referendum was not justified. Consequently, not more than twenty to twenty-five percent of the whole registered voters turned out for the referendum. The referendum meant was that General Zia-ul-Haq would remain the President of Pakistan for five years under a civilian setup. (Arif, 1995:229-230) There were no voters on polling stations of

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Lahore till 11.00 am while the majority of polling stations were closed due to the absence of voters. (Parker, 1987:4) There were flaws in the voting process as noted by the neutral observer. The turnout was not as it was being broadcasted by the media. Hence, the referendum got little to no support from the masses.(Haqqani,2005:155) The ballots cast in favor of General Zia-ul-Haq were cast by the administrative staff who were appointed at polling stations and some dead people votes were cast. The registered voters were lesser than the votes cast due to the military control. The people of Punjab had boycotted the referendum process. (Aziz, 2019)

The JUP launched an anti-referendum movement against General Zia-ul-Haq, especially on the eve of *Jumma* Prayer. The focus of the JUP movement was on Punjab, especially the mosques of Lahore, although the Voice of America (Washington) claimed to no effect while BBC claimed that some Muslims *Ulema* demanded the boycott after *Jumma* Prayer under the notion that General Zia-ul-Haq was only using the name of Islam for political purposes. (Jang,9th December 1984) *Ulema*, who were socially and politically conscious, took the stance of the resistance against the politics of Zia-ul-Haq and his misuse of the religion for political means. The SMLA Lahore took strict action and announced at District Council Committee Room, where a gathering of various sections of society was summoned, that any person who would create hurdle in the process of the referendum would be tackled strictly and no lenience would be shown to the violators. The violators would be punished through the military courts within one hour, and that the peace and security would be the first and foremost priority.(Jang 10th December 1984) The administration took every step to make the referendum process successful, whereas, the resistance was also exerting its influence in Punjab. When the official announcement was made about the invocation of the MPO, two persons belonging from Punjab were detained, one was Syed Salamat Ali (Faisalabad) while other was Qazi Ghiasud Din (*Toba Take Singh*). (Jang 11th December 1984)

The resistance against the referendum was an initiative by the people of Punjab and they remained stern on their stance despite the measures taken by the military administration against them. Sheikhpura Police arrested a PPP leader under MPO 16 and sent him to jail on the charge of instigation against the referendum. Moreover, *Okara* Police arrested the MRD Secretary Information, Chaudhry Ali Ahmad Mujahid Advocate, and the previous night (Jang 17th December 1984) on the charge of raising voice against the conduct of a referendum.

The feature of the questionnaire of the referendum was not according to the rules and regulations, and it was a controversial method opted to know the opinion of the people. On 19th December 1984, the questionnaire consisted of various parts and by opting yes; the result would be opposite to the question. The referendum organized by Zia's regime was not according to the international method or

standard of a referendum. (Amjad Jang 17th December 1984) A pattern that supported the dictatorial regime was used on purpose. The question related to the matter of Islam, however, the result would be in the form of an extension to General Zia-ul-Haq for five years. If General Zia used the question for the position of a presidency the question would not have been controversial. There was a possibility that the referendum would increase the rift between the government and its opponents. (Tufail, Jang 18th December 1984) Furthermore, the permission to cast vote without an Identity Card (Jang 18th December 1984) only based on voter records questioned the validity of the referendum. In such cases, there was no possibility to check the votes and total votes that were cast in favor or against and hence would be easy to manipulate for favoring the dictator. The MRD workers not only opposed the referendum but also made people aware, of the cunning step taken by the military setup, through the distribution of pamphlets.

In Sahiwal District, *Pakpattan* Police arrested the MRD Secretary Communication Qasim Bodla on the charge of distributing pamphlets against the referendum with objectionable material. On 14th December, the police arrested him in the premises of *Kachahri* (Court) under JK171. The Jhang Police also arrested Abid Hussain on the charge of distributing pamphlets against the conduct of the referendum. Also, various posters were pasted on the walls in Faisalabad, and pamphlets distributed among the people asking them not to become a part of the referendum. The MRD workers also distributed pamphlets against the referendum through unidentified people, and some were sent through the post. These were used to motivate people to boycott the conduct of the referendum. (Jang, 19th December 1984)

The religious parties and political figures also opposed the referendum openly and supported the stance of MRD in Punjab. The Secretary, Malik Muhammad Akbar Saqi, and Chief Organizer of JUP (Punjab) denied the news that JUP stood with General Zia-ul-Haq on the matter of referendum and would fully support him in the process. Both of them clarified the stance of JUP related to the matter of referendum. They opposed the referendum in an open statement and clarified that all those who supported the referendum in some newspapers would cease being a part of the JUP. Pattoke Minar Masjid's Imam Shabbir Ahmad also addressed the people against the referendum and had to face an investigation by the local administration. After informing the authorities about his address, the local people claimed he was that he was arrested after delivering a speech against conducting the referendum. (Jang 19th December 1984)

On the referendum day, the MRD workers gathered in huge processions against the process of the referendum at *Masjid Shuhada* Lahore. The police moved to disperse the procession but police could not succeed to arrest any worker. The MRD gave an active response related to the referendum and motivated the people not to become a part of it. The Vice President of TI in Gujrat, Chaudhry Muhammad Tufail, and the District Secretary, Syed Safer Hussain Shah, were arrested by the police under the charge of distributing anti-

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referendum pamphlets among the people according to JK171. Furthermore, General Secretary of MRD Muridke, Muhammad Aslam, was detained in Sheikhpura Jail for three months on the charge of distributing pamphlets against the referendum among the people. (Jang 19th December 1984) In *Okara* and *Depalpur*, the police registered cases against unknown persons under MPO 16 and JK171 on the charge of distributing pamphlets against the referendum. Moreover, cases were also registered against the opponents of the referendum at various places in Punjab. In *Cheechawatni*, the police registered a case against two people on the charge of distributing anti-referendum pamphlets among the people. The police remained successful in arresting Saraj Din but could not become successful as others escaped before the arrival of the police. *Sahiwal* Police also registered a case on the complaint of a person who had received pamphlets against the referendum through the postal service. (Jang 21st December 1984)

1985 Elections and Resistance of MRD in Punjab

The people of Punjab had been on the front line since the start of the resistance movement against the dictatorial regime of General Zia-ul-Haq after he imposed martial law on 5th July 1977. Although General Zia-ul-Haq had succeeded to become president for five years, the resistance movement continued. The orthodox advisors of General Zia-ul-Haq advised him to reshape the state and its institutions on a so-called Islamic system and get himself nominated as an *Amir* instead of following the European Democracy. (Arif, 1995:230) The MRD movement had gained influence in Sindh but failed to give expected results due to the hegemony of the landlords in the province. Punjab was the province where a conscious middle class had existed and was easy to mobilize for starting a resistance movement against the dictator. The middle class of Punjab would face the dictator and cause his downfall. Therefore, before the conduct of the general elections, Punjab would become the center of all the political activities in the country. (Jasarat, ed. 2nd January 1985)

After the referendum, the next step was an election that was expected to be conducted the next year. The MRD Convener, Malik Muhammad Qasim, announced a unanimous decision on behalf of the signatories of all the allied parties that the MRD would not become a part of the election process because it was being conducted against the spirit of the Constitution (1973). (Jang 7th November 1984) The MRD argued that conducting an election under (Revised Constitution Order) RCO would merely be a process of gathering the individuals who would follow the instructions of the military administration, and hence, would not be the true representatives of the masses because the civil administration was to operate under the umbrella of the military administration. (Waseem, 1989:413) The political workers struggling against the dictatorship rejected this method of an election on the pretext that the people elected through this process would not be

committed to the welfare and interest of the masses; they would be selected based on their wealth or power. Hence, they would not work for any manifesto or policy for the benefit of the country and its people; and would rather deceive people with various promises. (Kashmiri, 1995:41) The primary objective of the MRD was the restoration of the Constitution (1973) and democracy in its true spirit. However, the method opted by the dictatorial regime was deliberately designed to prolong the reign of a dictator.

In 1985, after the announcement of a non-party based election, the MRD leadership declared after the Jumma Prayer at *Masjid Shuhada* Mall Road Lahore that it would boycott the election process if they were conducted according to the regulations of 5th July 1977 instead of the Constitution (1973). The MRD leaders who addressed the gathering included Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Malik Muhammad Qasim, Aitzaz Ahsan, Rao Rashid, Aslam Ghurdaspuri, Sheikh Muhammad Rafiq, Malik Muhammad Akbar Saki, Maulana Saifud Din Saif, Mustakeem, Liaquat Bahlwal, and Sir Shaukat Ali. Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan argued that Islam cannot be implemented with dishonesty, hypocrisy, cheating, and falsehood. Also, he pointed out that after the referendum there was no possibility of taking part in the elections. (Jasarat, 5th January 1985) The stance taken by the MRD concerning the election was clear that they would not participate in an election under General Zia-ul-Haq if it was not held under the Constitution (1973). In 1985, prior to elections, General Zia-ul-Haq made the 8th Amendment in the Constitution (1973) which ensured his supremacy (Mehdi, 1996:55) and authority over all the state institutions.

The conduct of a non-party based election was the negation of the existence of political parties in the country. The existence of political parties is an integral element of political culture. The regime decided to conduct the election on a non-party basis to curb dissent and weaken any political power that could threaten the interests of the military setup. Hence, the people belonging to any party would be disqualified if such a system was imposed. (Zafar, Jang 2nd October 1982) The opponents of the election argued that the general elections could not be conducted under MLRs and the only solution was the restoration of the Constitution (1973). Also, they planned to resist against the conduct of elections without fear of arrest and harsh punishments. According to a BBC report about the general elections, Pakistan would be going in an election with 1500 of its opposition leaders in imprisonment. (Sartaj, 2009:68) Punjab Minister of Industry, while commenting on the elections, highlighted that there were two sides concerning the conduct of the election: MRD, on one side, as against the conduct of elections under General Zia-ul-Haq and took every step to boycott the election process, whereas, the other side demanded the conduct of an election on a non-party basis, however, the focus of both sides was on the restoration of democracy in the country. Punjab Assembly Debates, 1985:220)

The MRD leadership showed flexibility concerning participation in the general elections of 1985 if General Zia-ul-Haq ensured the restoration of the

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Constitution (1973) when PPP was the primary stake holder of the MRD.(Jasarat,11th January 1985). The MRD leadership took a clear stance against the dictatorial regime and boycotted the elections under General Zia-ul-Haq. As a result, the military administration took action against the MRD leadership in the form of arrest, detention, and banishment from Lahore. The dictatorial regime used all of its force to detract the MRD of its targets; however, the opposition was organizing public gatherings and meetings to stage a collective resistance movement against the dictator in Lahore, Punjab. General Zia-ul-Haq was aware that the MRD would not contest the election; however, he also did not underestimate the influence of MRD on the masses and decided to support the candidates who would be anti-establishment. Also, it was expected that agitation would not be bearable according to the strategy because the military administration was ready to take action against all those who would resist the conduct of a non-party based election. The MRD was playing leading role against non-party elections. Hence, the MRD boycotted elections and launched resistance movement against the elections which would never restore the true spirit of democracy. (Sartaj,2009:64-65).

Firstly,the police raided the residence of Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan at Nicolson Road Lahore at 06.00 am and shifted him to his residence in Muzaffargarh while declaring it a sub-jail for ninety days. Also, Rao Rashid (MRD Leader, Provincial Secretary), Salman Taseer (Secretary Information), and Malik Mukhtar Awan (Ex-Minister) were arrested from their residences at 05:00 am. The police also arrested Malik Hamid Sarfraz (Vice President TI) and Rashid Qureshi (NDP Secretary Information) when they had cast their votes in the bar elections. There was a clash between the lawyers and the police on the eve of their arrest. Abdur Rahim Zahid (President JUI Lahore) and Rana Zulkarnain Advocate were also among those in the custody of the police. Furthermore, the police raided the residence of Shahida Jabeen (Ex-Councilor) and Iftikhar Shahid, however, they could not be arrested so the police arrested their family members (brother of Shahida Jabeen and mother of Iftikhar Shahid); all the MRD leadership, except Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, was shifted to *Kot Lakhpat* Jail.(Jasarat, 11th January 1985).

As the MRD movement gained momentum in Punjab, the military administration imposed restrictions on political mobilization. In *Chiniot*, Section 144 of the Cr.PC was invoked and there was a restriction of the gathering of five or more people, raising slogans, use of loudspeaker, distribution of objectionable pamphlets; the restrictions were on remaining place for two months.(Jasarat,1st February,1985) The objective of imposing such restrictions was to control the mass mobilization against the dictatorial setup. There were several political prisoners detained in different jails of Punjab; details are as follows: 102 in *Kot Lakhpat*, 23 in Rawalpindi Jail, 3 in Jhelum Central Jail, 4 in Faisalabad Central Jail, 4in Mianwali Central Jail,2 in Shahpur District Jail, 10 in Jhang District jail,

5 in Multan District Jail, 22 in Bahawalpur Central Jail, 3 in Sialkot Jail, 15 in Sahiwal Central Jail, 1 in Sheikhpura Jail, and 2 in Attock Jail. The famous MRD leaders who were jailed included Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Malik Muhammad Qasim, Malik Mahraj Khalid, Rana Zulkarnain, Pervaiz Saleh, Abdul Rashid Qureshi, Rao Abdur Rashid, Jahangir Badar, Nawaz Gondal, Afzal Sandhu, Rana Shaukat Mahmood, and Mukhtar Ahmad Awan.(Jasarat,7th Febuary1985) The statistic of imprisoned people indicates that the resistance movement launched by the MRD against the dictatorial regime of General Zia-ul-Haq was in full swing in Punjab. Mian Riaz Hashmat Janjua pointed out that the letters of the political workers from the jails showed that they faced cruel circumstances in the jails, were not given proper medical care, were well kept in "C" class imprisonment status with heavy binds, and were imprisoned in isolation. Also, he argued that they were being treated in a manner crueller than the colonial period. (Punjab Assembly Debates,1987:383).

The political parties resisted the plan to conduct the elections in 1985 on a non-party basis; the political workers affiliated with the MRD conveyed dissent through publication and distribution of pamphlets. The administration took strict measures against and they were arrested by the Lahore Police. All those who resisted against the election process were presented before the Military Court no.79 and were given in judicial remand for ten days. The individuals included Iftikhar Ahmad (MRD Joint Secretary Punjab), Muhammad Aslam Khan (National Liberation Front), and the members of Lahore Art Press like Munawar Hussain Zaidi (Senior Clerk), Bashir Ahmad (Clerk), Dil Muhammad (Painter and Owner of the Press), as well as, Muhammad Mohsin (President NDP) could not be arrested. There was a case registered against all of them under MLR 13 in the *Anarkali* Police Station.(Jasarat,9th February 1985).

The struggle of MRD was based upon dialogue and democratic norms as the MRD relied upon the support of the masses. Kaswar Gardezi (MRD Convener), during a press conference in Lahore, expressed that the MRD's decision of not participating in the election was due to the support of the people. The MRD was formed after the support of people and it relied depend upon the democratic norms of politics, not upon aggression. Furthermore, he added that if the government opts for dialogue, the MRD would give a positive response on the condition that the Constitution (1973) is restored.(Jasara,14th February1985) During a session of the Provincial Assembly, Makhdoom Zada Syed Ahsan Shah expressed that the dictatorship had been imposed in the country for eight years and that although it seemed like a civil administration, it functioned under the whims of the dictatorial regime. The purpose of conducting the election on a non-party basis was to formulate a civil administration that works under the shadow of a dictatorial regime. (Punjab Assembly Debates,1985:37)

Despite the democratic gesture given by MRD, the administration continued to adopt a strict attitude against their leadership. Syed Walayt Hussain Gaedezi (MRD Convener Punjab) was detained for ninety days in *Kot Lakhpat* Jail.

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Moreover, the administration also adopted a strict attitude with Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan who was not allowed to meet other detained political prisoners. This was highlighted when Nawabzada's son (Iftikhar Ahmad Khan) and nephew (Sajad Khan) went to see him in *Kot Lakhpat* Jail. It was inhuman to detain a political leader in total isolation. (Jasarat, 18th February 1985) Chaudhry Muhammad Ashraf (President PDP Punjab), in his press conference, condemned the harsh attitude adopted by the administration concerning their conduct with Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan. He argued that Nawabzada was above seventy years old and according to the law he was to be treated differently. He also pointed out that Nawabzada was not given the facility of medical treatment. He demanded the imprisoned leadership to be either released or tried through the court. Shahid Mirza (Local President PPP Bahawalpur) was detained under the MLR for ninety days; he was arrested from the residence of Rafiq Ahmad. (Jasarat, 19th February 1985)

On the Election Day (of Provincial Assembly) MRD planned to gather at *Masjid Shuhada* Mall Road Lahore. Consequently, five prominent MRD leaders were arrested; they were Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan, Dr. Pervaiz Aslam, Khalid Rashid (TI), Mansoor Malik (PPP), and Naveed Anwar Naveed (PDP). (Jasarat, 1st March 1985) The leadership of MRD was resilient in its stance concerning the restoration of the Constitution (1973) and demanded that the election be organized according to it. MRD's concerns against the conduct of election (under the constitutional amendments) proved to be right as the dictatorial regime was prolonged and the representative assemblies would only act as the rubber stamp according to the desires of General Zia-ul-Haq (CMLA). The PPP rejected the elections organized under martial law and all the workers, during the Central Executive Meeting in Lahore, decided to continue their struggle for the restoration of democracy throughout the country. They also supported the struggle by lawyers, students, women, and political workers (Jasarat, 26th April 1985) who had joined the resistance movement against General Zia-ul-Haq who had amended the Constitution to suit his purpose. The dictatorial regime continued even after the elections; Nawabzada Muzaffar Ali commenting on the situation said that the existence of martial law over the civil representatives was an injustice to the Assembly because all the procedure was performed for establishing civil supremacy. (Punjab Assembly Debates, 1985:250) This indicated that the dictatorial setup was still influencing the administrative affairs of the country. Malik Muhammad Abbas Khan Khokhar expressed that the citizens were ready to carry the bier of the dictatorial regime and as early as possible and that it would be beneficial for the nation. (Punjab Assembly Debates, 1985:1323)

The movement initiated by MRD had spread in other parts of Punjab; the workers supported MRD's stance and presented themselves for imprisonment in protest against the government which had seemingly set up a civilian but was practically in hands of the dictator. The MRD workers organized a procession near

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Gol Masjid Chowk (Okara) and after the police action number of the imprisoned MRD workers raised to sixty. Also, Mr. Salahud Din Malik and Mr. Ghulam Dastigar were arrested at *Yadgarh Chowk Sheikhpura* when they were chanting slogans against the government and demanded the restoration of the Constitution (1973) in its original shape, and the release of detained political workers. In *Bahawalnagar*, the police arrested Manzoor Ahmad Mohal and Fareed Gondal while they were trying to initiate a procession from *Nur Mahal Chowk*. During the MRD processions in Bahawalnagar, Chishtian, Haroonabad, and Fort Abbas almost eighty workers were arrested. Also, Ch. Khurshid and Malik Manzoor Ahmad were arrested at Regal Chowk Faisalabad. Delivering a speech before his arrest, Mr. Khurshid supported the stance of MRD for the restoration of the Constitution (1973) and demanded the release of detained political workers. Afterward, when he was arrested and being boarded in a police van, he chanted slogans against the dictatorial regime, (Pakistan Times, 23rd August 1986) staying loyal to the resistance movement in Punjab.

The MRD workers hailing from *Haroonabad* were supportive of the stance against the dictatorial regime in Punjab which had become the center of the movement. The workers arrested for chanting slogans against the government were Rao Muhammad Ajmal, Mr. Imdad Ali Shah, Muhammad Sarwar, Asghar Ali, and Abdul Hameed Qureshi. (PakistanTimes, 25th August 1986) Rana Muhammad Afzal (PPP Additional General-Secretary) was detained by the *Sahiwal* administration under MPO on orders of the magistrate; he was shifted to Central Jail *Sahiwal*. (The Mashriq, 26th February 1988) The intent behind all these measures was to divert the attention of the resistance and to demoralize them enough to quit the movement. However, the result was contrary to the expectations of the administration.

MRD Resistance Against Zia on Issues

MRD organized a meeting against dictatorial regime the main participants were Nawabzada Nasrulla Khan, Sheikh Muhammad Rafiq. The participants' condemned the whole regime of Zia-ul-Haq and gave resemblance to the explosion of suspension of the constitution, the explosion of provisional constitution order, the explosion, the referendum, and a non-party elections MRD passed a resolution which consisted of the following points; first and major demand was the resignation of General Zia-ul-Haq from the post COAS while other demands were judicial inquiry of Rawalpindi incident under the supervision of Supreme Court senior judge and the result of inquiry would be shared with the people, MRD demanded from CMLA General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq took the responsibility of the incident and left the designation of COAS. In emergence meeting MRD demanded the inquiry within fifteen to twenty days and would share to the mass and the inquiry would be on open grounds and there would be no secret (Mashriq, 13th April 1988) the tragic incident became the central issue in all sphere

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of life. The incident weakened the position of Zia-ul-Haq on the matters related to the administration and policy especially Afghan war efforts in the near country capital. (Belokrenitsky & V.N.Moskalenko 2013:296).

General Zia-ul-Haq (CMLA) dissolved the assemblies of Pakistan through his press conference by using article 58(2b) and Sharia Ordinance would be implemented in the country and that the process of election would be completed within ninety days. He also expressed that assemblies had been unsuccessful to give protection to the citizens of Pakistan and targets which were set at the time of elections, it was necessary to take the step. According to CMLA, Senate would remain as its status but the provincial assemblies would also be dissolved with immediate effect. (Mashriq,30th May 1988) The dissolution of the assembly frustrated the politicians and the people inhaled to the various fields of life. After CMLA action the sentiment of resistance refreshed against the dictatorial regime of Zia-ul-Haq and supported the decision of MRD not to participate in the election under martial law and Sharia Ordinance was not acceptable. Thirteen religious parties organized a conference under due to the motivation of JUI (Fazal ur Rehman) at Lahore and rejected step of General Zia-ul-Haq to implement Sharia Ordinance after the dissolution of assemblies and declared it political tact to prolong dictatorial regime (Kashmiri,1995:181)

The step of general Zia-ul-Haq was considered to undemocratic that he took steps to dissolve assemblies in the political history of the country whenever he was not in a strong position against the opposition. (Kashmiri: 295) General Secretary Punjab Democratic Youth Organization Mr.Imtiaz Rasheed Qurashi commented on the step of General Zia-ul-Haq to dissolve assemblies proved the right step of MRD not to participate in the election which was conducted under martial law in 1985 he also presented congratulation to the central committee he further emphasized upon political leader move towards an alliance for the future election which announced by CMLA. The political activities accelerated after the announcement of elections. The prominent politicians like SM Zafar, (Acting President National Peoples Party), JUP Secretary Information, Pir Ejaz Hashim and leaders of JI Chaudhary Ejaz Jilani met Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan at his residence to discuss the situation (Mashriq,31st May 1988) which was prevailing after the dismissal of assemblies and conduction of elections for the further assemblies on the national and provincial level.

After the dissolution of the Junejo Government, the stance of MRD became stronger according to the situation. Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan expressed in a statement that MRD had a clear stance related to the conduct of elections. The stand of MRD related to the 1985 elections was right because under the dictatorship the election could not be according to the whim of the people. The restoration of the Constitution (1973) was the main demand of MRD and agreement between NDP and PPP was also the restoration of the Constitution. MRD would decide according to the situation, till CMLA had not gestured about

the nature of the forthcoming elections, MRD would take the right decision, as the CMLA had announced the *Shariat* Ordinance and afterward all the factor related to *Shariat* would be creating hurdle aftermath so MRD would decide according to the prevailing conditions after the dissolution of Zia's own selected government under Junejo. MRD became reliable after the forthcoming because the stance of MRD given confidence to the parties after the dissolution of the Junejo Government under the condition when three years had passed. Malik Muhammad Qasim inhaled from the ML Chatta Group expressed in a statement that MRD parties had got confidence under the condition when CMLA General Zia-ul-Haq had dissolved his selected assembly. MRD parties had decided all the parties would co-operate in the matters of the election if the election conduct after the restoration of the Constitution (1973). If the election process continued on a non-party basis MRD would not take part as like the elections of 1985 (Mashriq, 9th June 1988) which caused the dissolution of the Assembly

Conclusion

MRD remained an active symbol of resistance against the dictatorial regime of Zia ul Haq and Punjab remained the centre of resistance under the platform of MRD. Though Zia ul Haq proved himself to be strong by all means but after the formation of MRD he had to give space to democratic pattern in spite of he opted controlled democracy but MRD stood on the side of right option and played a vital role of opposition against a dictator when it was uphill task to raise against him and political leaders and workers had to bear hardships of imprisonment during dictatorial regime of General Zia ul Haq. All kinds of hardships could not demoralize the move of opposition against a dictator when he had strong hold on all affairs of state. They continued their struggle for the restoration of democracy in real spirit not in controlled way. The dictatorship launched elections but MRD members did not participate in contest under the stance that election process under a dictator could not be transparent which proved right when the assemblies of Muhammad Khan Junejo dissolved under various charge but in reality dictatorial regime did not want implement the real spirit of democracy. This incident prove the consciousness of MRD against dictatorial regime and MRD stance not to participate in General Election 1985 which were organized under non party system. Afterwards MRD continued its struggle till the end of dictatorial regime of Zia ul Haq.

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