

The Non-Violent Democratic Resistance in Pakistan: The Role of Nusrat Bhutto (1977-81)

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ABSTRACT

There was an opposition to Zia regime by the Movement for the Restoration of the Democracy (MRD) which was considered as a non-violent resistance movement in terms of tactics and strategies. The main concern of this research paper is to highlight the role of Nusrat Bhutto for the revival of democracy in Pakistan, as she supported the concept of non-violence in her struggle against dictatorship. She did not hesitate to form an alliance with her husband's bitter political opponents for the national cause. Her role in the MRD has received less scholarly attention in Pakistan and abroad as compared to that of Benazir Bhutto's role and other political personalities of South Asia. Although Begum Bhutto was the founding leader of the MRD yet her efforts for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan are unidentified. No substantial research work has been done in this domain, and this paper endeavours to display the influence as well as the importance of Begum Nusrat Bhutto in the non-violent resistance for democracy in Pakistan.

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Introduction

Historians and political scientists explain that people of Pakistan have been resisting against the dictatorship and struggling for restoration of democracy in Pakistan. The political alliances were formed by different political parties for the establishment of democratic system in Pakistan. However, these political movements could not contribute enough for the empowerment of political institutions. The PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement), the ARD (Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy) and Charter of Democracy (CoD) attempted to introduce democracy in the shape of dominant political party system.

In the light of Gene Sharp's concept of non-violent action and analysis of Global Non-violent Database, it is argued that the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) was an effective struggle against dictatorship in Pakistan. The people of Pakistan played an eminent role in this struggle. In terms of tactics, strategies and conditions, the MRD movement was a non-violent resistance which was launched by pro-democratic political parties. As the fact goes that in this non-violent resistance, Nusrat Bhutto's role was remarkable who mobilized party workers and people from all over the country against the Martial Law of General Zia-ul-Haq. The party workers took to the streets of Pakistan to generate pressure against Zia regime.

To gain the support of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), Zia promised political assurances, but he did not keep his words. He assured the PNA leaders for the introduction of Islamization and announcement of election schedule. However, he did not announce any deadline for the elections. Faiz Khoso argues that the progress of Islamization process was slow and did not meet the expectations of PNA. Disappointed by the actions of Zia, the PNA decided to launch movement against his authoritarian rule.¹ It is also a reality that the PNA had been supporting

1 Faiz Khoso, *Kari Kakar Haith Mon Jhaidaindai Chadiya: Tarkihee Halachal MRD* [Sindhi: Fighting Spirit Under Dark Cloud: Historical Movement MRD], (Hyderabad: My Publication, 2013), 28.

Zia since July 5, 1977, but also confronted him on several issues. Zia wanted Islamic system of his own choice which was not acceptable to the PNA and other political parties.

Final break up between Zia and the PNA took place in October 1979 and nearly all political parties stood in stark opposition against Zia government. There were still few political parties which supported Zia either for fear of return of the Pakistan Peoples Party to power or for their own vested political objectives. The Pir Pagaro Sayed Shah Mardan Shah II of the Functional Muslim League continued to provide support to Zia and the former conceived himself as the man of General Headquarters (GHQ).² The Jamaat-i-Islami also strengthened the hands of Zia and its student wing assisted the government in controlling the situation under the patronage and protection of police.

Despite antagonism with Zia and opposition to his so-called Islamization, the PNA and other parties which broke from the alliance with military regime did not find it easy to come to terms with the leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party. Hamid Khan opines that there was the recent history of hostility towards the PPP, including cooperation with the military junta for execution of Bhutto.³ There was communication and coordination gap between the PPP and the PNA. In September 1980, a session of Central Executive Committee of the PPP was held under the presidentship of Begum Nusrat Bhutto in which Benazir Bhutto, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, Mairaj Khalid, Farooque Leghari, Makhdoom, Khaliq-u-Zaman, Yahya Bakhtiar, Aga Ghulam Nabi Pathan, Piyar Ali Allana and others participated. The agenda regarding the formation of an alliance with the PNA was discussed.⁴ Finally, the political leadership of PPP decided to form alliance with the PNA for the restoration of democracy on the one hand and on other the PNA was in search of an alliance against Zia regime.

2 Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 263.

3 Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*, 263.

4 Khoso, *Kari Kakar Haith Mon Jhaidaindai Chadiya*, 27.

Later on, the PPP invited the PNA and a joint session of both was called regarding the formation of an alliance at 70 Clifton Karachi, the residence of Z. A. Bhutto family. This session restored communication between the two. Mehmood Ali Kasuri, Nawabzada Nasurullah Khan, Moulana Fazal-ur-Rehman and other leaders of the PNA joined the session which paved the way for the formation of MRD movement. Keeping aside all the previous conflicts and grievances, both the political forces showed desire to form an alliance for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan.⁵ Consequently, both moved to develop communication for the sake of democracy.

The first meeting of alliance held under the presidentship of Nusrat Bhutto. The leaders who were the part of alliance condoled with Nusrat Bhutto the death of Z. A. Bhutto. Despite high emotions, Begum Nusrat Bhutto tolerated and agreed to form an alliance with opponents of her husband.⁶ Faiz Khoso, a Sindhi author and columnist, states that in the first meeting it was a shock for the MRD leadership when leader of Pakistan Muslim League Pir Pagara Shah Sayed Ali Mardan Shah II refused to sign the charter of MRD without giving any reasonable cause.⁷ Another controversy appeared over the wording of proposed MRD charter that whether elections of 1977 were rigged or not, whether execution or assassination should be used in describing Bhutto's death.⁸ Finally, all the contradictions were kept aside and decided unanimously to move forward against military dictatorship.

Establishment of MRD

After a series of meetings and long negotiations among all political forces, the issue of Bhutto's execution or assassination as well as all the other differences were kept

5 Ilyas Shakir, *MRD Kee Kamiyabian aur Nakamiyan* [Urdu: Successes and Failures of MRD] (Lahore: Ferozsons Publishing House, 1991), 46.

6 Badar Abro, *Jail Jee Diary* [Sindhi: Prison Diary] (Karachi: Ibn Hassan Publication House, 1990), 39.

7 Khoso, *Kari Kakar Haith Mon Jhaidaindai Chadiya*, 29.

8 Benazir Bhutto, *Daughter of Destiny: An Autobiography* (UK: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 165.

aside and importance was given to the issue of elections which were delayed by Zia regime. Consequently, an alliance of the political parties was formed, who had not been or no longer were attached with the PNA, dominated by the PPP, was given a final shape as Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) in February, 1981.⁹ It took long period of six months to finalize the charter of MRD from 1980 to February 1981. To crack down the dead lock, ten parties whose leaders desired to join the hands of MRD agreed and signed the charter of MRD. The news of signing the MRD charter was broadcasted by the BBC Urdu News Service that stimulated the people of Pakistan and indicated to launch protests against the military rule.¹⁰

Benazir Bhutto shares her memories in her book:

I was astonished to see my father's opponents who were making hue and cries against my father's government and demanding the death of my father, now sitting in his house to strike a political deal with his widow, chairperson of the PPP, and his daughter. What a vague game politics is?¹¹

Under the umbrella of MRD, the Pakistan Peoples Party along with other regional parties was determined to launch a non-violent struggle in the form of agitations, protests, demonstrations, strikes, hunger strikes, rallies, marches, play cards and processions against the dictatorial rule.

The Member Political Parties

The Pakistan Peoples Party's Nusrat Bhutto, the Pakistan Democratic Party's Nawab Nasurrallah Khan, the National Democratic Party's Shair Baz Mazare, the Tehrik-i-Istiqlal's Mehmood Ali Kasoori, the Pakistan Muslim League's Khawaja Khariuddin Qasim, the Quami Mahaz-i-Azadi's Mairaj Muhammad Khan, the Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party's Fahtayab Ali Khan, the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam's Moulana Fazal Rehman and the Kashmir Muslim

9 Muhammad Asghar Khan, *We've Learnt Nothing from History; Pakistan: Politics and Military Power* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 184.

10 Abro, *Jail Je Diary*, 37.

11 Bhutto, *Daughter of the East: An Autobiography*, 166.

Conference's Sardar Muhammad Qayoom signed a declaration of MRD and reaffirmed their faith in democracy.¹² Later, the PNP (Pakistan National Party), Awami Tehrik (Formerly Sind Awmi Tehrik), the NAP (National Pakhtunkhwa Party) also became the part of this struggle against dictatorial rule.

The MRD under the leadership of Chairperson Nusrat Bhutto and co-chairperson of PPP, Benazir Bhutto, mobilized party workers and people across the country. The party workers took to the streets to generate pressure against Zia regime. The MRD sponsored the four point agenda programme which was aimed at pressurizing the unrepresentative government to (i) lift the Martial Law (ii) functionalize the abrogated constitution (iii) release all political prisoners held under false charges (iv) announce the schedule of general elections.¹³ From the inception, all elements of the MRD were united on this four point agenda, although every element had its own different political ideology. The MRD movement got immense response in the form of unlimited processions, protests, effective demonstrations and huge agitations against Zia regime throughout Pakistan. To curb non-violent action, military dictator used strict measures and introduced a number of ordinances that curtailed the powers of parliament.

Nusrat Bhutto's Role for the Restoration of Democracy

Lawrence Ziring writes that Zia's complicity in the *coup* that expelled Bhutto out of power, his later role in Bhutto's inhumane imprisonment, his refusal to spare Bhutto's life, or even after the execution, his decision to deny Benazir Bhutto and her mother the opportunity to attend Bhutto's funeral were actions that could not only be answered with vengeance. Benazir did not picture herself a hateful woman.¹⁴ However, the experience of her father's death was

12 Khoso, *Kare Kakkar Heth Mon Jharrendea Chaddiya*, 26.

13 Shahid Javaid Burki, *Pakistan Under the Military: Eleven Years of Zia-ul-Haq* (Francisco: West View Press, 1991), 34.

14 Lawrence Ziring, "Fatima Jinnah and Benazir Bhutto," *Asian Affairs* 21, no. 2, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30172211> (Accessed: 11/12/2012 02:00).

etched indelibly on her inner consciousness. Furthermore, Corinne J. Naden writes that with heavy blooded tears and under heavy guard, Nusrat and Benazir Bhutto paid visit to the unmarked grave of their husband and father. He was buried in the family burial ground in the village Kadhi Khuda Bux at the distance of 15 kilo meters from Larkana.¹⁵ After short moments, the two women were permitted to return to their home at Karachi. It was their courage that Benazir took initial step in earnest to carry on the mission of her father.

General Zia was apprehensive of growing support for Begum Bhutto and her daughter. So, to dent the popularity of Bhutto, he kept Begum Bhutto and Benazir under house arrest at Al-Murtaza House Larkana for six months. Shortly after the one-year anniversary of Bhutto's death, Benazir and her mother were released without explanation or ceremony. They returned to Karachi. At this time Benazir and Begum Bhutto were enough conscious that government observed their every movement. To release the tension, Begum Bhutto advised her daughter to go to Larkana and look after the family lands. This was purely a man's profession, but her father was dead and her brothers were in exile, so Benazir had got no alternative.¹⁶ However, Benazir Bhutto entered into the politics of Pakistan. Throughout Zia's power, Nusrat Bhutto was treated with strict measures including punishments, but she was determined to fight against military dictator.

In Mercedes Padrino views, the Bhutto women were not ignored by the Zia government, however their phones were tapped, they were watched by intelligence agencies and their visitors were photographed and had their license plates registered.¹⁷ Begum Bhutto was suspicious that they might be detained again. Under Martial Law, military courts with the power to try and punish civilians were established. The

15 Corinne J. Naden, *Benazir Bhutto: Leading Women* (New York: Marshall Canvendish Benchmark Publishers, 2011), 44.

16 Naden, *Benazir Bhutto, Leading Women*, 46.

17 Mercedes Padrino, *Women in Politics: Benazir Bhutto* (America: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 45.

press was censored, and it became illegal to express opinions against the government. About 20,000 political opponents were arrested between 1978 and 1985.¹⁸ Many prisoners were flogged; others were tortured. International human rights organizations documented numerous cases of abuse. Labour protests were also banned by army.

Former worker of the Jeay Sindh Student Federation, Israr Ahmed Khokhar claims that Begum Nusrat Bhutto proved to be a chain of unity among the provinces of Pakistan. Despite hardships and critical circumstances, she succeeded to unite people of Pakistan and brought diverse political forces on one platform. Sardar Nawab Nasarullah Khan, Asghar Khan and Bhutto worked under different political ideologies. However, Begum Nusrat Bhutto brought the opponents of Bhutto under the umbrella of MRD and succeeded to constitute united front against dictatorship.¹⁹ The concept developed in the minds of common people of Sindh that a Sindhi helpless and widow woman united diverse political forces and people of Pakistan under the umbrella of MRD for the sake of national interest. It happened first time in the political history of Pakistan in post-partition era.

The prime strategy of the military regime was to discourage and restrict the press (including censorship) from publishing the views of dissenting politicians. The private printers ran on the risk of heavy financial and legal penalties for printing such views in the form of booklets or pamphlets. There were also restrictions on the movement of political leaders, as they were not allowed to travel intercity or interprovincial, and purpose was to stop them establishing contacts with each other.²⁰

18 Padrino, *Women in Politics: Benazir Bhutto*, 45.

19 Interview with Israr Ahmed Khokhar, Oldest worker of the Jeay Sindh Student Federation (Currently Assistant Professor of Commerce Government Degree College, Shahdadkot).

20 Saeed Shafqat, "Democracy in Pakistan: Value Change and Challenges of Institution Building," *The Pakistan Review* 37, no. 4, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41261058> (Accessed: 11/12/2013 02:32).

Despite restrictions, the think-tank of MRD decided to call a secret meeting on February 27, 1981. General Zia knew that he was in corner. He closed all universities across the country and imposed ban on the political activities, demonstrations and meetings of more than five people. He reacted quickly; arresting many of the MRD leaders on February 21, 1981. Other members of the MRD and the PPP were issued restriction orders expelling them from Punjab province and their entrance was deemed as prejudicial to public safety and maintenance of public order as well as public interests.²¹ The Governor of Punjab issued restriction orders regarding the entry of Begum Nusrat, Benazir Bhutto and other political leaders of member parties of the MRD in Punjab province. The main reason was to foil the secret meeting of MRD and stop the demonstrations against the military regime. However, Zia could not curb the huge wave of the opposition.

Qamar Bhatti adds that the search operation was launched in Punjab to nab the MRD workers. However, Begum Nusrat Bhutto and others succeeded to break up the restrictions of the police and reached Lahore to attend the secret meeting of MRD. The police raided the meeting and arrested the members including Begum Nusrat Bhutto that held one day before the schedule at the home of Mehmood Ali Kasuri. Begum Nusrat Bhutto was expelled from Punjab to Karachi (Sindh).²² Later on, key leaders of the MRD including, Air Marshal (R) Asghar Khan, Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto, Nawabzada Nusrullah Khan and General (R) Tikka Khan had been under house arrest for periods ranging from three months to about four years. The political workers were periodically arrested under the Martial Law Regulations whereby no writ can be filed in the regular

21 Bhutto, *Daughter of Destiny: An Autobiography*, 167-68.

22 Qamar Bhatti, *MRD Tahreek* [Urdu: MRD Movement] (Hyderabad: Publisher Dahar Sindhi, 1984), 32.

civilian courts for their release. Many were sentenced to imprisonment or flogging by the military courts.²³

Nusrat Bhutto's Appeal to the People of Punjab

The political leaders of Punjab who belonged to the MRD strengthened the hands of non-violent struggle in the beginning of the movement. A large number of political workers along with political leaders were arrested from Punjab province. Although the Punjab PPP political leadership failed to convince the common people to come on the streets against military regime yet other factors were also responsible for the low response to the call of MRD in Punjab. Saeed Shafqat writes that Zia regime not only attempted to facilitate the people of Punjab with jobs and other sources but also employed the policy of divide and rule to alienate the masses from the MRD movement which created misconceptions in the minds of the people of Sindh. The policies of dictator expanded the cleavages between Sindh and Punjab and within the MRD it led to politics of blame which left negative impacts on the unity of the movement.²⁴

There was lukewarm response to the MRD's call in Punjab as compared to Sindh province. When Punjab did not respond enthusiastically for the Sindhi demonstrations, Nusrat Bhutto warmly appealed to the people of Punjab to rise and strengthen the anti-government campaign. This appeal did not receive much response in Punjab. Even the PPP supporters in Punjab were unable to launch a massive movement because an impression had been created that the Sindhi movement was being waged by Sindhi nationalists or even potential secessionists.²⁵ To the people of Punjab this

23 Shafqat, "Democracy in Pakistan: Value Change and Challenges of Institution Building".

24 Saeed Shafqat, *Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan: From Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Benazir Bhutto*, 215.

25 Khalid Bin Sayeed, "Pakistan in 1983: Internal Stress More Serious than External Problems," *Asian Survey* 24, no. 2, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2644441> (Accessed: 22/05/2015 05: 29).

did not look like a movement entirely to the restoration of democracy.

It was believed, and correctly so, that if it could get the movement to spill into other provinces, particularly the Punjab, it would finally be able to oust Zia from political arena. In Rakisits's opinion, this is where the leadership of MRD made a blunder as they did not examine the political situation objectively in the rest of the country, believing that the three other provinces would automatically come to support the issue which was generally perceived as provincial in character.²⁶ Consequently, the initial phase of MRD movement failed to gain strong response against military regime. Apart, there were many different causes for the tepid response of the people of Punjab to the anti-government demonstrations.

Exile of Nusrat Bhutto

During the non-violent resistance, the family of Bhutto (Begum Nusrat and Benazir) was kept under arrest. Benazir Bhutto complained that the western media was being informed by regime that women of Bhutto family are under house arrest. However, it was contrary to the fact. House arrest in Pakistan is quite informal; the detained person was being allowed to pay visits from friends and family, press interviews, local and long distance telephone calls, books, and sometimes even a quick drive or outside meetings are also not restricted.²⁷ Due to severe treatment, Nusrat Bhutto's health deteriorated.

Nusrat Bhutto was suffering from lungs disease and Benazir was psychologically tortured and forced to leave the country. Thus Nusrat Bhutto was not in a position to resist against military dictator. In January 1981, Benazir was taken to see her mother who was seriously ill with cancer and was

26 C. G. P. Rakisits, "Centre-Province Relations in Pakistan Under President Zia: The Government's and Opposition's Approaches," *Pacific Affairs* 61, no. 1, (Spring, 1988) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2758073> (Accessed: 17/10/2014 04: 06).

27 Bhutto, *Daughter of Destiny: An Autobiography*, 26-27.

finally permitted to leave Pakistan on the medical grounds.²⁸ After detention, Begum Bhutto was released in July 1981 and she left abroad for the treatment. After few years, Benazir was also released on medical grounds due to international pressure against the Zia regime. Nusrat Bhutto was settled in Geneva and loved to settle her daughter in Switzerland.

Rural Character of the MRD

The MRD was more rural in character than urban because Sindh is the most urbanized and developed province of Pakistan, while its native population is marginalized after Baloch population. In Adeel Khan's views, except Sindh no other province of Pakistan is divided between urban development and rural deprivation. It is because of development in industrial and commerce sectors in mega cities of Sindh province, this development and awareness enables Sindh to produce the highest per capita income in Pakistan.²⁹ Furthermore, Tahir Amin writes that Sindh's rural native population is in agitations and protests for gaining their fundamental rights. This disparity has divided Sindh along ethnic lines.³⁰ The urban population is migrants (Mohajirs) who have been providing support base to the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) in elections while rural population has been providing firm mandate to the PPP. The MRD involved rural character because the people of rural areas strengthened the movement and resisted against Zia tactics.

The MRD was led by the leadership of PPP and the people of rural Sindh participated in this mass movement against the dictator. Adeel Khan claims that the MRD was more rural in character than urban and involved different

28 Padrino, *Women in Politics: Benazir Bhutto*, 37.

29 Adeel Khan, *Politics of Identity: Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications India (Pvt) Ltd., 2005), 150.

30 Tahir Amin, *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International Factors* (Rawalpindi: Pap-Board Printers (Pvt) Ltd., 1988), 177.

characteristics in the political history of Pakistan. In the initial phase of the movement, so spontaneous and widespread was the unrest in interior Sindh that not only were the military rulers perturbed, but even the MRD leadership itself was shocked.³¹ Qamar Bhatti argues that the PPP leadership with the support of Pirs of Sindh succeeded to bring out the common man on the street against military regime. However, the PPP does not deserve the whole credit, as it was also Sindh Awami Tahreek's political leadership that provided organizational support base to the processions, strikes, hunger strikes, marches, demonstrations and agitations.³²

MRD: A Non-violent Resistance

Gene Sharp scholar in the field of non-violent theory has introduced 198 methods of non-violent action including protests, protesting songs, marches, religious processions, strikes, hunger strikes, student strikes, rallies, and demonstrations.³³ Global Non-violent Database has been assessing the movements throughout the world in the light of Gene Sharps' suggested 198 techniques of non-violent action. Global Non-violent Database not only examines the movements in terms of tactics and strategies but also in terms of survival, growth, failure and success. It has also examined, evaluated and declared the Philippine People Power Movement and the MRD as non-violent struggles in terms of tactics, strategies, survival, growth, success and failure and suggested points for these movements.³⁴ In the framework of Global Non-violent Database, the MRD is on the criteria of non-violent action.

According to analysis and criteria of Global Non-violent Database, the MRD stands with successful non-violent

31 Khan, *Political of Identity: Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan*, 150.

32 Bhatti, *MRD Tahreek*, 32.

33 Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Non-Violent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publication, 1973), 136.

34 Non-violent Intervention in Philippines during military clash, 1986, <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>

movements of the world in terms of tactics, conditions and strategies of non-violent theory. In terms of success and achieving goals the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy in Pakistan obtained one point out of six points and in terms of growth it succeeded to gain 0.5 points out of one point. No points were given for survival level although people of interior Sindh resisted military's repressive actions and survived for months for the cause of democracy. Global Non-violent Database indicated that the campaign was able to gain its goals and demands although it got one point for the success because of having pressurized Zia to form committees to look into issue.³⁵ The movement looks to have been dissolved in late 1983, but it was able to boycott elections in 1984 which shows that it had some level of survival.

The assemblies of protest or support, strikes, hunger strikes, demonstrations, non-violent marches and rallies, singing protest songs, noncooperation by enforcement agents, prayer and worship were used in Philippine People Power Movement, explained by Global Non-violent Database. The MRD activists used banners, posters, displayed communications, singing Sindhi protesting as well as Sindhi national songs, consumers' boycott, sit-ins, non-violent slogans, marches, boycott of elections, celebration of black day and volunteer arrests to develop pressure against the military regime.³⁶ In fact, the people of Pakistan wished to get rid of military dictatorial rule. In this connection they took the streets of Pakistan to unseat dictator Zia.

Conclusion

Pakistan is regarded as a democratic state, but it has been under the rule of dictatorship for quite long time. In the light of theory of non-violent action, this paper concludes that the MRD was a peaceful, non-violent nationwide mass mobilization aimed at restoring democracy in Pakistan. The

35 Pakistanis in Sindhi Struggle for Democracy, 1981-1984, <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>

36 Pakistanis in Sindhi Struggle for Democracy.

people from all provinces joined hands to strengthen the pro-democratic alliance. Although General Zia controlled the mass mobilizing from spreading throughout Pakistan yet he failed to stop the emergence of second phase of mass mobilization in the shape of civil disobedience in 1983.

In the history of non-violent resistances, the name of Nusrat Bhutto is remembered because she was a woman of courage who mobilized world opinion against dictatorship in Pakistan. Begum Nusrat Bhutto proved to be a chain of unity among all the federating units of Pakistan. Despite hardships and strict measures, she dealt with political opponents of her husband and united divergent political forces under the umbrella of MRD. At the start, the movement got massive response at national level, but lost its equilibrium in other provinces within few months because the rest of the founding leadership including Nusrat Bhutto was arrested.

This non-violent resistance for democracy had distinct characteristics and was more effective struggle as compared to other non-violent resistance for democracy in Pakistan. The MRD had its own particular dynamics in politics that had generated pressure on Zia for holding elections. Military regime succeeded to curb the struggle in other provinces, but in Sindh it turned into huge agitations, demonstrations, processions, boycotts and strikes. The MRD activists used all peaceful measures in their fight for the restoration of democracy. Zia suppressed the mass mobilization with full might. However, authoritarian rule failed to crush pro-democracy forces. At last, Zia declared the four tier election formula which was a crucial step to facilitate the democratic transition in Pakistan.