**Some Memories of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy**

[Pervaiz Saleh](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/pervaiz-saleh/)

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The Movement for the Restoration of Democracy was formed in 1981 when as many as eleven political parties joined hands to get rid of the then martial law administrator President Zia-ul-Haq. He and his government are still notorious for having destroyed the socio-economic-political fabric of the Pakistani liberal and secular society, as had been envisaged by Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Through his manipulation, he paved the road for the hanging or what some may call the judicial murder of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Still, he was unable to suppress the historic 1983 agitation organised by the MRD. Therein, literally hundreds of thousands of people–many led by Makhdooms of Hala and other top feudal landlords–had come out on the streets to pour support for the Movement.

This literally shook the brutal Zia regime e.g as per a decision in Zia’s cabinet, the then Defense Minister was sent to my house who even offered me the so-called bonanza of a cabinet portfolio. I still remember the fear in his eyes when I had refused and said, “You please take care of yourself. You people will face the wrath of the people and your days are numbered.”

Despite hundreds and thousands of us being hanged, lashed, imprisoned, and even tortured at the notorious Lahore Fort, MRD workers stood firm.

The marathon agitations in Sindh and the voluntary courting of arrests on a daily basis (accompanied by more agitations) created an irrevocable dent in the Zia regime, like the theory of dialectical materialism, wherein the boiling point takes its time to change into a gas. “Rome was not built in a day.”

Despite hundreds and thousands of us being hanged, lashed, imprisoned, and even tortured at the notorious Lahore Fort, the workers stood firm. Their conviction remained unwavering and they walked steadfastly toward democracy and human rights.

Since the main leadership of the MRD had been arrested, I was assigned the task of going underground and maintaining the e momentum of the Movement in full force in the face of the incessant/continuous arrests. Though it was an arduous task, I honoured my commitment. Moving from one house to another; addressing press conferences clandestinely in order to maintain the momentum of the Movement, I did all I was asked to the best of my abilities. The police and the intelligence agencies were constantly pursuing to arrest me, but luckily, our strategy proved superior and they could never get hold of me.

Finally, when I was instructed by the MRD leadership, I courted arrest in the company of thousands of MRD supporters.

They incarcerated me at the notorious Lahore Fort and tortured me. According to the authorities’ own words, “We have incarcerated you at the Lahore Fort, to give you a stinker.”

For the sake of space, I would reserve my account of the dismal environment at the notorious Lahore Fort to be elaborated on in another Article.

Well, life goes on. We must do our best to strive for the amelioration of our poor masses. No good efforts ever go to waste. We might not have won skies but we have still been able to achieve something. Today, no authority can dare talk about openly hanging, lashing or even torturing the common man. No matter what anyone may try, censorship of the media and freedom of expression cannot be imposed. We have moved beyond the terror of Zia’s tenure.

*The writer is a former Special Assistant to PM (Benazir Bhutto); Member (National Finance Commission) and Convener (Movement for the Restoration of Democracy)*