

Letters

TFT thefridaytimes.com/tft/letters-154/

Sir,

This letter has been sent to the chief minister of Sindh, Mr Murad Ali Shah and has been reproduced in this space:

I run a non-profit organization, the Ali Hasan Mangi Memorial Trust, which has been working since 2008 in Village Khairo Dero, Taluka Ratodero, District Larkana to create a model of rural development. Thousands of people have benefited from our education, health, shelter, solar, training and loan programs.



In 2012, we began adopting non-functional and poorly functional government schools and we have poured hundreds of thousands of rupees into them, building classrooms, installing drainage, providing furniture and supplies and hiring teachers, supervisors and monitoring staff.

We adopted the Govt Boys High School, Khairo Dero (SEMIS#413030341) in 2014 where attendance was zero. We developed this school's playground, provided whiteboards and science equipment and built a computer lab and library. We put in place an aggressive community outreach effort to build attendance to 75 students and hired our own teachers because despite being a total of nine in number, government teachers refused to leave their office and enter classrooms.

Over the last two years, we repeatedly requested headmaster Mr Abdul Qadir Bhutto, [HST (BS-16 and Personal ID 10230123) bearing CNIC 43205-4773048-5] to run the school properly and cooperate with our organization to improve school attendance and learning outcomes. He not only refused to cooperate but began creating one hurdle after another in our way. He ordered his staff not to teach even when in school, he ordered lower staff not to clean classrooms or attend to duties and he routinely marks absent staff present and seeks monetary benefit in return. He himself attends school for only a short time every day, has never visited a class in progress and isn't even able to answer a question about the timetable.

Moreover, we purchased a solar power system for the school worth Rs46,000 through SMC funds which he promptly removed to his house. When he heard we had filed a complaint to the education department, he brought back part of it and locked it in a toilet. To date, fans are missing from that kit and he has also removed doors, windows, bulbs and other material illicitly from the school.

We lodged a series of complaints to the district education office, the education secretary's office, and the education minister's office but I have not received a single reply to date and neither has any action been taken against the headmaster or any other staff.

On Jan 21, 2017, I found out that the school library we had built had been torn down and books were lying on the ground in dust. I requested the school sweeper to open the school and upon seeing this, I asked my staff to remove our equipment from the school temporarily for safekeeping. On Jan 23, 2017, when our teachers and supervising staff arrived for duty at the school, Mr Bhutto threw them out of the school and locked the gate from the inside. Students who were deeply offended by this action and wanted to bring their complaint to the Community Center where our offices are, were locked inside classrooms. It is pertinent to note that this headmaster, who is paid about 100,000 rupees a month, always ignored our repeated entreaties to keep the school gate closed for purposes of discipline and security on a daily basis.

Members of the general public reacted with outrage to this gross disrespect shown to employees of our organization and teachers. They arrived in large numbers at the school, demanded answers from the headmaster and asked him to leave their village. He refused. A busload of peaceful protesters then arrived at the district education office in Larkana along with about 50 students from the school whose fathers set them free from classrooms and demanded to see Ms Razia Pathan, the director. She consented to meet a small group of us, heard our complaint and said the matter lay with the secretary which is why there was not much she could do. Despite my repeated demand, the director declined to leave her office and offer members of the public and students even a few words of reassurance.

Mr Chief Minister, I ask you the following questions:

1. It is your government's job to run public schools? Since you are unable to, we have stepped in to help. Is this the treatment we deserve in return that your employees disrespect teachers to the extent of grabbing them by the arm and throwing them out?
2. When members of the public bring a matter of public interest to public officers paid to solve these issues, is this the disdainful treatment they deserve that they don't get even to see the officer's face?
3. Is your government prepared to look the other way as your employees steal public property and take it home?
4. Does the PPP's policy include providing support to public servants such as Mr Bhutto? He is a PPP supporter with backing from an MPA which is why he refuses even to attend when summoned by the secretary's office.

Speaking on behalf of this entire village of 4,000 people, we demand that Mr Bhutto be dismissed from government service altogether so that he isn't simply transferred to another school where he will undoubtedly wreak the same havoc on another unassuming community. We also demand he immediately be removed from this post and other school staff be strictly ordered to perform their duties and stop sabotaging the future of our children.

Mr Chief Minister, we are a small grassroots community organization struggling to bring change to the desperate people of rural Sindh. We have never asked for your help in running projects that you should be handling to begin with. But we do ask that where your government's employees stand in our way, you provide us with protection and assistance to continue our service.

Founder & Managing Trustee Naween A. Mangi,

Khairo Dero.

Copyright 2013 by The Friday Times, Inc. All rights reserved.

