

Frenzied mob mentality

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By Farahnaz Ispahani

All Pakistanis should have their heads lowered in shame. We appear to be still medieval rather than part of the 21st century.

At a time when we reach out to the international community for aid to help our citizens after the devastating floods, we are still living through mob lynching. This is not digestible, leave alone acceptable at any moral level. This is hardly the face of a modern democratic state. The natural calamity and the holy month of Ramazan have failed in making our hearts softer or more civilized. On the one hand we are condemning the barbarity of the suicide bombings carried out by extremists but unfortunately the violence and lack of tolerance they exhibit seems to have trickled down into our national psyche.

The Taliban in Fata and the crowd of savages and the police and bystanders in Sialkot seem to be living by the same norm: might is right. Both are inhumane and cruel, murderers of the innocent and the enemies of humanity. How long can we continue to accept the atrocities against minorities, the honour killings of women and incidents like the public lynching in Sialkot and a similar incident in Toba Tek Singh where eight innocent travelers were beaten to death in a similar way? There too in the presence of the local police. Sadly, one hears that influential locals hushed up the Toba Tek Singh incident but that miscarriage of justice has been seared into the hearts and minds of the families of the 8 dead individuals.

There have also been many incidents where in the presence of police people have been killed in encounters and their bodies paraded through the streets. The state authorities and the citizens of Pakistan must wake up or else we will find ourselves trapped in a country where the rules and norms of civility and humanity are a long forgotten idea. Now is the time to fight the forces of regressivism. This is the moment to re-lay the foundations for a civilized democratic society and use Islamic and secular teachings regarding basic human rights to change our nation's destiny

Look at these two recent public mob murders. On August 15 two brothers, Hafiz Moghees (aged 17) and Muneeb (aged 15) were beaten to death by a frenzied crowd in Sialkot. This heartless attack on two innocent students continued for hours. The murderers took turns savagely beating them with sticks, kicks, and stones. They were crying out for help but no one lent a hand to them. No one present raised a voice during the attack. Police witnessed the entire event. The DPO of Sialkot reached the scene of the crime during the time of the beatings and witnessed the boys being pulled by ropes by their feet and being hung upside down with blood running down their mouths and noses. Even after their death, the savages toured the entire city with the mutilated corpses showing not an iota of remorse in their action.

The father of children told newsmen that he himself prepared the funerals of his children and there was no part in their body not beaten, injured, bloodied and broken into pieces. I couldn't identify the bodies of my beloved sons as they were terribly mutilated, he said. "We demand a fitting punishment for the culprits and the local police."

“The fact is that they had not committed any crime, they just come about to pass by the wrong place at the wrong time,” a news reporter quoted an eyewitness statement. “They were innocent teenaged students and were killed for no reason,” the witness added. As details have appeared it is almost certain the two boys - Hafiz Moghees and his brother Muneeb- were innocent.

But let us presume that the rabble caught them even after the brothers had robbed and killed two people. Even then, does our law and morality allow us to beat, kill and mutilate human beings? Such barbarous incidents, one hoped had been left behind when man had lived in the Stone Age and had no norms and laws. Today when society has developed and has a system of reward and punishment, such actions take a stable society toward destabilization. The government, media, civil society and the courts must take up the case for real justice to be done and make it an example for those who practice vigilante justice. As someone has recently said the violence we condone leads to the violence we condemn.

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