

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



November 27, 2017

No End to Cruelty of Terrorist Networks

In recent days, the issue of terrorism makes international headlines. Terrorist networks have triggered a sense of public disappointment through their cruel practices and carry out attacks and suicide bombings in every nook and cranny. Despite the defeat of the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group, terrorists still seek to extend their reach around the globe.

The destructive and bloody suicide bombings carried out around the world bespeak of the sinister objectives of terrorist networks. They never tend to stop violence and bloodshed. The Friday's bomb-and-gun attack on a mosque in Egypt, which left 305 dead and 120 wounded behind, fill one with strong fear and hatred and, once against, reveal the ugly face of terrorists - who are mostly operating under the cloak of religion. The attackers were said to carry a flag representing the IS group. There are many fundamental groups which continue shedding the blood of men, women, and children on the grounds of their race, religions, etc. It is really shocking to see that those who operate under the sacred term of religion, kill worshippers in sacred place. Such attacks are rife in territories where the IS group operates. For example, the IS loyalists carried out many deadly attacks on mosques in Afghanistan and sought to foment sectarian violence.

The fundamental ideologies of terrorists know no religious or moral boundaries. They have simply adopted religion as their shield to justify their inhuman acts and trap people to join them. Take, for example, the IS group. After the defeat of IS, Iraqi officials have found the sites of more than 70 mass graves, numbers that have overwhelmed the nation's police and forensics resources as well as the Iraqis' international partners helping to search for tens of thousands of missing people.

A 25-year-old shepherd Omar reveals his memory about IS practices in Hawija Town, Iraq. Omar and his family heard the gunshots and screams emanating from inside the base of IS group. Later that night, when the area appeared deserted, Omar climbed the earthen walls to see what had happened. The scene surpassed his worst nightmares. Dozens of bodies, some clothed and some burned, lay scattered across the frigid ground in large sticky pools of blood. "The stench was unbearable. You can't imagine the feeling of seeing the bodies of children, of people that my family and I knew," Omar is cited as saying.

Omar felt outrage about the killings, as well as the indignity of the unburied bodies' likely desecration by wild dogs. He shook off his fear of being discovered by Islamic State and tried to do the decent thing for the victims. By starlight, for several nights in a row, he dug several shallow pits and pulled, by his count, 60 bodies into a makeshift grave.

Omar's memory about the practices of IS group reflects a drop of the ocean of IS's cruelties. The IS group besmirched the history and their violent acts surpassed the practices of many terrorist networks. Hence, targeting a number of worshippers in holy places will be one of their common practices.

It is believed that nothing is sacred for the militants. Recently, the United Nations revealed that insurgent groups were involved in human smuggling often for the purpose of sexual slavery and forced labor. The Security Council reiterated its condemnation of trafficking of people at its session on Tuesday - especially regarding the sale of people by IS, as well as other violations and abuses by Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, the Lord's Resistance Army and other such groups for the purpose of sexual slavery, sexual exploitation and forced labor. These incidents show that terrorist networks violate all religious and moral principles. After all, they have frequently violated humanitarian law and killed civilians intentionally.

Needless to say, terrorist networks have triggered global worries and target people in many parts of the world. Since violence and cruelty run in their blood, both the ideologues and mercenaries seek to kill people so as to destabilize the world. That is to say, the militant fighters do not only carry out ideological war but also proxy war. If they were not supported by mysterious hands, they would not grow that much strong. Many political analysts believe that the ongoing war in the Middle East is a project and the militant fighters are political pawns that are used in this war.

To reduce militancy and safeguard the rights and freedoms of all human beings, the human societies will have to launch a campaign against terrorism with bona fide intention. If the entire world is not united against terrorism, the war and violence will continue unabated. It is not only the issue of military campaign but also social and cultural campaign against their ideology and propaganda.



Only Negotiation will Pour Oil on Troubled Waters

By Hujjatullah Zia

Although democracy is debated hotly in modern world, democratic principles are violated to a great extent. People's rights and dignity are infringed not only by militants but also by states, which are supposed to advocate democracy. In democratic states, citizens have the right to peaceful demonstration and government is not allowed to use force against demonstrators. However, a number of states seek to repress demonstrators through military force. There are reports about clashes between Pakistani police and demonstrators.

A protest broke out when Pakistan National Assembly passed the Elections Reforms Amendment Bill 2017, tabled by Law Minister Zahid Hamid, that amends the recently-passed Elections Act 2017 to restore a Khatm-i-Naboo oath lawmakers are required, to take back to its original state. Through the Elections Act 2017, the words in Form-A "I solemnly swear" had been replaced with "I believe" in a clause. Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan started a protest and set a camp in Faizabad, Islamabad, demanding that the government identifies and punishes the responsible persons behind the recent change of wording in the declaration of Khatm-e-Nabuwat in election laws and the resignation of Law Minister Zahid Hamid over accusations of removing the clause.

Tehreek-e-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYR), an Islamist political party which is headed by Maulana Khadim Hussain Rizvi, opposed any changes in blasphemy law of Pakistan.

The party demands Sharia law be established as law of Pakistan through a gradual legal and political process. Rizvi said his only goal was to see a stricter vision of Islam enshrined in the law of the land. Over disqualification of Nawaz Sharif, elections were held to elect new member for National Assembly of Pakistan from Constituency NA-120, so the party also participated in the election and secured third position.

Demonstrators have linked the change to blasphemy and claim the oath was softened to enable the participation of Ahmedis, a long-persecuted minority sect.

Subsequently, police launched an operation, on Saturday, using tear gas and water cannons to clear the area where Tehreek-e-Labaik protesters had camped out for the last 20 days as they have blocked the main route to Islamabad. According to reports, at least six people were killed and more than 125 people, including 80 members of the security forces, were wounded in Saturday's crackdown when several thousand policemen and paramilitary forces tried to disperse the sit-in protest.

Furthermore, private TV channels, major social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter have been reportedly shut down on Saturday in Pakistan. It is being said that the decision has been taken as the Tehreek-e-Labaik is using the platforms to incite hatred in the aftermath of the Faizabad operation.

It should be noted that Tehreek-e-Labaik, similar to other political parties, has the right to launch peaceful demonstration, which is a democratic means for demanding government to meet citizens' need. Warning demonstrators or punishing them is neither democratic nor effective. Since, Tehreek-e-Labaik is a political movement, negotiation would be the best solution to the issue. If Tehreek-e-Labaik is a radical party, what is it doing in National Assembly? But if it seeks to safeguard Islamic sharia in its true form, not in a radical way, the party should be given the chance to express its idea. Criticizing government or government officials is not a crime in democratic systems. So, punishing demonstrators is against democracy and a violation of citizens' rights if it does not harmful to other citizens of a country.

To counter radicalism, Pakistani government must not let radical parties gain high position or seats in government's machinery.

To institutionalize democracy, a country will have to respect the rights and freedoms of citizens and respond to their needs in a democratic manner. The Saturday's military crackdown did not only fail to resolve the issue, but also fueled the fire of demonstrators. This reflects the fact that violence against citizens will make them lose their trust in the government.

Secondly, preventing radical parties from gaining high political status in the government's machinery will also strengthen democracy. In brief, countering radicalism does not necessarily mean to deal militarily with a radical party.

Narrowing the chance of radical figures and parties to gain position in the state will be a great step in combating radicalism, which will be a great support to democracy. In sensitive issues such as the current demonstration, both government and citizens have to be reasonable and tolerant so as to avoid further problems.

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Profiles in Discouragement

By Bernard-Henri Lévy

Some specialists in the life sciences say that no one is ever fully cured of any injury or disease, because our cells forever retain traces, memories, of even the slightest attacks on the body's integrity. So it will be with the United States.

One day, the US will turn the page on Donald Trump. But America will never recover completely from the unshakable wound that his presidency's baseness, bull-headed stupidity, and puzzling passivity in the face of China's global ambitions has inflicted on its culture and international standing. Is Trump a symptom? Or is he a terminal disease?

Demoralization and defeatism have not spared the Democrats, as I found recently in New York and on a recent visit to Chicago to address a seminar at the University of Chicago's Institute of Politics.

At the home of the Iranian-American Nazee Moinian, whose Manhattan apartment recalls the patrician abodes of the members of the Algonquin Round Table, the assembled elites are in agreement.

Trump, by not backing the Kurds in their bid for independence from Iraq, committed not just a moral error, but also an irreparable political mistake. He betrayed his Kurdish ally. He strengthened his Iranian adversary. The German legal and political theorist Carl Schmitt might say that Trump had confused his friend and his enemy, dealing with the former as he should have dealt with the latter.

Inexplicably, Trump sacrificed (once again) a crucial US national interest, this time by abandoning the sole force in the Middle East region (outside of Israel) on which America could safely and seriously rely.

How does one respond to such a forfeiture? With what resources? Was there really no way to counter the club of bad neighbors who refuse to countenance any discussion of Kurdish sovereignty?

Some Democrats swallow their national pride and say that France's young president, Emmanuel Macron, newly crowned by Time magazine as king of Europe, is in a better position to step in and stay the hand of Iraq and Iran.

Older Democrats express not the slightest reservation about the use of US power during the Cold War. But here they are, paralyzed, disarmed, when the time comes to raise their voice - merely their voice! - against the sinister but motley gang of four (Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria) blocking Kurdish independence.

At Temple Emanu-El on Fifth Avenue, the most beautiful synagogue in New York and one of the largest in the world, I was recently interviewed by Pamela Paul, editor of the New York Times Book Review.

The conversation again turned to Macron. I tried to explain that his trademark phrase, en même temps (at the same time), which tends to be heard here as an expression of American-style pragmatism, may instead be one of the most visible traces of his doctrinal proximity to the French Protestant philosopher Paul Ricœur.

Far from reflecting careful deliberation over an ambiguous choice, "at the same time" is the credo of someone suspended in fear and trembling before the unsolvable and terrifying mystery of the double nature - physical and spiritual, mortal and resurrected - of the tormented body of Christ.

But very soon we arrive at the question of anti-Semitism in America. On the one hand, it is to be found in that horde of nativists, white supremacists, and neo-confederates who descended on Charlottesville, Virginia, in August to break some black and Jewish heads. On the other hand, it is seen among leftists on US campuses who have caught the fever of BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions), the global campaign against Israeli products that is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate from a quasi-overt campaign against products and businesses that are just plain Jewish.

In this sense, are we living in the époque of Trump, in which Trump's revival of the "America First" slogan of the American Nazis in the 1930s has encouraged a loosening of bigoted tongues? Could it be that Trump himself, despite his officially pro-Israel positions, is a closeted anti-Semite?

The truth is that the question of Trump - the enigma of the man and even his very name - takes up much too much space in public debate.

The truth is that in spending time wondering whether Trump is insane, or, like an overstuffed and obscene Hamlet, he feigns madness to confuse his adversaries, we are all falling into the trap of a narcissism that, here in the US, is the new face of nihilism. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Bernard-Henri Lévy is one of the founders of the "Nouveaux Philosophes" (New Philosophers) movement. His books include *Left in Dark Times: A Stand Against the New Barbarism*, *American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville*, and most recently, *The Genius of Judaism*.



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