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Hate, Intolerance and Genocide of Minorities

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On one fine evening in March 2013, two young men got out of the car and passed young children playing on the street in a neighborhood in Karachi... Two children aged 6 and 7 with innocent faces smiled at him. The young men quietly passed them. In a few minutes later there was a big bomb blast, and those two children died instantly with the smiling faces.

On September 22nd 2013, two men with hidden bombs entered a church in Peshawer-North-West Pakistan and was greeted by smiling women and children who did not know that they were smiling at the men who were about to blow them up.

How these men's heart became so insensitive towards these innocent people. It is hard to imagine that human beings have lost the humanity. **Who are corrupting their mind?**

How long we should remain silent and if want to do anything, what can be done apart from condemning these incidents, issuing the press releases or blame foreign elements for the atrocities?

It is time that we need to wake up and do something. Please take some time from your busy schedule, think about these issues and make contact with us. The time for writing the editorials and articles has passed. We need action now to save the humanity.

The sectarian violence and atrocities against Shia, Christians and other minorities have become nearly a routine in many parts of the Muslim world. These killings are outright shameful. It is indeed very disturbing that thousands of people belonging to minority sects have been killed during the last few years. Today what is happening in the Muslim world is extremely disturbing. For Muslim moral majority it is very painful and difficult to watch as a bystander. I write today about this immense challenge that is calling upon us, especially all the fair minded, peace loving Muslim Intellectuals, religious and political leaders to:

- Raise our voice and consciousness of local Muslim communities against these atrocities.
- Call upon governments and relevant world organizations for firm and prompt actions to alleviate this situation.

Loss of lives of Muslims in Palestine, India, Burma and any other part of the world rightfully receives immediate and forceful reaction against the atrocities, oppression, religious bigotry and hatred. In these cases, we Muslims plead our case and express our emotions to the entire world. But when the same inhumane actions are committed by one Muslim group against the other, and specifically the minorities, reaction is a deafening silence.

A case in point, the Shia minority in Pakistan: They have suffered target killings for the last three decades. These are always followed by immediate and forceful condemnation by various government and political organizations in Pakistan, USA and other parts of the world. While admirable, worthy as well as necessary but these statements and press releases do not go beyond lip service and an expression of self-righteousness. After a week or two the human misery is buried in the mist of time, a new chapter of atrocities is written and the problem goes on. We are fully aware that in the last three decades the problem has gone from bad to worse. The only thing Pakistani government does is to investigate. Not a single effective preventive measure is taken by the government. Quiet often the foreign intervention, especially from USA and India, are blamed and held responsible for these atrocities. The litany of killings,

discrimination and terrorist activities has become a routine in Pakistan. Lashkar Jhangvi, Taliban and other groups proudly and openly accept responsibilities for these atrocities.

Recent Incidents of Violence in Pakistan Reflects Atrocities Committed by Muslims:

- On January 13 and February 16th 2013, bombs were exploded in a [Shia neighborhood in Quetta](#), killing and injuring hundreds of people.
- On Feb. 18th 2013, Dr. Syed Ali Haider, a shia eye surgeon was killed in Lahore
- On Sunday March 3rd 2013, another lethal blast in a Shia neighborhood in Karachi killed at least 45 people and injured more than 150.
- Few days later in Karachi, [Syed Haider Kazmi a Shia naval officer](#) was killed.
- On March 9th 2013, in retaliation of an alleged blasphemy by a Christian enraged Muslims ransacked and burned 178 Christian homes and shops of in Lahore.
- On June 16th 2013, 25 people including fourteen female medical students, four nurses and one doctor of all women university were killed by a female suicide bomber.
- On June 18th 2013, another suicide bomber detonated his explosive at the Funeral in Mardaan in North Western Pakistan killing thirty five people.
- On August 13th Jamaat Khana(2 Aga Khan Prayer Houses) in Karachi were attacked where 2 people are killed and 42 were injured ..
- On Sep.17th 2013 Muhammad Arif killed A Christian Mr.Bootah Masih by cutting his throat with knife. Afterword he waved his knife in air standing on dead body shouted slogans “Allah O Akber, Allah O Akber” “I have killed an infidel blasphemmer” and walked away.
- On Sep 22nd, Two explosions outside a crowded church in northwest Pakistan killed at least 85 people and wounded more than 100.

Terrorist activity in Pakistan has been gradually worsening and according to the [South Asia Terrorism Portal](#), a watchdog, over 2,500 civilians have been killed in terrorist violence in 2013 so far. This is around the same as 2005, 2006 and 2007 combined .

In the summer of 2011, a leader of [Jhangvi group sent an open letter](#) to the Shia community in Quetta, Baluchistan saying: ***“All Shias are worthy of killing. We will rid Pakistan of (these) unclean people.”*** *In my view, responsibility lies both with the people and the government of Pakistan.* It is high time that the people and the government of Pakistan take decisive actions against fanatics and terrorist. Why it is not done? It is beyond human comprehension.

Root Causes of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan:

The country’s Shias and Sunnis have largely lived together peacefully until the 1980s. The downward slide began during the dictatorship of General Zia ul Haq who ruled Pakistan between 1978 and 1988. Then the State of Pakistan used Islam as an instrument of state policy, prayers in the government departments became compulsory, people were punished for not fasting and Hudood law was established. It was also required that the candidates demonstrate the knowledge of Islamic teachings for obtaining government and academic positions. Jihad was declared essential for all the Muslims.

A wave of new Madrasas (seminaries) opened from which [clerics issued fatwas and declared Ahmadis and Shias heretics and apostates](#). As Pakistan got involved in the Soviet war in Afghanistan, the power of

religious extremists grew. Many of the extremists came from the Madrasas that Zia helped build. Free education with free boarding and lodging became major attraction for poor parents who could not afford education for their children. Unfortunately, the education system in Madrasas further promoted violence and “Jihadi” movements by creating a fear that Islam is under threat.

In the mid 1980s, a Muslim religious leader Haq Nawaz Jhangvi formed an organization Sipah-e-Sahaba, (Army of the Friends of the Prophet). It positioned itself as a political party with the aim of declaring Pakistan a Sunni state. After 9/11, General Pervez Musharraf banned both Sunni and Shia sectarian militant groups, but it did little to ebb the violence against Shias. In the early two-thousands, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi an offshoot of Sipah-e-Sahaba, frequently targeted Shia professionals.

Blasphemy is a serious crime in Pakistan that can carry death penalty. Occasionally, people abuse the law to punish people for perceived insults of Islam’s Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), for personal gains and or notoriety.

Other motives involve scaring off Christian residents to grab their property. Currently, at least 16 people are on death row for blasphemy and another 20 are serving life sentences. Once an accusation is made it’s extremely difficult to get it reversed, partly because law enforcement officials do not want to be seen as being soft on blasphemers. Two prominent officials, the governor and a judge, were assassinated in 2011 for urging reform to this law. Instead, the killer of one of the governor was hailed as a hero.

This makes one wonder if non-Muslims or minority sects within Islam have any space in Pakistan as equal citizens. This is certainly not the Pakistan its founder Quaid-e-Azam envisioned. It was for people of all sects and beliefs living in peace, and harmony.

The turmoil in Middle East:

Just like Pakistan, such atrocities among Muslims of differing sects are spreading like a wildfire in other Muslim countries such as Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Egypt.

Syria is disintegrating with Alawite Shias fighting Sunnis (according to UN report over 100,000 people are killed in last two years in Syria). Shia Hezbollah of South Lebanon with Shia Iran and Nuri-Al Maliki of Iraq are supporting the Shia-led army of Bashar Assad in Syria. Together, they are carving out a sub-nation from Damascus to Homs in the Mediterranean. Sunnis in Anbar province-Iraq, in the west are supporting Sunni rebels across the border in Syria, with Saudi, Turkish and NATO blessings.

Over 200,000 people were killed during the last few years in the sectarian violence in Iraq and Syria. The Syrian forces carried out ethnic cleansing in Sunni areas murdering hundreds of Muslim men, women and children, leaving mutilated and decomposing bodies behind. The Sunni insurgents followed with summary executions of Alawites who currently rule the country. A recent video of killing showed the cannibalistic behavior of an insurgent declaring “I swear to Allah, we will eat your heart and liver, you soldiers of Bashar the dog”.

More than 1,000 women and children were killed in Iraq in May 2013, making it the deadliest month since the sectarian violence of 2006-2007. The most serious sectarian killings being during the Iraq war between 2003-2007. The periodic killings continue even after the withdrawal of the US forces.

This is not how it used to be. Until the 18th century, there was coexistence between the Safawi Shia dynasty on one hand and the Sunni Ottoman and the Mughal Empires on the other. Both the Shias and the Sunnis had gone about their daily routines unconcerned with ideologies and dogmas and with hardly any feelings of schism and sectarian divide.

Then what changed? Unfortunately it is a long story of infighting, colonial deception and manipulations. These include but are not limited to the following:

- The Arabs fighting against Ottoman Empire, siding with Britain.
- Fall of Ottoman Empire
- Britain's refusal to grant the Ottoman lands under Arab rule.
- November 1917 British declaration to create a national homeland for the Jewish people on the Ottoman lands.
- A secret deal between Britain, France and czarist Russia to mutually subdivide Ottoman Empire lands; France got Syria and Lebanon, Britain took Transjordan, Palestine and Iraq and Istanbul was promised for Russia.
- Arab hostility, mistrust and hatred, following implementation of the British plot, the wars with Israel, Palestinian oppression, the Iraq wars leading to the current messy Middle East situation.

And therefore, it is commonly believed that the British and other imperialists created division among Muslims and supported one group against the other in all the colonies in India and the Middle East. By promoting conflicts among various groups they ensured that no country gains enough power and destroy each other by in fights.

The Saudis, their protégés, Taliban, the Jhangvi groups; the Iranians, their protégés Hizbullah, Jundallah and other similar groups in different parts of the Muslim world are playing a major role in promoting the sectarian divide. We are facing the prospects of a civil war between the Sunnis and the Shias on a global scale.

Can we attempt to avert this serious situation before it damages the entire Muslim world?

Do we not have enough wisdom to recognize the consequences of in fighting? Instead of killing each other we should resolve the differences by negotiations and compromise. Iranian and Saudi governments must come to the negotiating table, implement immediate ceasefire and find a peaceful solution. Muslim intelligentsia (scholars and religious leaders) should now take a serious step in condemning the political and religious leaderships promoting hate and intolerance and force them to resolve disputes through dialogue. We should show compassion toward fellow Muslims first, so that we can play our due role in promoting peace and serving the humanity at large.

The efforts for peace between Muslims, thus far:

During the last few years we have seen hundreds of Fatawa against terrorism from many Muslim scholars. Hundreds of Muslim scholars and Muslim organization have issued statements condemning the atrocities in Pakistan and other parts of the Muslim world. Articles have been written exploring the underlying causes and pathology of the problem and recommending an educational process to highlight unity and harmony among different factions. These writings have not reduced the incidents of violent behavior. ISNA and other respectable organizations in US and other parts of the world made strong statements on Muslim code of Honor promoting religious harmony. Unfortunately, it has not produced any significant impact on sectarian violence around the world. In fact, it has much more intensified in the last decade.

We have not seen any massive protest and agitation against the atrocities committed by Muslims around the world. We have, however, have seen hundreds of thousands of Muslim agitating against the “cartoons” or burning of Quran with the loss of Muslim lives and property damage.

Conclusion:

The obvious question is, while Islam is the religion of Peace, what are the main contributing factors for the current situation of the Muslims Umma? In my humble opinion, they are:

- The politically driven theocratic forces among Muslim sects.
- Intolerance due to lack of conviction and faith in Islam

Possible baby steps towards Intra-faith harmony:

It is time that we Muslims, specifically the scholars and leaders, sit together to focus on commonalities between our sects instead of elaborating the differences, collectively striving to strengthen our faith in our Creator.

It is time to nurture our youth to tolerate the differences and learn to live in peace and harmony with humanity at large.

It is time for a collective, sincere and unbiased grass root effort to bring muslim power brokers to negotiating tables. This independent group should not be influenced by power brokers and must continue this process until the goal is achieved. Please remember in Islam, the highest importance is given to the sanctity of human lives.

It is time we heed to simple truths:

The best religion of all is humanity. If religion does not have humanity then it is useless. The Pakistani philanthropist and humanitarian Abdul Sattar Edhi

An Institute of Quranic knowledge and intrafaith Religious Acceptance (IQRA) has been established, with the following mission statement:

To evoke insightful Islamic intrafaith dialogue and serve as a policy institute that contributes knowledge to the Muslim world through progressive research and advocacy concerning religious edicts, laws and policies.

All Muslims, with a desire to play a positive role in this journey are invited. For further inquiries and follow up, please contact

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