

Ideology: Clergy holds War on Terror Responsible for Terrorism

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Pakistani religious scholars, mostly the Deobandis, have suggested that President Musharraf should step down to save the country from suicide attacks and the current turmoil. As part of solution they also demanded the restoration of judiciary on November 3, 2007 position.

A comprehensive charter of demand issued by 30 leading religious scholars though commends President Musharraf's recent irate statements in reaction of Western media reports about Pakistan's role in war against terrorism yet it advises him to be bold enough not to see 'extremists' with American eyes.

These scholars have once again declared the suicide attacks forbidden (haram) in a Muslim society but have not detached themselves completely from the extremists and militants saying their deadly acts are the reaction of government's wrong policies. They have, nonetheless, urged the government to stop military operations in tribal areas. However they didn't clear their position over the issue of foreign jihadists in these areas and their operations in neighbouring country i.e. are they justified to use the land of their host country [Pakistan] for waging 'jihad' violating the law of the state and basic human rights? They also didn't comment on issue of declaration of jihad without permission from government.

Here is the complete text of their demands. (Muhammad Amir Rana)

Text of the Charter of Demand

Pakistan is facing unprecedented crisis of its 60-years old history. The problems like shortage of flour, water and electricity, inflation, unemployment and lawlessness have made life almost impossible for a common man. But two other issues have multiplied the worries of the nation. One of them is political instability in the country that has ended all hopes of better future. And the other is massive use of military force against our own people in the north of the country that has created a situation of civil war. The chaos has brought a never ending chain of bomb blasts and suicide attacks that kill dozens of people every now and then and ruin the lives of hundreds of families.

Such a bleak scenario demands that every Pakistani should think beyond his personal interests for the sake of the survival of the country. All segments of the society including the political parties should ignore their differences and try to pull the country out these crises unscathed. The government bears the foremost responsibility to shun status quo and honestly analyse its policies that have led to this situation. We advise the government in good faith to ponder over following points to keep the existence of this nation and country intact.

Although most of our governments have been under American influence, but the way our government brought the American war into our own streets after 9/11 and compromised national interests is unprecedented. The country's armed forces were used to kill our own people to please Americans. The leaders showed timidity in facing America and India, but manifested all bravery on the innocent people of Wana, Waziristan, Swat, Balochistan and Lal Masjid. Those who are always harping on the same strings of women rights, mercilessly killed hundreds of women teachers and students of Jamia Hafsa just to get a pat from Americans.

On the other hand, efforts were made to distance the country from religion in the name of 'enlightenment' and 'moderation'. National curriculum was changed to look modern and secular and thus acceptable to America instead of catering to our national needs. Hudood Laws were amended in the name of protecting women but new changes made women more insecure and prone to injustices. Obscenity and vulgarity were promoted and the state patronised massage centres in clear violation of Shariah. Inflation and unemployment made life impossible for common man. Loot and murder was

the order of the day where no body felt security of life and property. The government remained busy in arranging marathon races, basant festivals, dance and music. It became a Herculean task for the masses to win justice in courts. Then the country's top level judiciary was dismissed. A culture of bribery made routine affairs of life very difficult in public offices.

By adding insult to the injuries, the government gave an impression that it did not care for public's demands and rights. Thus there was no way to get any fair demand accepted through peaceful constitutional means. It became a lawless state where mighty, looters and murderers lived freely but law abiding citizens suffered. A peaceful demand for implementing Shariah was not only rejected but the government was also not willing to give ear to any reasoning based on Quran and Sunnah in support of the Shariah demand.

Apparently, these circumstances led some minds to the frustration that manifested itself in suicide attacks. As far as the legality of suicide attacks in Shariah is concerned, every Muslim knows that committing suicide is haram (forbidden). And there are very clear injunctions in lieu of this. Now the question arises whether suicide attack is allowed in a 'just and rightful war' to effectively harm the enemy? There are two views about this in Shariah. One view validates the suicide attack during a 'just and rightful war' at the time of a serious need without targeting innocent people. It would be some thing similar to that of Pak army soldiers striking Indian tanks with bombs attached to their own bodies at Chawinda front during 1965 war. This strategy worked and the advancement of Indian tanks stopped. Since it is an Ijtihadi issue, we hope that Allah might accept the great sacrifices (of suicide bombers), rendered in good faith, for a noble cause of saving the country and the nation from the enemy in a 'just and rightful war'.

This applies only to a situation where a 'just and rightful war' is being fought against an overt enemy. It does not apply when the targets of the suicide attacks are faith-sharing Muslim brethren or such innocent non-Muslims whose lives and properties have been held sacred (to be kept safe and secure) by Allah. Killing of a faith-sharing Muslim, no matter how sinful practically he may be, is an unpardonable crime before Allah. According a Hadith reported by Ibn-e-Maja, Allah has held life and property of a Muslim more respectable than even the Holy Kaaba. A suicide attack that targets Muslims or for that matter; peaceful citizens of a Muslim state carries dual sin. First, it is a sin of an intentional murder of many people and secondly the sin for committing suicide. Thus no body differs to the illegality and forbidden status of suicide attacks.

The issue can not be resolved by merely condemning these attacks. The real question is that who is committing suicide attacks and why? Whoever goes for a suicide attack, knows well that he will be the first victim regardless of the accompanying death toll. Under normal conditions, every body loves his life and can not kill himself unless he gets into some extraordinary situation.

So there is a genuine need to think as to what has made a great number of people willing to take such an extreme step that they neither care for life nor for orphans and widows they are going to leave behind. They damn care as to what the world would say about them after their death. It also deserves attention that suicide attacks were not known to our people a few years ago. Certainly, there are reasons behind this scenario, and we can not remedy the situation just by condemning these people. If we are sincere to restore law and order, then we have to realistically review our policies that have landed us in turmoil and show the courage to change them.

Suicide attacks are, in fact a reaction to the government policies that have spread despair and disappointment in the public. These people after losing all hopes for redressing their grievances through peaceful means have taken the route of violence. There might be many youth among them

whose homes were reduced to rubble during military operations by the US and Pak armies. They have heard the cries of their loved ones dying helplessly amid raining bombs and bullets and now in a state of shock and awe, they are blowing themselves to avenge what happened to their families and homes.

It appears as if anti-state forces are also taking full advantage of the intricate situation to push Pakistan into civil war and dismembering it during the following chaos. These forces are causing explosions in such a way that they are accounted for the ongoing violence by the frustrated youth. These anti-state forces are covertly inciting the violent groups to continue their mission. Perhaps the frustrated youth have been misguided to believe that the Pakistani public is equally responsible for their plight because it has accepted the writ of a cruel government. So the public and the government both should be punished for their respective part in the crime.

The situation has reached such an alarming level that no reasoning or arguments can convince the violent youth. The more use of military force will add fuel to the fire. Military operations against Pakistan's civil population are no solution to this issue. To change this special mindset, a sagacious planning will deliver more than what military force can achieve.

In our view, the government needs to see those 'extremists' through Pakistani eye instead of looking at them through American eye. They are our Pakistani brothers, no matter whether they belong to FATA, Swat, Balochistan or elsewhere. They are our countrymen and faith-sharing brethren and not the enemies of Pakistan. They have always been our first defence line. But the circumstances have made them the enemies of the government and of all those who do not share their grudge against the government. If the government can change its policies, then the causes of extremism can be finished. If this truth is accepted honestly, then following steps can help us find a safe way out.

We should acknowledge the fact that our alliance with the US in the name of the War on Terror has completely failed to bring us any gains. Instead we have lost a lot in the due course. Now the very existence of the country is at stake because it is one of the core reasons of nation's internal divisions. This policy should be reviewed and changed accordingly through broader religious and national consultations. (Suggest: end cooperation with US)

Military operations in Northern Areas and Tribal Areas should be immediately stopped and a genuine effort should be made to understand the reasons of revolt in these areas in consultation with tribal elders of the area. The government should accommodate the just demands of the people of these areas. (Stop military operation in FATA)

This fact must be realised that the Taliban are not terrorists, nor all of them are extremists. There are certain moderate elements among them who can be reasonably engaged in constructive and result oriented dialogue. (Start dialogue with Taliban)

The moderate Ulema of Northern Areas do not back bloodletting and violence but their voice has remained ineffective because the government has been consistently pursuing un-Islamic policies there. They have nothing substantial to offer to the violent groups in return for peace which makes their appeals to stop violence fruitless. If the government is willing to build trust with these people on the promise of framing the policies in view of national interests and showing independence towards the American interference, then the moderate Ulema can keep a large number of people away from violence. Such an effort has to be consistent and backed by practical steps on the ground. (Ulema involved in talks with Taliban and give them the mandate)

If a handful of miscreants remain unmoved by the steps suggested above, they will lose the popular support from the general public and the moderate segments will openly dissociate themselves from the violence that will make the voice of violence mongers practically ineffective.

The people of Balochistan have some genuine problems and it is their just right to seek solution to those problems. Labelling such a demand as disloyalty to the state and subjecting them to military operation is not fair. A serious dialogue can be started with the Baloch leadership to contain the insurgency there.

President Musharraf has issued some bold statements about America in the past few days that really reflect Pakistan's status as a sovereign and independent state. He should go beyond lip service by basing his future policies on his new discovery of American hypocrisy.

National consensus is also a must for achieving the objectives of the above mentioned policy suggestions and attaining political stability in the country. President has to take this initiative by reaching out to all political parties in the best interest of the country. He should think beyond himself and should accept all the fair demands of other political forces to lend credibility to the forthcoming elections. He must not feel hesitant if some of positive changes go against his earlier announcements.

We appeal to all the political leaders to ignore their mutual differences and agree on minimum number of points that are essential for the survival of the nation.

We honestly believe that judiciary should be restored in compliance with the constitution by reversing all the ultra-constitutional measures to take the country out of the multiple crises it faces today. Thus the right way for president Musharraf is to step down in the best interest of the country by handing over the charge of presidency to the Chairman of Senate according to the constitution. Then the Chairman Senate should hold free and fair elections and hand over power to the elected representatives.

We have no political affiliation with any political party nor have any agenda of our own. That is why our policy suggestions are not aimed at any political purpose. These suggestions have been put forward in good faith for the best interest of the country and as a right advice to President Musharraf. His ultra-constitutional steps can not bring stability in the country. He will have to quit this office sooner or later. But it will be too late then. On the other hand if he voluntarily steps down now, it will not only raise his stature but also put the country back on track to normalcy. It is earnestly hoped such a step by president will put an end to the insurgencies going on in many parts of the country. It is not yet too late to act according to the above said policy guidelines to take the country out of the crises.

- 1) Maulana Muhammad Sarfraz Khan Safdar – Jamia Nusrat ul-Uloom Gujranwala
- 2) Maulana Saleem Ullah Khan – Administrator Jamia Farooqia Shah Faisal colony Karachi
- 3) Maulana Dr Abdul Razzaq Sikandar – Administrator Jamiat ul-Uloom Islamia, Allama Banauri Town Karachi
- 4) Maulana Mufti Rafi Usmani – administrator Jamia Dar ul-Uloom Karachi
- 5) Maulana Mufti Taqi Usmani – Vice president Jamia Dar ul-Uloom Karachi
- 6) Maulana Dr Sher Ali Shah – Sheikh ul-Hadith, Jamia Haqqania Akora Khattak (NWFP)

- 7) Pir Muhammad Amin ul-Hasnaat Shah – Administrator Dar ul-Uloom Muhammadia Ghausia, Bhera Sharif
- 8) Allama Syed Azmat Ali Shah Hamdani – Administrator Dar ul-Uloom Qamr ul-Islam Sulaimania Karachi
- 9) Maulana Hafiz Muhammad salfi – Vice chief Jamaat Ghurabae Ahle Hadith
- 10) Maulana Naeem-u-Rehman – Chief Nazim Wifaq ul-Madaaris al-Salfia Pakistan
- 11) Maulana Abaidullah – Administrator Jamia Ashrafia Lahore
- 12) Maulana Abdur Rehman Asrafi – Vice chief Jamia Ashrafia Lahore
- 13) Maulana Qari Hanif Jalandhri – Administrator Jamia Khair ul-Madaaris Multan
- 14) Maulana Anwar ul-Haq – Vice administrator Dar ul-Uloom Haqqani Akora Khattak (NWFP)
- 15) Maulana Mehmood Ashraf – Vice Mufti Jamia Dar ul-Uloom Karachi
- 16) Maulana Mufti Abdur Rauf - Vice Mufti Jamia Dar ul-Uloom Karachi
- 17) Maulana Syed Abdul Qudoos Tirmizi – Jamia Haqqania Sahiwal (Sargodha)
- 18) Maulana Ghulam-u-Rehman – chairman Nifaze Shariat Council (NWFP)
- 19) Maulana Mufti Abdur Rehamn – Jamia Dar ul-Uloom Karachi
- 20) Maulana Fazl ur-Rahim – Nazim Jamia Ashrafia Lahore
- 21) Maulana Zahid ur-Rashidi – Secretary General Pakistan Shariat Council.
- 22) Maulana Fida ur-Rehman Darkhawasti – Amir Pakistan Shariat Council
- 23) Maulana Abdul Ghaffar – Administrator Jamia Fareedia and acting Khateeb Lal Masjid
- 24) Maulana Qari Arshad Obaid – Nazim Jamia Ashrafia Lahore
- 25) Maulana Akram Kashmiri – Registrar Jamia Ashrafia Lahore
- 26) Maulana Muhammad Siddique – Sheikhul Hadith Jamia Khair ul-Madaaris Multan
- 27) Maulana Mufti Abdullah – Mufti Jamia Khair ul-Madaaris Multan
- 28) Maulana Abdul Maalik – president Rabat ul-Madaaris Pakistan
- 29) Maulana Mufti Muhammad Tayyab – president Jamia Imdadia Islamia Faisalabad
- 30) Maulana Mufti Muhammad Zahid – Vice president Jamia Imdadia Islamia Faisalabad