

Criminals Disguised as Muslims

4:79: "Whatever good happens to you is from God, and whatever evil happens to you is from yourself."

On December 16, *criminals disguised as Muslims* massacred over 140 people at a Peshawar school, mostly children. Such a targeted killing of children has not been witnessed in modern times. Pakistan, the entire Ummah, and the whole World are mourning and condemning this barbarous act.



After such a calamity, it is only natural to wonder: "Why does God allow innocents to suffer?" St. Augustine, perhaps the most celebrated Christian thinker of all time, once said, "If evil exists by the will of God, He cannot be entirely good. If evil exists against the will of God, He cannot be Almighty. The Quran has a different explanation of Good and Evil:

4:79: "Whatever good happens to you is from God, and whatever evil happens to you is from yourself."

8:25: "Beware of a tribulation that may not be limited to the wrongdoers among you."

From these verses we can understand that *God does not create evil*. Since the first civilized tribe of Adam, we were guided to follow Divine Laws; to establish justice and distribute resources equitably. Hence, all goodness derives from God by way of His Guidance. But, if we neglect these principles, **we create for ourselves** the calamities which destroy innocent lives. For example, compare some scenarios:

California has been struck with drought for three years now, but due to careful resource allocation, deaths are unheard of. In contrast, ill-prepared countries in Africa lose tens of thousands to drought and famine yearly.

The Netherlands, 50 percent of which is below seawater, handles its recurrent flooding with relative ease with an efficient system of dikes. In contrast, Bengalis are decimated by the 1000s when floods strike.

Hence, when disaster occurs, the degree of damage done is a reflection of that society's level of social and economic justice. No doubt, **we are responsible** for what occurred on 16-12-2014. For it is we who have surrendered our Deen to an oppressive religious establishment. Far too many of our mosques provide platforms for intolerance and hate speech.

- Blind following is rampant. The once vibrant Islamic tradition of ijtihad (independent thought) is suppressed in favor of taqlid (traditional thought, as espoused by imams from 1000+ years ago). Reason and questioning is heretical.
- Recitation, repetition and memorization (to the point of mind-numbing) is emphasized over understanding.
- Many mosques are bastions of Wahabiism, the radical sect that seeks to destroy any diversity or differing opinion and sees (all they consider) non-Muslims on a war footing.
- The self-righteous ones at these mosques feel that a certain appearance renders them superior to others, as if Arabism is not the same as Islam.
- Many of our imams and scholars have very poor views on Human Rights: child marriage, gender inequality, stoning, blasphemy and apostasy laws (all non-Quranic beliefs), are fine with them. Why not emigrate to "Muslim" homelands if such values are so dear to them?
- While pushing for the death penalty for adultery and blasphemy, some of these religious leaders even consider the captured Taliban "wayward brothers" and block their executions, although the Quran clearly dictates capital punishment for terrorists (5:33).

Supporters of these kinds of institutions are but two steps from the Taliban!

Finally, the worst offense of our religious establishment is opposition to reform. It is very telling that the Taliban spokesperson (<http://tinyurl.com/nx47x5v>) is using narrations to defend the Peshawar massacre:

He says, "The Mujahideen were instructed to only kill the older children. The Peshawar attack is in complete accordance with the Prophet's teachings because when the Prophet killed the Jewish Tribe of Banu Qurayza, he put the same guideline, that only the children who have hair below their belly button (pubic hair) are allowed to be killed. Killing of women and children is also in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet. Those who object to this claim can refer to Sahih Bukhari, Volume 5, Hadith 148."

Furthermore, the terrorists use narrations such as these: The Prophet passed by me at a place called Al-Abwa or Waddan, and was asked whether it was permissible to attack the pagan warriors at night with the probability of exposing their women and children to danger. The Prophet replied, "They are from them (i.e. pagans)." Sahih Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 52, Hadith 256.

First, there are Quranic injunctions and many benevolent narrations that clearly state that women,

children, even trees are not to be harmed in battle (<http://tinyurl.com/ncs2hkw>). Furthermore, there is strong evidence that the massacre of the Banu Qurayza as narrated by Ibn Ishaq is a fabrication. No less an authority than (his contemporary) Imam Malik called him “a liar” and calls the story “odd” (<http://tinyurl.com/cdzk4sp>).

Would our benevolent Prophet (S), who in the Battle of Badr refused to block access to water for the enemy, who was so kind even to animals, allow the massacre of women and children? Should not these violent, extremist-enabling narrations then be expunged from the Sahih (those labeled “authentic”) collections? The religious establishment cries, “Absolutely not!” It is discouraging that even very popular, young American Muslim preachers passionately oppose reform and post videos entitled: “Warning to Hadith Rejectors” (<http://tinyurl.com/nw3w3mj>).

In conclusion, it is convenient to blame external forces for what ails us. But, according to the Quran, even external forces are a trial for oppressive societies (9:39, 47:38). Time to look in the mirror. We have failed our children in Peshawar by enabling an oppressive society. Let us pray for patience and recovery for the victims’ families. We should also pray for the wisdom and courage to reform before we are struck with another calamity of our own making.

Just as we have condemned this attack, we must also condemn the destruction of churches and temples and the oppression of non-Muslims in Muslim countries.

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