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## Reform from Within Muslim Society



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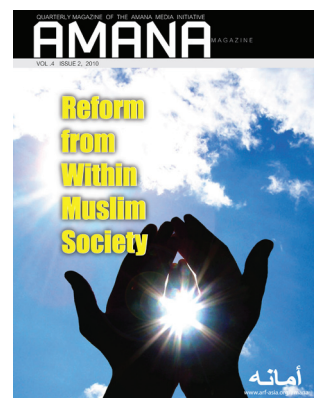
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# Reform from Within Muslim Society

Editorial : By M. Abdus Sabur

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There is a common articulation in the Muslim society that there is need for reform from within the Muslim society itself. So it is, in other faith-based as well as secular societies. Recently, during a consultation on Islamic peace education organized by Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, Dr. Manaros Boransing (the Under-Secretary for the Ministry of Education of the Philippines) narrated a story about a Muslim scholar from Egypt who went to Paris for a visit. After returning, he had a conversation with a fellow Egyptian in Cairo. He was asked what he saw in Paris. In his reply he said that in Paris he saw Islam but no Muslims. He went on to add that on the contrary, in Egypt there are Muslims but no Islam.

What I understood from the story was that some Islamic values are nurtured in non-Islamic countries such as welfare of the most vulnerable people, freedom of expression, greater participation in local governance, and accountability on the part of the government. Of course, no country is perfect. There are common problems such as discrimination and corruption that exist in both Muslim and non-Muslim societies.

But coming back to Muslim societies such as those in Egypt, of course the government changes through elections but the question remains how transparent and democratic a society Egypt is? Though Western governments portray Egypt as one of the democratic societies of the world, the Islamic brotherhood, and other opposition groups, could testify as to how much freedom they enjoy. The last presidential election in Iran also created controversy and divided Iranian society down the middle. People are on both sides. The only way forward is to have space for dialogue and forge understanding as to what is good for Iranian people. Both sides can make contributions to build up Iran as a strong and prosperous nation, based on Islamic values, which are just, caring, and able to eradicate poverty and unemployment. My intention is not to single out Egypt or Iran, but there are Muslim majority countries, to name a few such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, where the situation is similar. Civilian supremacy over the military is short-lived. Invisible power of military institutions can still be felt.

There are also calls for those oil rich Islamic countries under monarchy to create space for creative thinking and

participation of the people. Most of the countries have embraced economic liberalization, as the communist countries such as China and Vietnam have done, while keeping the political power totally under control. Economically, in terms of growth, they are doing well but economic gaps and disparities are increasing. Western democratic society is not free from corruption either. Over the past years, the world has witnessed massive corporate corruption in USA and corrupt practices abound among parliamentarians in Britain.

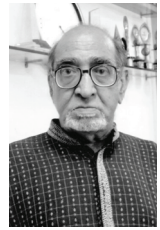
Women's status and participation, and Islamic educational institutions are two other areas where call for reform has been loud. It is not only the interpretation of the Qur'an and Islamic laws, but cultures and attitudes in the male-dominated societies that are, in many ways, responsible for the plight of women in Muslim societies. Islamic education has largely been left to citizen's initiatives and the government has been the main driver of mainstream general education. Recently, there has been a change in terms of the increasing numbers of private schools and universities that are operating. But they are expensive and virtually out of reach for the poor. Most people, who work in the government structures, are drawn from the pool that are educated in secular schools and universities and not many, from Islamic institutions, particularly in South and Southeast Asia. Still corruption persists. This means that reform is needed, not only for Islamic education, but all across the board. Many Muslim scholars find ways to go to the west and achieve excellence in education and research, why cannot the Islamic countries provide space and opportunities for them?

There are calls for quality education in Islamic institutions, and for more qualified teachers and Imams with better remuneration. Islamic values are universal values. The challenge would be to understand and act on how to ensure that these values become an integral part of education, governance and leadership? How can these values become a way of life, for everyone in our society? This task cannot be left to the government alone, but involves the society as a whole.





# Kashmir – Unending Conflict; What is The Way Out



Asghar Ali Engineer



after killing 15 young people and unleashing angry protests? Even the CRPF has suffered great casualties, more than 273 Jawans have been injured in the last month and 1980 over one year. Could this decision have not been taken earlier to

The conflict in Kashmir seems to be unending and is further aggravated by the way our armed forces, especially the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), are handling it. Unfortunately, it is still being addressed primarily as a law and order problem and the aspirations of people and their problems seem to hardly matter. Our armed forces go on violating human rights and they know only to kill. This way, instead of solving the problem, we will reduce Kashmir to a vast cemetery. More and more young protestors are dying and death hardly dissuades these young protestors from demonstrating.

It is not that the people of Kashmir are really anti-India and want to opt for Pakistan. A recent U.K. think tank survey also established that not more than four percent of Kashmiris want to align with Pakistan. They have their own aspirations and problems which instead of being addressed are met with bullets. At a recent all-party meeting it was decided that instead of lethal weapons, pepper guns will be used, which do not kill but produce psychological impact similar to real bullets.

Should it have taken so much time to make this decision

save young lives and CRPF Jawans from injuries? Or was this pepper gun technology invented only before the all-party meeting? Do we have to kill so many innocent civilians before using appropriate technology? Had this decision been made in time it would have saved several lives and would not have pushed the valley to the brink of such a serious crisis.

I was in Kashmir in June for a workshop on peace and conflict resolution and talked about possible solutions to a cross section of people, including intelligentsia, activists and even common people in the markets. One thing which emerged from my interactions was that Omar Abdullah had failed to deliver on every front and sentiments were overwhelmingly in favor of Mufti Saeed.

Mufti is considered as more mature and is thought to be talking frankly to the Center and capable of handling the Kashmir problem more satisfactorily. Omar Abdullah has lost his grip over the situation and moreover lacks the courage to talk frankly with the Center. This comes out very strongly from throughout the cross section of people I talked to. Also, the separatist sentiments are not as strong

as they are thought to be from outside. They are angrier at the mess in which Kashmir finds itself today.

The youths are interested in employment and betterment of the economic situation in the valley. Most of the young people I met bitterly complain about the lack of economic opportunities there. Even highly qualified persons do not find satisfactory jobs and are either unemployed or underemployed. The separatists exploit this anger and frustration. However, state and central governments are not serious about this and both keep condemning separatists for the present situation.

There also remains the serious political dimension of our Constitutional commitment to ensure autonomy; the Nehru-Abdullah pact of 1953 further reinforced it but under political pressure from right-wing elements this promise of full autonomy to Kashmir was never fulfilled. Again, after the militancy movement in Kashmir during the late eighties and nineties, the then Prime Minister

Mr. Narsimha Rao promised Farooq Abdullah, whom I had met during a previous visit to the valley, that he would grant autonomy to Kashmir. When Abdullah asked him how much of it, he told him, 'the sky is the limit'. These words ring in my ears even today.

However, the BJP led government came to power with an agenda to remove Article 370 from the Constitution instead of giving even a small element of autonomy to the people of Kashmir. Also, the way we held elections since independence never inspired confidence among the people of Kashmir. In fact, the militancy in Kashmir began after the 1988 elections were rigged and Salahuddein, a school teacher and now head of Hizbul Mujadidin based in POK, was declared defeated even though most Kashmiris thought he had won.

It was only in 2004 that for the first time fair elections were

held; when I visited the valley I found new confidence among a section of Kashmiri people. Some of them told me that if fair elections are held in the future, things will qualitatively change in Kashmir and the people of Kashmir will align with India. The elections in 2009 were more or less fair but unfortunately Omar Abdullah does not seem to be in control.

After long years of militancy and violence, the people of Kashmir have realized one thing (and I am saying this after interacting with a large number of people in the valley): that violence does not pay and that a peaceful solution is the only way out. But they want a peaceful solution with honour and dignity and one which addresses a host of their problems including Kashmiriyat, their regional autonomy and pride in their culture and institutions.

**“At a recent all-party meeting it was decided that instead of lethal weapons, pepper guns will be used, which do not kill but produce psychological impact similar to real bullets. ”**

We do have a problem with Pakistan and we do not want to internationalize the Kashmir problem or go for a plebiscite. But what is coming in the way of our winning the hearts and minds of Kashmiri people? The way

our forces indulge in fake encounters and seriously violate human rights is not the way to win hearts and minds. With such actions we are greatly alienating them.

When Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited the valley in August 2006 for a round table conference with Kashmiri leaders, he said that there will be zero tolerance for violations of human rights; after this there were again fake encounters in the valley. Immediately thereafter I conducted a peace workshop and some participants taunted, 'is this the zero tolerance to violations of human rights?'

Unfortunately, the situation is worsening rather than improving. Human rights violations seem to be increasing by every passing day. A few months ago two young women were raped and their bodies were fished out of the water and until today no culprit has been arrested. Even CBI did not hold a proper inquiry. It is alleged and suspected that



military and police officials are involved in this heinous crime.

Again, my interaction with people in the valley shows that except for a small section of Kashmiris, as was also brought out in the survey by the U.K. think tank, no one is in favour of joining Pakistan. All they want is peace and honorable existence. The Government of India and the state government have to do everything possible to ensure this. People feel that Mufti had succeeded in wresting some concessions from the Center which Omar Abdullah is unable to do, either because of his inexperience or lack of courage. Whatever the reason, opinion is swinging in favor of Mufti.

Even Ghulam Nabi Azad is rated as a better Chief Minister. The Government of India, in order to stop bloodshed, will have to show political courage and determination to take bold steps and strictly discipline the army and not tolerate these violations for fear of 'demoralizing' it. Such an approach will play only in the hands of the terrorists and keep on aggravating the situation.

Fake encounters have absolutely no place in a democracy and it is nothing but a serious failure of governance if innocent citizens are killed by the police or the army. Such unscrupulous officers must be rigorously punished. Such killings can lead to serious trouble even where there are no separatist or terrorist movements, much less in sensitive areas like Kashmir where issues of regional culture and identity are politically extra-sensitive.

We have to sort out the Kashmir problem on two fronts - our own internal front and the Pakistan front. Here I do not want to comment as far as the Pakistan front is concerned, as my main concern is our own internal front and ensuring peace in the valley. The people of Kashmir, in my opinion, are ready for non-violence and peace. Firstly, development will play a very important role. The youth must be won over through ensuring employment. Faisal Shah's case is an important example. It was a matter of pride for the Kashmiris to see that one of their own had been selected and in fact stood first in the IAS examination. Muslims in other parts of India also felt very proud and organized receptions for him throughout the country.

Thus, to solve the Kashmir problem internally we need a measure of negotiated autonomy, economic development, greater recruitment of Kashmiri youth in and outside Kashmir, in Central Government jobs which will give them a greater sense of belonging to India, expeditious development of a railway network, ensuring protection of human rights, and minimizing the presence of armed forces except in border areas. These measures can lead to internal peace.



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# Peace or continuation of selective strikes in Waziristan?



Shafqat Munir

**T**he U.S. Secretary of State's recent visit to the region followed by a series of meetings between Pakistani leaders and U.S. special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Mr. Holbrooke, sparks a new debate; whether peace is a possibility in the near future in Pakistan's troubled North and South Waziristan or if more air strikes are being considered.

Diplomatic analysts say that the U.S. demands are so high that Pakistan may hardly meet them at a cost of its own security. Pakistan wants cessation of drone attacks inside Pakistani territories while the U.S. disagrees, insisting they will continue strikes until the Mullah Haqqani network is broken. On the other hand, the Haqqani group is supposed to be among those Taliban who do not harm Pakistan and its people. So, due to differences in perception, once again the 'do more' demands are on the rise with a new claim from Secretary Hillary Clinton on July 19th, that bin Laden was still in Pakistan.

Though Pakistan's military forces are undergoing an operation and the United States is continuing drone attacks in North Waziristan, Washington is still pressurising Islamabad to 'do more' to end what it calls the 'hideout of terrorists' in the areas bordering Afghanistan. Washington and allies including Pakistan seem in a hurry to complete their mission against terrorists, but the Taliban want to linger on the war either until any serious peace efforts are started or they intensify their continued guerrilla war, causing damage in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The northern part of Waziristan, a mountainous region of Pakistan, is a strategic location bordering Afghanistan and covering an area of 11,585 square kilometers. Waziristan comprises the area west and south-west of Peshawar between the Tochi River to the north and the Gomal River to the south, forming part of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Miranshah is the capital of North Waziristan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa lies immediately to the east. The region was an independent tribal territory from 1893, remaining outside of the British Empire and Afghanistan.

Tribal raiding into British territory was a constant problem for the British, requiring frequent punitive expeditions between 1860 and 1945. The region became part of Pakistan upon independence in 1947. The Taliban cadres in the region still pose a threat to the security of both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Amid controversy between Islamabad and Washington on the issue of drone attacks in Waziristan and other tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, the United States has continued unabated, the air strikes since 2004. So far, the U.S. has conducted 144 air strikes inside Pakistani territory, since it began the air strikes program in this area. During the last two and a half years since January 2008, 134 such strikes were conducted.

According to The Long War Journal, of the 144 strikes, 62% have hit targets in North Waziristan, and 32% have hit targets in South Waziristan. While data for 2004-05 killings in these attacks is not tabulated, the U.S. sources claim killing 1285 al Qaeda and allied Taliban groups since 2006. However, 97 civilians were also reported killed in these attacks. Some other sources say that civilian casualties were higher than those reported by the U.S. sources.

Various Taliban groups including Mullah Nazir and both Waliur and Baitullah Mehsud groups are based in South Waziristan. The Haqqanis, Hafiz Gul Bahadar, and Abu Kasha al Iraqi are based in North Waziristan; Hakeemullah Mehsud is based in Arakzai; and Faqir Mohammed is based in Bajaur. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is also in South Waziristan.

Regarding various Taliban groups, both Islamabad and Washington have different opinions. Pakistan reportedly believes that Mullah Nazir, Haqqani, Bahadar and Hekmatyar are not the 'bad guys', as they do not conduct suicide attacks inside Pakistan. But Americans and the Afghan leaders dislike these groups as they believe that they operate inside Afghanistan attacking Allied forces and the Afghan interests.



system to stop this cross border movement of the Taliban. The United States and other allies should focus on enhancing the capabilities of both Pakistan and Afghanistan to take action against terrorists.

If one analyzes the impacts of this continued war in Waziristan on the lives and livelihoods of the people of the area who are not on either side, one would find that the miseries of common civilians have increased manifold. Development is marred by conflict and violence. There is no respect for rule of law and there are remote opportunities to earn a decent livelihood in these areas. Poverty is on the rise. Peace is the need of the people of Waziristan but the warlords are using them as shields. Most of the time, civilians are killed in such conflicts.

Since at present, the U.S., Pakistan and Afghanistan are in a strategic dialogue process they should sort out whether they want an unending war or if they have limited plans to end violence in the area. Peace can prevail in Waziristan but not through selective justice. The need is to think of the poor people of the area and not the vested interests of a select few. This war may no longer benefit anyone, as war and violence and counter-violence are not the solutions to this conflict. All the stakeholders in the war should come out of their boxes and promote some sort of an out-of-the-box solution. Only pushing one party may not benefit the cause of peace and the people of the area. It is high time that the leaders of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United States think about the safety and security of the people of the area and pool their capabilities and resources to fight terrorism together.



Shafqat Munir is the Editor of Infochange News and Features Network and a core member of the Asia Media Forum. He is based in Islamabad, Pakistan.

During the recently concluded strategic dialogue between Pakistan and the United States, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asked Pakistan to 'do more' to track down the Haqqani network in Waziristan. Clinton, during her meetings with Pakistan's powerful military leader Gen Kayani, President Asif Zardari, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani, and her counterpart Shah Mahmood Qureshi, insisted on her stance for a stern action against Haqqani. Clinton stepped ahead when she addressed a joint press conference with her counterpart on July 19th saying, "I believe (bin Laden) is here in Pakistan and it would be very helpful if we could take them (al Qaeda leaders)". She called for a tougher action against militants by Pakistani authorities.

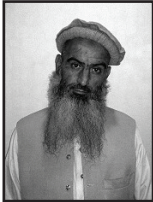
The U.S. Secretary of State during her visit to the region has been active in telling Pakistani leaders that they have to do more. This time she not only talked to political leaders in the country, but also negotiated with the Chief of Army Staff General, Pervez Kayani. Media, diplomatic, defense and strategic analysts in Pakistan described Clinton's body language and gestures as, dictating terms to Pakistan.

The U.S. analysts and officials say that infiltration takes place from Waziristan to bordering provinces of Afghanistan and the groups in Waziristan conduct activities against the forces inside Afghanistan. To check infiltration, Pakistan has suggested sealing the Pakistan-Afghanistan border or increasing check posts on the long border between the two countries. One would suggest that the U.S., Pakistan and Afghanistan should agree to fence the border to stop and prevent damage of interests of either side. Moreover, the U.S. and allied troops should have a border vigilance



# The first encounter with an inmate of the Infamous Guantanamo Bay

Haji Rohullah's life and his journey from Kunar, to Guantanamo Bay and then to Jalalabad



Haji Rohullah

It was at the office of the Afghanistan Human Rights Organization (AHRO), in Kabul, during a recent visit, that Haji Rohullah was introduced to me. Born in the Kunar province of Afghanistan he hails from a very respectable religious family, his father a respected and famous community leader.

Haji Rohullah was arrested on August 21, 2002 by American forces and taken first to Bagram then to the infamous Guantanamo Bay where he spent six long years in detention. In the confinement cell, isolated from the outside world, it was a difficult life for him to lead. He sustained himself by reciting the Quran, praying, and reading books. It was only at the very last days of his imprisonment that a small group of detainees was allowed to meet him and talk to him. He was released in March, 2008.

After his release Haji Rohullah came back and settled down in Jalalabad. Six years of inhuman treatment had cost him his health, but could not break his spirit. Today, he is re-engaged in community dispute-mediation work through the local jirga, which is rooted in Afghan tradition. Before he was arrested, Haji Rohullah had a stable economic condition, he owned a guest house which housed community members and provided them with simple food options. After his arrest however, everything had been ruined and after his release he has had to start everything from scratch.

At present, people come to Haji Rohullah with various disputes with the hope that he can resolve them. These disputes range from serious issues like murder and domestic violence to private issues such as family disputes. He has been addressing these disputes through the local jirga and so far has resolved eighty of these.

Responding to my question about the limitations of the justice system he was of the opinion that the system was corrupt, took a very long time to deliver justice, was expensive and some of the laws were unclear and ambiguous. He further said that when the local jirga takes up a case, in comparison to the formal justice system, it investigates in detail, brings the parties in conflict together, consults, clarifies and gives its decision within a week or two. He however acknowledged that where issues of women and children were concerned, the local tradition was not

just. For instance, where two parties were involved in a dispute over murder, the local Jirga would decide to offer a girl from one family to the other as an act of forgiveness. It believed that this could heal sour relations between two families but did not think it was necessary to take the consent of the girl for the same. This, Haji Rohulla believed was against Islamic principles and needed review and revision in the present day and age.

The local jirga, he further explained, took guarantee money from the parties in dispute so that the necessary expenditure could be easily met. He elaborated saying that although the disputing parties shared the costs, there were chances of the process not being very transparent.

When asked about the cooperation between human rights NGOs and the local jirga, Haji Rohulla observed that local jirga members and the community leaders need capacity building. They need to be familiarized with the concept of human rights, about rights specific to women and children, constitutional provisions and the Islamic justice system, documentation of cases also becoming an important part of this familiarization. He very rightly opined that legal aid provided by human rights NGOs can serve better if the local community leaders are equipped with knowledge and wisdom. NGOs receive foreign funds for awareness and capacity building programs, but the local jirga has no funds, so cooperation with NGOs can accelerate the activities and expand areas of operation. He further stated that the reason the local jirga may not be collaborating with the NGOs profusely may be because this may lead to a certain level of dependency on the NGO's and hamper their traditional spirit of a self-reliant community. He was of the opinion that Exchange programs for traditional leaders could also possibly widen their vision and in addition to this, networking within the local jirga could play an important role.

It would be interesting to see how this cooperation further develops in the coming years, given the complex and volatile situation in Afghanistan with signs of growing ethnic tension.

By M. Abdus Sabur



# An Israeli Mother Addresses the European Parliament



Nurit Peled-Elhanan

**T**hank you for inviting me to this today. It is always an honour and a pleasure to be here, among you (at the European Parliament). However, I must admit I believe you should have invited a Palestinian woman in my stead, because the women who suffer most from violence in my county are the Palestinian women. And I would like to dedicate my speech to Miriam R`aban and her husband Kamal, from Bet Lahiya in the Gaza strip, whose five small children were killed by Israeli soldiers while they were picking strawberries at the family`s strawberry field. No one will ever stand trial for this murder. When I asked the people who invited me here why didn`t they invite a Palestinian woman, the answer was that it would make the discussion too localized.

I don`t know what non-localized violence is. Racism and discrimination may be theoretical concepts and universal phenomena but their impact is always local, and real. Pain is local, humiliation, sexual abuse, torture and death, are all very local, and so are their scars. It is true, unfortunately, that the local violence inflicted on Palestinian women by the government of Israel and the Israeli army, has expanded around the globe, In fact, state violence and army violence, individual and collective violence, are the lot of Muslim women today, not only in Palestine but wherever the enlightened western world is setting its big imperialistic foot. It is violence which is hardly ever addressed and which is halfheartedly condoned by most people in Europe and in the USA.

Great France of “la liberte egalite et la fraternite” is scared of little girls with head scarves. Great Jewish Israel is afraid of the Muslim womb which its ministers call a demographic threat. Almighty America and Great Britain are infecting their respective citizens with blind fear of the Muslims, who are depicted as vile, primitive and blood-thirsty, apart from their being non-democratic, chauvinistic and mass producers of future terrorists. This, in spite of the fact that the people who are destroying the world today are not Muslims. One of them is a devout Christian, one is Anglican and one is a non-devout Jew.

I have never experienced the suffering Palestinian women undergo every day, every hour, I don`t know the kind of violence that turns a woman`s life into constant hell. This daily physical and mental torture of women who are deprived of their basic human rights and needs of privacy and dignity, women whose homes are broken into at any moment of day and night, who are ordered at a gun-point to strip naked in front of strangers and their own children, whose houses are demolished, who are deprived of their livelihood and of any normal family life. This is not part of my personal ordeal.

But I am a victim of violence against women in so far as violence against children is actually violence against mothers. Palestinian, Iraqi, Afghan women are my sisters because we are all at the grip of the same unscrupulous criminals who call themselves leaders of the free enlightened world and in the name of this freedom and enlightenment rob us of our children. Furthermore, Israeli, American, Italian and British mothers have been for the most part violently blinded and brainwashed to such a degree that they cannot realize their only sisters, their only allies in the world are the Muslim Palestinian, Iraqi or Afghani mothers, whose children are killed by our children or who blow themselves to pieces with our sons and daughters. They are all mind-infected by the same viruses engendered by politicians. And the viruses, though they may have various illustrious names-such as Democracy, Patriotism, God, Homeland-are all the same. They are all part of false and fake ideologies that are meant to enrich the rich and to empower the powerful.

We are all the victims of mental, psychological and cultural violence that turn us to one homogenic group of bereaved or potentially bereaved mothers.

**Western mothers are taught to believe their uterus is a national asset just like they are taught to believe that the Muslim uterus is an international threat.**

They are educated not to cry out: 'I gave him birth, I breast fed him, he is mine, and I will not let him be the one whose life is cheaper than oil, whose future is of less worth than a piece of land.' All of us are terrorized by mind-infecting education to believe all we can do is either pray for our sons to come back home or be proud of their dead bodies. And all of us were brought up to bear all this silently, to contain our fear and frustration, to take Prozac for anxiety, but never hail Mama Courage in public. Never be real Jewish or Italian or Irish mothers.

I am a victim of state violence. My natural and civil rights as a mother have been violated and are violated because I have to fear the day when my son would reach his 18th birthday and be taken away from me to be the game tool of criminals such as Sharon, Bush, Blair and their clan of blood-thirsty, oil-thirsty, land thirsty generals. Living in the world I live in, in the state I live in, in the regime I live in, I don't dare to offer Muslim women any ideas how to change their lives. I don't want them to take off their scarves, or educate their children differently, and I will not urge them to constitute Democracies in the image of Western democracies that despise them and their kind. I just want to ask them humbly to be my sisters, to express my admiration for their perseverance and for their courage to carry on, to have children and to maintain a dignified family life in spite of the impossible conditions my world is putting them in. I want to tell them we are all bonded by the same pain, we are all the victims of the same sort of violence even though they suffer much more, for they are the ones who are mistreated by my government and its army, sponsored by my taxes.

**Islam in itself, like Judaism in itself and Christianity in itself, is not a threat to me or to anyone. American imperialism is, European indifference and co-operation is and Israeli racism and its cruel regime of occupation is.**

It is racism, educational propaganda and inculcated xenophobia that convince Israeli soldiers to order Palestinian women at gun-point, to strip in front of their children for security reasons, it is the deepest disrespect for the other that allow American soldiers to rape Iraqi women, that give license to Israeli jailers to keep young women in inhuman conditions, without necessary hygienic aids,

without electricity in the winter, without clean water or clean mattresses and to separate them from their breast-fed babies and toddlers. To bar their way to hospitals, to block their way to education, to confiscate their lands, to uproot their trees and prevent them from cultivating their fields.

I cannot completely understand Palestinian women or their suffering. I don't know how I would have survived such humiliation, such disrespect from the whole world. All I know is that the voice of mothers has been suffocated for too long in this war-stricken planet. A mothers' cry is not heard because mothers are not invited to international forums such as this one. This I know and it is very little. But it is enough for me to remember these women are my sisters, and that they deserve that I should cry for them, and fight for them. And when they lose their children in strawberry fields or on filthy roads by the checkpoints, when their children are shot on their way to school by Israeli children who were educated to believe that love and compassion are race and religion dependent, the only thing I can do is stand by them and their betrayed babies, and ask what Anna Akhmatova - another mother who lived in a regime of violence against women and children - asked:

**Why does that streak of blood, rip the petal of your cheek?**



Dr. Nurit Peled-Elhanan is a Jew and the mother of Smadar Elhanan, 13 years old when killed by a suicide bomber in Jerusalem in September 1997. This is Nurit's speech made on International Women's Day in Strasbourg . Please listen to the words of a bereaved mother, whose daughter fell victim to a vicious, indiscriminating terrorist attack. I wish her words enter the hearts of all peace seekers in our troubled and divided world.



# Another Earth Summit on Sustainable Development in 2012: Leading or Misleading the World through a Green Economy?



Uchita de Zoysa

'Sustainable Development' is one of the most defined, interpreted and misinterpreted words today. After two decades since the Brundtland Commission Report on 'Our Common Future' published in 1987 the famous definition of sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs', the world still appears to be unsatisfied. To most of us in the South, sustainable development would mean 'achieving an enduring prosperity, wellbeing and happiness for all where sustainable consumption and production opportunities are ensured in an equitable world, that at the same time keep the ecosystem in a healthy balance'. Yet, many Northern Governments, Multinational Corporations and the United Nations Bureaucracy are not satisfied with the plans already made way back in 1992 when the first ever Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro to achieve such a world order.

## Do We Need Another Summit?

The 1992 Earth Summit adopted Agenda 21, a comprehensive global plan of action for sustainable development. A decade later, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) was adopted highlighting concrete steps for better implementation of Agenda 21. However, the progress has been slow in achieving these internationally agreed goals and sustainable development has now become a greater challenge. Therefore another Earth Summit to deliberate on sustainable development will be convened in the year 2012 in the same city of Rio de Janeiro.

Do we need another earth summit? According to Mr. Felix Dodds of the Stakeholder Forum in UK, a UN summit is the best way to draw global attention towards sustainable development. If not, the subject continues to be conveniently neglected by policy makers and governments and does not get media attention to enable the sustainability agenda. The first preparatory committee (PrepCom-1) of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) more popularly known as 'Rio+20 Summit' was held in May 2010 in New York at the headquarters of the organization. A poorly informed and rather quietly

organized event had already attempted to finalise a programme for the proposed 2012 Earth Summit. The organizers appeared to be in hurry to conclude the outcome rather early without any sense of responsibility towards national governments and its people and stakeholder groups. The framework of the summit also has been decided with four agenda items; Review of Commitments, Emerging Issues, Green Economy in the context of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development, and Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development.

Why is the UN together with some countries in a mighty hurry to frame another Earth Summit agenda? What troubled the minds of many at the PrepCom-1 was the dominant agenda item called 'The Green Economy'. While the 2012 Earth Summit is to focus on a Green Economy, everybody including the top UN officials managing this process kept asking "what is a green economy?" While many different definitions and explanations were offered by various interest groups, the closest that the official process could arrive at to justify the agenda item was to compromise on wording that read as "Green Economy in the context of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development".

## Greening the Economy vs. Green Economy

The Report of the Secretary General of the Rio+20 Summit released during the PrepCom-1 of the UNCSD says, "the green economy approach is an attempt to unite under one banner a broad suite of economic instruments relevant to sustainable development".

This is distracting us away from the core strategies of sustainable development as set out in the agenda 21. Everyone is saying we do not still know what a Green Economy means. Why then are we not concentrating on what we know after 20 years of sustainable development discussions and negotiations? After 18 years since the first Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, how did we manage to come to a position that we define Sustainable Development under the purview of a Green Economy? Shouldn't it be the other

way round? Greening the economy was supposed to be a strategic transition path towards achieving sustainable development. Poverty eradication too was another strategic pathway. Now the UN once again is changing the direction of the global evolution of the entire sustainable development policy focus and turning it upside down.

But now that a summit is to take place, should the focus change from sustainable development towards a green economy? United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) backed by some Western European countries appear to be the key proponents advocating a green economy and making a sustainable development summit into a green economy summit. While the Business and Industry sector is planning to thrive on the opportunities at Rio+20 by pushing for a green economy, many other stakeholder groups were more pessimistic. Ms. Leida Rijnhout of the Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED) in Belgium rejects the wording of green economy and claims that the Rio+20 should not be about greening our greed but about expanding our thinking to adopt sustainable lifestyles respectful and responsible towards global equality. Representing the Asian Indigenous Women's Network, Vicky Tauli Corpuz from the Philippines also believes that the green economy concept is distorting what we have achieved with the concept of sustainable development. We are talking about growth, but growth in the current sense is what Indigenous Peoples see as the source of the environmental problems we are facing. Another veteran from the first Rio Summit, Ms. Chee Yoke-Ling of the Third World Network (TWN) in Malaysia clearly explains that the call since Rio 1992 Earth Summit was on greening the economy rather than making an all new green economy. Yoke-ling places emphasis on the need for the global systems to be collaboratively repaired, regulated and combined with a recommitment to the promises made in Rio 18 years ago. There has not necessarily been a deficit to devise structures based on sustainable development but that the failure has come in the implementation of their mandates. Rich countries are continuing to run away from their obligations and responsibilities to the South. As a result there are more inequalities today that are suspended in outdated agreements, which promote unsustainable practices that developing countries are obliged to follow. Dr. Palitha Kohona from the Sri Lanka Permanent Mission to the UN in New York says that for those in developing countries, securing food and shelter are of primary concern and to bombard them with the pressure to green their economic and social activities is one which cannot be realistically addressed until poverty for them

has been eradicated. He emphasizes our need to look at the green economy in this context and not to forget that over one billion go to bed hungry every night.

So are these two different concepts? While greening the economy is a process that drives the world's unsustainable consumption, production and trading process to be corrected, the object of creating a green economy appears to be focused on creating new market opportunities in the realization of the down turn of the market based economy. Greening the existing industrial production system will not help green the economy. It will not take us towards a carbon neutral society and drive us away from the wasteful lifestyles. A new green world order has to be more authentic than merely making mountains of the green labeling and green procurement business. Such a new world order will have to make sufficiency based considerations more pertinent. Sufficiency can firstly reduce greed and want for over-consumption through a state of adequacy and contentment. It can also innovate on indigenous knowledge systems to produce without waste, more efficiently, become more self-reliant, and less dependent on external resources.

Are we entering into a new battle between North and South or developed and developing countries? Are we entering into a new phase of a global trading regime that favours the rich and powerful? And are we using the concepts of environmentalism to green wash the black industrial economies? And are we heading towards new conflicts and wars on earth?

### **Main Issues and Proposals for the Rio+20 Summit**

Therefore, I raise the following questions for the organizers of the UNCSD Rio+20 Summit. (a) Do we need more convincing to eradicate poverty as a prerequisite to achieve sustainable development? (b) The so called Marrakech process during the past 8 years has failed to consult nations and formulate a 10YFP. What do we need? Voluntary commitments or binding agreements to regulate unsustainable consumption and production (c) Can we bring to focus the Climate Change challenge into the Rio+20 processes? What is the so called post Kyoto challenge in the "Green Economy"? I have proposed three key international commitments to draw focus on at the Rio+20 UNCSD in 2012 to enable sustainable development on earth.

### **Proposal 01: Poverty Eradication**

The first proposal is on poverty eradication. While discussing sustainability for the past four decades, the world has failed

to eradicate hunger and poverty on earth. Currently half of the people in our world live in poverty and are desperately struggling to survive on a daily basis. Poverty is a result of a hypocritical global governance system. This is a system that has promoted unsustainable production regimes and over-consuming societies to grow further; a system that rewards exploitation by a few and obstructs access to resources by the majority; a system where the unconcerned and non-compassionate continue to decide the destinies of humanity. If any hope for sustainability is to be drawn in the development processes in the developing countries where the poor reside, poverty needs to be eradicated. Development that cannot ensure the wellbeing of all citizens does not have the capability to sustain itself. An emerging world order suggests that the resources for over consumption in the developed nations are becoming harder to come by the day and the Rio+20 Summit should take an early note to address all kinds of poverty on earth.

#### **Proposal 02: Sustainable Consumption and Production**

The second proposal is on sustainable consumption and production. The World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, or Rio+10, clearly declared that one of the greatest barriers for sustainable development on earth has been the unsustainable consumption and production patterns and that we should be regulating such activities. The prevailing unsustainable consumption and production system is the largest contributory factor to both climate change and poverty on earth and thus requires greater emphasis and focus at the levels of international regulation. If anthropogenic climate change is to be controlled, then developing a regulatory framework for sustainable consumption and production must be a priority as well. In very simple terms, unsustainable consumption and production needs to be regulated on earth parallel to emission cuts as a solution to both problems of climate change and poverty.

#### **Proposal 03: Climate Sustainability**

The third proposal is on climate sustainability. The continued failure by the UNFCCC lead climate negotiations to derive a global agreement is driving the world towards a climate catastrophe of a magnitude that threatens the mere existence of humans on earth. Climate change is no longer a possibility but a larger reality that has already commenced its ascending. While the Kyoto Protocol is said to be expiring in 2012 and the world is looking for a new binding agreement in 2012, the Rio+20 UNCSD Summit once again fails to include it in its agenda. Sadly, the Climate Change Convention that was signed at the first

Earth Summit in 1992 has become out of reach of the sustainable development programme and has become another separate programme in the UN system.

#### **Riding on a Dismantled Train to Sustainability: A Formula for Failure**

In my book “It has to be CLIMATE SUSTAINABILITY” I wrote that the UN process that drives the world towards sustainability is like a ride on a dismantled train. The train to sustainable development had been dismantled since the first Earth Summit in 1992 and different compartments were placed on different tracks; climate change, biodiversity conservation, poverty eradication, economic prosperity, etc. Since then many of us continued to demand that this train needs to be assembled together and placed on the correct track, and that we should proceed towards sustainability through a clear path to avoid being stranded. Today, we are dangerously stranded with possibilities of no return. Yet the UN system continues to ignore negotiating these interlinked issues in a holistic approach and continues to divide and rule.

The Rio+20 UNCSD Summit already demonstrates another formula for failure. The hunger for dominance on earth by the different regions and countries, clearly to protect the business and trading interest of the multinational corporations that keeps the rich richer and poor poorer still is the greatest debate inside the UN rooms where negotiations take place. Therefore, another UN summit has brought us once again on to a football field where the ball will be passed from one end to the other till the game results in a stalemate; a no result that will prolong the quest for sustainability on earth and increase the threat of climate change. So, to keep the sustainable development agenda alive, we may have to organize Rio+30, Rio+40 and Rio+50 summits and by that time the world will be in much desperation than it already is today.



Uchita de Zoysa is the author of ‘It has to be CLIMATE SUSTAINABILITY’ and convener of the Climate Sustainability PLATFORM, chairman of Global Sustainability Solutions and Executive Director of the Centre for Environment and Development. He was a Steering Committee Member of the Global NGO Forum at the first Earth Summit in 1992 and is International Advisory Board Member of the Stakeholder Forum for Rio+20. This article was written as a firsthand witness to the 1st PrepCom of the Rio+20 Summit held in New York recently. Please send your comments to uchita@sltnet.lk



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