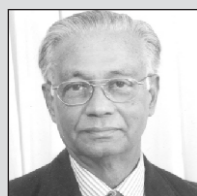


# Carnage in Istanbul



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

THE week ending November 20 witnessed series of devastating bomb blasts in Istanbul killing altogether over 50 people and injuring over 450. The latest was the series of suicide bomb attacks against London based international bank HSBC and British Consulate in the busy commercial areas of Istanbul. There were devastating scenes in the entire area. Among the dead was the Consul General of Britain based in Istanbul. Al-Qaeda and some local terrorist groups have reportedly been involved in these attacks. The reason appears to be terrorists' expression of anger against President Bush's state visit to Britain and Bush-Blair's war against Iraq. But the results of the bomb blasts have been the deaths of all innocent people. The dead and injured in Istanbul blasts never participated in Iraq occupation war, if the terrorists wanted to put forward any justification at all for the ill-conceived deadly attacks. Therefore, the attacks were utterly wrong and deserves total condemnation.

Unfortunately, these terrorist groups have generally been using the name of Islam to gather support for their attacks. Often they name their organizations by cunningly using some attractive Islamic words like Hizbullah which means -The party of God.. God never asked them to organize a party in His name and fight wrong people in a wrong way. Often these groups act in the name of religion though these acts are forbidden by the religion -Islam.

The people of Faith -- whether Jews, Christians or Muslims -- believing in the Unity of God (i.e. One God and God alone) - know that occupation of others' legitimate Homes by force is wrong and against the basic principles of all religions. Therefore, fighting the enemy who are in the battle-field in the act of occupation should be considered legitimate for regaining illegally and illegitimately occupied homes. But no religion, let alone Islam, ever allows any one to kill innocent people in the name of fighting such occupation or subjugation.

The instructions of Islam is very clear on this. "..... Takenot life, which Allah Hath made sacred, except by Way of Justice and law." (Sura Anam - Quoran) ".....We ordained For the children of Israel That if any one slew A person - unless it be For murder or spreading Mischief in the land - It would be as if He slew the whole nation;" (Sura Maida - Quoran) In view of all these specific instruc-

tions of the Quoran, the followers of Islam should condemn all these terrorist acts in Istanbul and elsewhere. It must be accepted that the persons who were killed in Istanbul bomb blasts never participated in anything that these terrorists have been fighting against. Moreover, they killed scores of fellow Muslim too, who were obviously fasting in the month of Ramadan.

The terrorists apparently targeted British interests in Istanbul as Blair

target any American interests as all Americans do not support Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld policies and militarism. Even many in the State Department of Bush Admin do not support White House on such matters.

Earlier in the week they destroyed Synagogues in Istanbul and killed several Jewish worshippers. They apparently targeted synagogues because of Israel's brutal policies and actions against the Palestinians. But

the occupied territories and dismantled the settlements in the occupied areas. Such a solution would have stopped all violence in no time. Indeed, the main cause of violence is occupation. If occupation ends, violence would also end.

Therefore, it is terribly wrong to go for mass killing of innocents because a particular country's administration is involved in wrong doing. It is possible that things would be quite different

against a country or it's people because of the wrong policies and actions of a particular government at a given time is terribly wrong and can have no support from any religion even though they do it in the name of a particular religion. Let's hope that Bush Admin would also take these into account seriously and change its mind set against a particular religion. Indeed, as the present situation stands, Bush Administration's policies appear to cast doubts on all Muslim names and obviously that leads to going after their antecedents and such policies divide the people in terms of religion. The result is, more people get antagonized. This is bad for America. A country that openly and rightly boasts of its freedom must abandon such discriminatory policies based on religion before things go out of control.

For combating terrorism the international communities will have to look into the roots of terrorism and make determined efforts to remove them as soon as possible. Terrorism cannot be

## SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

**For combating terrorism the international communities will have to look into the roots of terrorism and make determined efforts to remove them as soon as possible. Terrorism cannot be stopped by force. The terrorists are too dangerous and extremely widespread. The end of all forms of Israeli and American occupation of Middle Eastern countries seems to be the only way to substantially curb, if not remove altogether, the present wave of terrorism.**



government was a party to Iraq war in collaboration with Bush administration. But they utterly failed to show any respect to the views of huge number of Britons who demonstrated against Bush's state visit to Britain and indeed 38 percent Britons were against Bush's visit. Therefore, it was utterly wrong to target British interests as such because a large number of Britons were and still are against Iraq war and occupation. Similarly, it is absolutely wrong to

they again ignored the positive contributions other Israelis and particularly the "Peace Now" activists have been making towards peace with the Palestinians. There are also people like former Justice Minister Belin and his supporters who are followers of late Ishaq Rabin who have been making all efforts to find a peaceful solution with the Palestinians. Indeed, Belin earlier said that if he were in power he would have withdrawn all Israeli troops from

once such the government changes. The example is already there. When Clinton was President, Arafat was invited to the White House and discussions were held in a very cordial atmosphere, but with the arrival of Bush Arafat became a terrorist because Sharon calls Arafat a terrorist. Everything depends on who is in charge, but this does not make a country bad. Therefore, terrorism as such

stopped by force. The terrorists are too dangerous and extremely widespread. The end of all forms of Israeli and American occupation of Middle Eastern countries seems to be the only way to substantially curb, if not remove altogether, the present wave of terrorism.

Muslehuddin Ahmad is a former Secretary and Ambassador and founder president of North South University

# Time to liberate the US

YAMIN ZAKARIA Writes from UK

TRUE liberation emanates from within a nation rather than from a marauding invading force with a diametrically opposing alien culture. If the ordinary Iraqi masses really desired liberation in this manner they would have certainly showed signs of mass revolt and open cooperation in supporting the early phase of the US led military campaign. Which would have naturally grown with the passing of time. The lack of support was evident even after the demise of the Bathist regime. When the US marines and Chalabi's rent a mob symbolically toppled Saddam's statue, the Baghdad Square was not even filled. This is in a city that has a population of five million. To the contrary the Iraqi resistance has been growing consistently ever since the war has begun. The coalition casualties are increasing, as is the hate and contempt towards these arrogant mercenaries in Iraq. Most certainly, the Iraqi resistance movement could not operate without support from the ordinary masses. Since the resistance is growing, we can safely assume, so is the actual support base. This was also confirmed by the recent CIA report. The recent attack on the Black Hawk helicopters in Mosul has silenced the mass media obsession with the so-called Sunni triangle. Which perhaps has become the octagon by now, as the resistance has clearly become widespread.

The Iraqis, as predicted, are engaged in a heroic struggle along with the aid of their fellow Arab/Muslim brothers to liberate their country. It is perhaps also appropriate to consider the case to initiate the liberation of the US from the clutches of its own "axis of evil". Which are comprised of the neo-cons, Christian fundamentalists and the big businesses. The neo-cons are a group of powerful and influential Jews that "advises" the US State Department to further the interest of Israel as well as for their own personal gains. The word was perhaps invented to bypass the wrath and hysteria of "Anti-Semitism". As the real architects of the war, like many of the "chicken-hawks" of the Pentagon and the US State department, the neo-cons and their children have conveniently avoided all the war drafts. You won't find them in

the forefront of "operation anything". As for the big businesses, which includes the huge arms industry. America is the largest producer and exporter of arms, for them any war is a good profitable business. Then comes along the large reconstruction firms e.g. Halliburton, Bechtel with their intimate connection to the US State Department. They receive the lucrative contracts on a plate as kickbacks for their party "donations". These big businesses want the lucrative oil of Iraq so much that they were content to inflict much suffering and pain upon the defenceless Iraqis and other Arab/Muslim nations. Hence, by the

The final group in the "axis of evil" are the fundamentalist Christians; they are littered within the US State department and the Pentagon. They have no problem using religion as a basis to justify their pro-war policy as was demonstrated by the recent comments of an obscure US General, but yet simultaneously they are lecturing the Islamic world not to bring Islam into politics! What ever happened to the often-repeated Christian slogan "loving your enemies" and "turning the other cheek"? Unprovoked slaps more like! In any case, many of them have been simply brainwashed into believing that the subjugation of the Palestinians and Arabs is part of the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. The Arabs if necessary need to be expelled, the temple of Solomon needs to be rebuilt upon the current Mosque of Al-Aqsa, which would precipitate the second coming of the "Messiah". All this means provide whatever support is necessary to Israel -- not for its survival -- but for it to carry out its divine mission.

**The liberation of US must be pursued through the intellectual front. Educating and dialoguing with the ordinary Americans has brought about a lot of good results and has the potential to do a lot more. So, many Americans after simply visiting the Arab countries or even the European countries have altered their views on Palestine, Iraq and the US foreign policy.**

universal principal of retribution, the Iraqi resistance movement should let them have it free of charge; -- by dousing their soldiers and civilian commercial contractors with it and then setting them alight. Which should be a just retribution for the depleted uranium, cluster bombs, burning napalm, JDAMS and cruise missiles. If possible, similar treatment but on a far greater magnitude should be dispensed towards the shady *Shylock* neo-cons. In any case, all this would be good for America as it would curb their aggression, greed and make them less obese, but most importantly it would contribute towards handing back America to the real ordinary Americans.

At present the Arab/Islamic world, as a combined force could not engage in a military confrontation to eradicate power base of the US "axis of evil". Hence the liberation of US must be pursued through the intellectual front. Educating and dialoguing with the ordinary Americans has brought about a lot of good results and has the potential to do a lot more. So, many Americans after simply visiting the Arab countries or even the European countries have altered their views on Palestine, Iraq and the US foreign policy, in many cases even converting to Islam. This illustrates the gross ignorance of the American society, drugged by its superficial and permissive culture along with the deliberate media manipulation to keep its masses in the dark. As a result many exhibit behaviours that can only be described as being brain washed, unable to distinguish fact from fiction. Perhaps in due course of time we will see Saddam Bin Laden as the real threat. The American mass media in particular lacks objectivity and critical examination of the facts. Just look at Fox TV, which has become a joke in the eyes of the rest of the world.



# General Election 2006

## Election Commission should concentrate on rectifying the electoral roll

SADRUL HASAN MAZUMDER

DEMOCRATIC election systems require a good electoral roll, prepared following certain criteria and mechanism for identifying eligible voters and preventing ineligible persons from voting. Such a mechanism helps guarantee the "one person one vote" principle by preventing people from voting more than once during an election. It's the accurate electoral roll which is the fundamental document of a good election and on the basis of which the election officials identify fake or false voter during the Election Day. Thus a fair and democratic election completely depends on the accuracy of the electoral roll.

The right of all adult citizens to participate in the affairs of the government is one of the cornerstones of democracy. As the foundation stone of democracy, integrity and accuracy of the voter roll is of paramount importance. An underage voter may creep into the electoral roll, but it is unpardonable to disenfranchise any eligible voter by excluding his/her name from the electoral roll.

Perhaps the most fundamental form of political participation is the right to vote in free and fair elections. The ability to exercise the democratic right to vote is premised on the existence of a comprehensive and inclusive voter roll.

Enrollment procedures need to strike the right balance between the need to be rigorous to ensure integrity of the rolls, and the need for flexibility to ensure that people's right to enroll and vote are protected.

electoral roll in the last few elections in our country. The confrontational nature of politics is reflected in arguments related to the electoral roll. Various reports in different news media just after the publication of the preliminary electoral roll raised different controversies. Some of the complaints and measures taken by the EC are mentioned below:

Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity warned that election in hill districts would be prevented unless the voter list was cancelled and a new list was prepared before the 2001 election, arguing that the list was not prepared following the terms and conditions of the Peace Treaty and the District Council Law. The voter list prepared during May-June, 2000 included nonresident persons staying in the Parbatya Chattagram such as businessmen and army personnel. PCJSS claimed that the list should include only the permanent resident of Parbatya Chattagram.

Four thousand women of 12 villages in Surat union of Jhenidah district were barred by fatwa from casting their vote in any election in the last 85 years before the 2001 election. This was reported by a section of the print media in January 2001. EC directed the Deputy Election Commissioner of Khulna and the Deputy Commissioner of Jhenidah to inquire into the complaint and submit a comprehensive report.

EC constituted high-powered investigation committees to probe into allegations of falsification and fraud in the voter roll at two places in Dhaka and one in Bhola. A four-member committee headed by a deputy secretary visited the constituencies where the voter rise was 50 per cent while

country's average rise was 34 per cent. EC investigators were facing difficulties in finding out the floating voters enrolled in slums in the city's Uttara area. An EC team visited the slum in June 2001 to re-investigate allegations that non-existent people were enrolled in the voter list there. During the visit, the investigators did not find some people enrolled in the list at the slum,

**EC should consider the formation of vigilance team comprising volunteers from various EMOs and representatives of various political parties. These teams would be engaged in scrutinising the electoral rolls of the respective areas under direct supervision of the election officials. If considered, the EC should go for immediate implementation of such a program for timely and effective completion of their activities resulting an accurate electoral roll acceptable to all.**

and the local people informed them that these 'voters' actually resided in nearby Dakkhin Khan union. EC reconstituted four investigation teams to re-investigate BNP's allegation of falsification in the voter list in Bangabandhu Slum in Ward No. 85 of the capital city, Laxmipur-Ramgati constituency, Lalmojon and Tamujuddin.

Chief Election Commissioner Mr. M.A. Syed admitted the falsification of voter lists reported by the press and complaints filed by different political parties and directed the concerned officials to bring the culprits to book and take action.

Such controversies and complaints lodged by political parties and candidates clearly indicate lack of confidence in the accuracy of the electoral roll. EC received complaints from both the BNP and the AL as well as some

independent candidates. Despite a sincere effort to make the electoral roll free from complaints before the last general election, EC failed as the drive was not timely. Thus EC should concentrate on the preparations for holding the election well ahead of time. The political parties should also play a complementary role with the EC for holding the election in a free, fair and

impartial manner. The civil society organisations along with the NGOs should come forward with more boldness to establish an independent EC above political interference. Initiatives of the civil society and NGOs help bridge the gap between the political parties and the EC, which can be strengthened through collaboration between the two agencies.

Emerging in the early 80s the NGOs in Bangladesh have been enthusiastically contributing in the national development process very successfully and on some issues more than the government institutions. The political government should not consider the NGOs as the rival but as a supplementary force in meeting the people's aspirations.

NGOs can successfully help government institutions solve most of the national crises. In this regard, Fair

Election Monitoring Alliance has already set up some examples. FEMA has been vigorously advocating for electoral reform since its inception and has contributed to the process of holding free and fair elections in the country. FEMA's contribution in increasing the public confidence over the electoral process is unprecedented. After consultation with a wide range of

professionals, activists and political leaders, FEMA made some recommendations for change to the existing electoral roll, some of which were included in the ordinance by President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed during the tenure of the Caretaker Government on the eve of the 2001 general election.

Just after the official publication of the electoral roll before the election FEMA launched an awareness campaign "Let's Get the Voter List Right" with a view to promote a process for rectification of the electoral roll. The campaign also helped to wipe out fictitious voters from the list, ensure enlistment of those who were left out, and enhance public confidence over the electoral roll. Although the countrywide campaign led by FEMA was very effective it ultimately could not reach its overall goal due to time con-

straints and thus requires large-scale meaningful involvement of the non-government and civil society organizations in the future.

The whole nation has witnessed the formal politicisation of the NGOs of the country. In spite of this, the EC should seriously consider involvement of Election Monitoring Organisations like FEMA in updating and correcting the

electoral roll by engaging its country-wide network of volunteers. The involvement of a non-partisan EMO in the process of preparing and updating the electoral roll would help increasing its level of acceptance to the political parties and the general voters.

During the registration period a good number of people get an excellent opportunity to get involved in the electoral process as volunteers with specific responsibilities. These responsibilities may include initiating voter education campaigns, encouraging the people to register to vote, monitoring the conduct of the government officials, and implementing a system to process complaints regarding preparation of the voter list. These activities including identification of probable problems in the process of registration can substantially enhance the quality of the electoral roll.

Moreover the importance of the pre-election environment monitoring including the process of nomination and its successful contribution towards holding a free and fair election suggests for monitoring of the process of preparing the electoral roll. Monitoring of the electoral process for ensuring a free, fair and credible election cannot be limited to monitoring on election day. The controversies surrounding the preliminary electoral roll and its finalisations demand inclusion of the monitoring of the process of preparing and finalising the electoral roll under the long-term observation program by the EMOs like FEMA.

The compilation of voter list for the purpose of elections to the parliament is based on the constitution, which vests responsibility for preparation of the electoral roll with the EC. Under constitutional provision there is to be one electoral roll for each constituency for the purpose of elections to parliament. Preparation of any special electoral roll classifying electors according to religion, race, caste or sex is prohibited.

Another important issue to be addressed is ensuring the right to franchise of the expatriate Bangladeshis. Non-resident Bangladeshis, numbering 2.5 million, are still considered ineligible to exercise their franchise in national and other elections. Once the expatriates are included in the voter list, it will be a must for the EC to make the necessary arrangements for casting their votes, which is not possible in the conventional system. Relevant laws need to be amended for ensuring the expatriate's right to franchise.

The EC however can seriously

consider the following issues with a view to rectifying the electoral roll: + Involving EMOs to monitor/check the electoral roll throughout the country, particularly in areas where there were serious allegations of fraud; + Verifying the accuracy of the information on the voter lists by conducting sample surveys following a statistically accepted method;

+ Identifying extreme changes in the number of registrants in a region; and + Determining duplicate registrations and the registration of ineligible voters, various computer applications can be used for the existing election database.

EC should consider the formation of vigilance team comprising volunteers from various EMOs and representatives of various political parties. These teams would be engaged in scrutinising the electoral rolls of the respective areas under direct supervision of the election officials. If considered, the EC should go for immediate implementation of such a program for timely and effective completion of their activities resulting an accurate electoral roll acceptable to all.

Generally, the EC ought to have its own permanent personnel who would specialise in election related jobs and remain to serve the EC while top executives may be brought in from the civil bureaucracy. The EC should also hire consultants from amongst former/reired officers of the EC who have previous experience of handling election related issues and problems. EXPERIENCE has no substitute.

Sadrul Hasan Mazumder, served FEMAMSS as the Programme Officer