



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Lebanon massacre

This is with tremendous outrage that I convey my disgust at the brutal killing of the Lebanese by the Israelis. I really want to know if their conscience ever reproaches them for the mass murders of innocent civilians that they commit from time to time. Maybe they do not even have a conscience. The barbaric killings of the Lebanese and the Palestinians are highly regrettable.

And the icing on the cake is, the Israelis have the unconditional support of the Americans, who proudly proclaim that their strongest foundation stone is their belief in democracy, whereas it is evident throughout the world that the Americans slaughter the very essence of the word 'democracy'.

It is high time that they stopped their crimes, as it has been a long time since peace prevailed throughout the entire world.

Jessica Quasem
Niketon, Gulshan

The recent aerial assaults of Israel, which left as many as one hundred Lebanese civilians killed, have shocked all the civilised people of the world. We condemn such brutal display of power. Obviously, this act undermines the very existence of the UNO, which is entrusted with the duty of maintaining peace in the trouble-prone places, including the

Middle East. However, blessed with the favour of the US, the self-proclaimed leader of the unipolar world, Israel has managed to keep its neighbours in a state of fear. The US launched its attack on Iraq in a bid to find the so-called weapons of mass destruction. Yet, Mr. Bush finds no fault with the belligerent stance of Israel. It seems that Israel has been given the carte-blanche to do whatever it wants to.

It is time the UNO adopted a tough course of action on Israel. Otherwise, the peace-loving countries will lose faith in the world body. Certainly, we should not submit to the logic of power, as evident in the recent act of Israel.

Zabed Wali
Pahartoli, Chittagong

I do hereby condemn in the strongest terms Israel's indiscriminate killing and criminal destruction of Lebanese civilians and its infrastructures. There is absolutely no doubt that Israel's actions constitute war crimes. Alas! the world leaders at the G-8 Conference, instead of condemning the outrageous breaches of Geneva Convention calling for an immediate halt of bombing, took side with Israel mentioning it as protecting its people! Had there been any such massacre or killing of innocents carried out by a Muslim country I don't think any one in the West would have remained indiffer-

ent. I am appalled by the pathetic statements from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the G-8 leaders! By failing to condemn the Israeli atrocities under the pretext of 'self defence' they have 'ipso-facto' given the Zionist fanatics more time to carry out their rape of Lebanon.

The Muslims all over the world believe that Israel's slaughter of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon will not break the resolve of their respective peoples. This sterile policy has been tried for decades by successive Israeli governments. But it has only produced highly motivated resistance movements. Many more will be recruited into their ranks across the region and beyond due to Israel's deceitful and criminal behaviour.

The only way out of this crisis is an immediate cessation of hostilities and a negotiated international settlement that secures the release of prisoners and detainees from all sides.

A F Rahman
On e-mail

After the attack on Lebanon by Israel, there has been vehement criticism of Israel in your daily. And for obvious reasons at that. However, as a law student I have gone through many of the writings and found that most of them are based on passion and fraternity towards

a attacked Muslim state, rather than focusing on the core issues. Besides being sympathetic towards Lebanon, it should also be our duty to have a true insight into this conflict.

I am not advocating for Israel. Needless to say, what Hezbollah is doing is just a reaction to Israel's long suppression. But it has been already proved that Israel cannot be bent down by suicide bombs and kidnapping. Rather, these actions are inviting counter-attacks on the innocent civilians of Palestine and Lebanon. After every suicide bomb attack or kidnapping in Israel, the misery inflicted by Israel on Palestine is usually greater. Right to self-determination can be exercised in some other ways (other than attacking Israeli civilians) and world history has examples of other methods working well.

Sharin Shajahan Naom
Kobi Joshimuddin Road, Kamlapur, Dhaka

Israeli military strikes have killed more than 300 Lebanese, almost all of them civilians; destroyed much of Lebanon's infrastructure; put Israeli citizens at much greater risk, because Hezbollah arrested 2 Israeli soldiers. Now world leaders demanded the return of those two soldiers in an effort to stop killing of Lebanese civilians. May I ask those world leaders whether

they can get back those innocent civilians in exchange of the two captured Israeli soldiers? The most shameful comment was made by the US President Bush who said that Israel has the right to defend itself. If Bush really thinks that killing 200 civilians in an effort to release 2 captured soldiers is a correct decision, I must pray to God to save this world from such a dangerous man.

Dr. Mahboob Hossain
Associate Professor
Department of Pharmacy
The University of Asia Pacific, Dhaka

Lebanon "captured" two Israel soldiers? Did they not take as hostage two Israeli soldiers? Soldiers who were just doing their job of guarding their borders? You in Bangladesh are, at the moment, fighting hard for your rights. Freedom of speech must be among these rights you struggle for. How then can you show so much favour to Hezbollah? How can you not realise that if these people succeed in all of their goals, they will not just take out Israel. The "infidels," most of whom will sadly have to die or become very good Muslims. We will all have to dress alike, talk alike, think alike. Did we learn no lessons at all from the Taliban of Afghanistan?

Hezbollah has taken beautiful Lebanon, who had just come back to life after the civil war and practically turned it into



dust. No, you will say. It's with their bombs. Can't you go back a bit further to the beginning? Hezbollah with the help of Iran, and possibly Syria, has thrown the citizens of Lebanon, those who aren't Hezbollah, that is, away for their cause once again. Why can you never see these people for what they are really about? Maybe you don't want to really see them. Repression and keeping people in poverty that's what Hezbollah and groups like it stand for. I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that Muslims are the most self-destructive people on planet earth. Look at Iraq. They had a chance. America would have helped them. You won't believe it, but we still are trying to help. Yes, yes, it would be good for our national interests if it would just work out. The point is it

would be good for Iraq too. At least they could have tested the water a little before starting to slaughter each other. I am, of course not referring to the average Iraqi citizen. Neither do I refer to the average Muslim citizen of various Muslim countries when I speak of this penchant for self-destruction. I don't mean to generalise.

Now, look what we have in Iraq. Sunnis fight Shiites, Shiites fight Sunnis and I understand the Turkomen and Kurds don't much like each other either. What possible sense does all that make? They should be working to build themselves into the prosperous country they could have been but for Saddam Hussein and his murderous regime. This poor country does seem to be all about power. Forgive my rudeness, but it is

beyond frustrating to see a culture of such intelligence and capability throw itself away on old hatreds.

Ayasha, On e-mail

The war against Lebanon is a serious breach of international law. Hezbollah kidnapped two of their soldiers but in response what are they doing? Killing scores of innocent civilians for no reason whatsoever.

It's time the international community forced Israel to stop the war.

Solaiman Palash
East Jurain, Dhaka

Living in an occupied land, which was barbarically taken away from Palestinians, this illicit nation lives on death and destruction of the innocents.

Obaidur Rahman
Gopibag, Dhaka

Teachers' demands

Education is one of the fundamental rights of a citizen, without which no nation can prosper. We achieved independence after a prolonged nine-month war. So we are in the habit of struggling. Though teachers are called nation builders, they are very much neglected and deprived of their rights and claims. So the government should give importance to the people who are trying their level best to educate the nation.

It is known to all that with an empty stomach no success is possible.

Md. Abdus Salam
Assistant Teacher
Joypara Pilot High School,
Dohar, Dhaka

Rights of Palestinians

It was absolutely deplorable that 'a concerned Muslim' compares the situation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with a self made example of a rabbit & beast in his/her letter published in The Daily Star.

The Zionists occupied Palestine & established an illegal state which they named Israel. The Palestinians were & are still being driven out of their homes, their children killed, their wives & daughters raped & you are suggesting that they and the rest of the Muslim world accept all this?

If you want to face the fact, then here is the fact: the land of Palestine is not only a land for the Palestinians themselves, but it is also land for all Muslims. But victory will not come to the Palestinians & Muslims in a silver plate.

Syed Husain
Old DOHS, Dhaka Cantt.
Dhaka

UNSC Secretary General

I read with great interest the articles of Mr. Abdul Hannan and Professor Talukder Maniruzzaman published in your daily regarding the possibility of having a Bangladeshi as

Secretary General of the United Nations.

Hannan and Maniruzzaman have persuasively agreed that given Bangladesh's participation in the UN activities we can make a claim for consideration of our nominee to be selected/elected as the Secretary General of the UN following the expiry of the term of Kofi Annan, the present incumbent of the top most UN post.

I feel that the nominee of Bangladesh government should be a professional diplomat on whom all the political parties of Bangladesh can agree.

In any case if we do not contest for the post this year, we shall have to wait for long years to get a chance to nominate our candidate. Let us not miss this opportunity.

Dr. U. A. B. Razia Akter Banu
Professor, Department of
political science
University of Dhaka

Interpretation of Islam

This refers to Mr. Anisur Rahman's quote from the Holy Quran - (Islam vs. fanaticism: Star, July 18). There are several verses that emphasise tolerance of other religious beliefs. At one place, for instance, Allah says that had he so wished He would have turned all people to Islam. Elsewhere Muslims are clearly forbidden from insulting the gods that non-Muslims worship, lest they should do the same to Muslims.

There is no report that "fanatic mullahs and so-called religious scholars" try to implement Islam by force on non-Muslims. They actually address themselves to the "so-called" Muslims, so-called, because they defy Islam and try to fit it to their size like Christians have done with Christianity and legitimise everything from drinking, through homosexuality, single motherhood, adultery, lesbianism, fornication, and maybe even eating pork. Some like Irshad Manji of Toronto (who calls herself "Muslim refusenick"), even 'denounce' Islam,

yet none displays the courage of their conscience to 'renounce' Islam. It is only then that the verse quoted by the learned correspondent would apply to them.

The "fanatic mullahs and so-called religious scholars" actually address themselves to Muslims. They want the deviationists not to distort Islam to justify acts that are incompatible with it. If they use force to do that it must be denounced. However, the solution is easy. Let anyone who refuses to believe in the sanctity of Islam's precepts, and defies them as of no consequence, openly renounce Islam. Then, no mullah, fanatic or otherwise and no Muslim scholar will bother them.

S.G. Jilane
New York, USA

A miserable experience

I had a bitter experience in the audition test for Close-up-1. I was asked a lot of irrelevant questions by the judge after we waited for long three hours in a queue.

The organisers of the contest should look into the matter.

Amir Mohammad Khan
Dept of English, DU

Dear Dr. Moazzem

With reference to your article titled "Character Assassination: Who is next?" published recently in The Daily Star, I would like to thank you very much for your strong opinion with regard to recent controversy raised by the media about two eminent professors and great scholars of the country - Professor Muzaffar Ahmed and Professor Asaduzzaman. I know Prof. Asaduzzaman personally and let me allow to share some of my personal experience about him. I know him as a professor and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Dhaka University. Professor Zaman is widely known not only as a professor of the university but also as the second father of some young academics like ours. Being a faculty member of Social Sciences,

I can affirm you that his activities are above political position; he helps people irrespective of political colours, gender, position and so on. He is known for his strong personality to all segments of people.

It has been a wonderful opportunity to work under his dynamic leadership. With him I spent a lot of pleasant moments full of hope, vision, mission and aspiration. I cannot remember any bad experience I had ever gone through during his tenure as Dean at Dhaka University. I learnt every time I met him. I have learnt from him how to be optimistic amid a lot of problems all around.

You might be aware that quality of education in general and tertiary education in particular has now become a major concern. Quality of education in Bangladesh is deteriorating day by day. Both public and private universities have not been functioning as per rules set by the government for a long time. UGC is responsible for recommending, overseeing and implementing government policy at the university level. It is professor Zaman who has given institutional shape to UGC through his dynamic leadership.

M. Abu Eusuf
Assistant Professor
Department of Development
Studies, Dhaka University

The other side...

Mr. Minhaj Ahmed in the July 18 issue of The Daily Star wrote, "Finally, we have found one Bangladeshi Jew sympathiser. It is my question to this Jew sympathiser, how would he feel if his home was forcibly taken away from him? How would he feel if the Jewish soldiers murdered his dear son or daughter? How would he feel if his wife or mother was forced to work in a labour camp? We really do not need to recognise Israel. Israel does not exist. These Jews came out of nowhere & yet they flourished."

I find Mr. Minhaj Ahmed's comment about 'this Jew sympathiser' a slur, just as if Mr. Minhaj Ahmed was

called a sympathiser of people we Bangladeshis are more familiar with.

I also find it a slur for Mr. Minhaj Ahmed to ask how a Jew would feel if soldiers murdered his dear son or if his family was forced to work in a labour camp? Whatever else you may think, six million Jewish people as well as others including Gypsies were murdered and forced to work in labour camps during the Second World War. I don't believe Mr. Minhaj Ahmed can relate to that.

I disagree with his statement that "We really don't need to recognise Israel. Israel does not exist. These Jews came out of nowhere & yet they flourished."

Whether our government, the government of Bangladesh wishes to recognise another nation or not is up to the government. itself They choose to recognise another country for diplomatic and political reasons. But if we take Mr. Minhaj Ahmed's notion that 'Israel does not exist. These Jews came out of nowhere & yet they flourished' he should look at Bangladesh, our own country. There were many and there are still many who believe Bangladesh should not have come about but that it should have remained part of Pakistan just as there are many who believed that India should not have been partitioned. Yet, to change Mr. Minhaj Ahmed's words slightly-- these Bengalis came out of nowhere & yet we try to flourish.

M. M. Haque, London

A dismal picture

Really, it's sad and pretty unfortunate that we the people are not able to change or develop the country. Only a few hundred people are responsible for this. May be 100 years later it will be the same. Here government officials and politicians are dictating or controlling every sector of society. Doctors are doing malpractice, lawyers are being bribed, Engineers earning commission. Your legal paper will not be signed until you pay money. Anybody can acquire land in the dark and start real estate business.

Many of the real estate business groups exist in Dhaka. Some of them may not come in reality even after 20-30 years!

That is the picture of society.

W. Islam
Apollo Hospitals Dhaka
Bashundhara R/A, Dhaka

BSF atrocities

Like the ads of various mobile service operators, one piece of news is almost regular in all national dailies-- "BSF kills----". Indian Border Security Force (BSF) members are killing our fellow

Bangladeshis in the border areas frequently and are reluctant to return even the dead bodies.

Will the government raise the issue with its Indian counterpart and try to find a permanent solution to the knotty problem?

Emran
Chittagong

What is wrong with being pro-life?

Is it so wrong to want innocent unborn children to see the light of this world? Who can say these babies, that are killed by abortion,

wouldn't grow up to be doctors, emergency workers, teachers, mothers, fathers, a friend when you are in need or even a scientist that discovers a cure for a disease?

Everyone has a soul at conception and a heartbeat at 24 days. Abortion clinics do not want the truth known because they make their money destroying innocent life and exploiting women. Life is a precious gift that should not be taken.

Maria L. Weiss,
Somerset, USA

Campus politics

Education, regarded as the backbone of a nation, cannot be achieved without a favourable environment. Unfortunately, this sort of environment does not exist in our educational institutions, thanks to the rivalry among the student-wings of our political parties. Their sole objective is political domination. Therefore, Shibir, BCL or JCD, whatever party we talk about, never perform anything on behalf of the general students.

M Alauddin Ansary, DU

