

Mob murder is a national shame

We must launch a public campaign against it

THE sight of three men lying burnt on the dead killed by mob rage as helpless police stood by is more than a matter of law and order failure. It is a statement of a shameless account we are giving of ourselves to the outside world. Indeed, the signs today are disturbing, because thirty years after birth of Bangladesh, public behaviourism is showing signs of being in an immature state. This has to be addressed or we shall see more of the same and perhaps on a greater scale.

Two factors have contributed most to the perception of public helplessness that has forced many to take up vigilante justice. The failure of the police to deal with a law and order situation and the attendant corruption that has followed this decrepit institution are one. The other is the link between the ruling class and criminal society. No administration has been able to convince that they are not in league with the massive criminal construct that commands the country. In fact, politics in Bangladesh isn't possible without the support of criminals. And since such arrangements inevitably operate under the umbrella of impunity for lawbreakers, the public is left with the only psychological option that helplessness generates, which is extreme violence. As they can't change the system they hit out at the manifestations functioning at their own level.

The police are being blamed for the incident but one should also scrutinise if they are allowed to function in a way that is practical for improving law and order. Everyone believes that a criminal caught is no guarantee of a criminal punished. It's the legitimisation of this process of escaping justice that has led to such acts of insane rage.

It's not just the incompetent police or a misbehaving public or even the snatchers that are together causing the problem. Unless confidence in the absolute supremacy of law and order is restored, situation will not get better. That message was delivered in a gruesome manner at Motijheel on Monday. People must be motivated not to take law in their own hands. One hopes before the next one happens, things will get better.

The opposition should join parliament

And test the speaker, the gov't on the floor of the House?

THE Awami League has made it known, without any compunction, that it won't attend the winter session of Parliament commencing tomorrow. After the opposition's boycott of the maiden session of the Jatiya Sangsad in a huff over losing the election through alleged vote-rigging based on a blueprint, we thought they would be wise next time around. But no, they have done it again, this time citing unbecoming atmosphere as the reason. However, contrary to the belief of those in the AL Parliamentary Party who made this decision, we can assure them that even as an excuse this is a poor quality one, let alone as a political ruse.

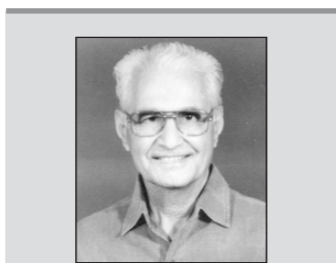
In fact, this has been downright impolitic in the very obvious sense that their voters will feel unrepresented in the JS, even betrayed, by their continuing absence from parliament. As for the whole electorate, the sense of denial in terms of seeing an oppositionless parliament hurtling along with a spanner on the wheels of democracy, will be equally pronounced. Why must AL show a chink in its nerves by expecting to be cajoled into doing something which is their given duty to perform.

Taking due note of their allegations of repression and atrocities on the AL activists and supporters, harassment of opposition leaders by filing court cases and denial of role to AL MPs in development activities, we don't see how these must keep them out of Parliament in a free country under no alien suzerainty? These charges of repression relate to government's behaviour with the opposition outside the parliament. And we, as a paper, have not flinched from criticising the government's treatment of the opposition categorically suggesting that it left room for improvement.

So, why not test the government on the floor of the House, keeping in view for instance the stupendous relevance of your complaints to be addressed within the precincts of the Jatiya Sangsad? Moreover, why not test the Speaker on his declared commitments to neutrality in the knowledge that it is he who holds the key to fairplay inside the parliament.

As a matter of fact, we endorse Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar's suggestion to the opposition that they put up a list of persons who allegedly faced ruling party repression so that he could take it up with the leader of the House for necessary redressal. Mere carping from the wings without specifying details is a lame excuse to play truant from the institution of parliament. Either you join the winter session of the JS or go further down in public esteem. There is nothing in-between.

More realistic thinking on the nukes



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

ALTHOUGH a nuclear weapons and missiles race is still intensifying between Pakistan and India, as shown by the clamour to give a tit for tat reply to the Agni test on Friday (January 25), President and Chief Executive is said to be reluctant to do so. Instead, he has suggested a series of treaties to India with a view to radically improving the relations between the two nuclear neighbours in the security field. He thinks the two should sign a No War pact. And insofar as nuclear weapons are concerned, Pakistan would like to go much further than India's mere no-first-use treaty idea. It is instead proposing the denuclearisation of South Asia by working out a phased but simultaneous nuclear disarmament by both India and Pakistan. There is however nothing new in either Indian thinking or in the Pakistani response. Both know the other will reject the idea; the aim is to score points. The two have gone round this mulberry bush many times since 1980s while cynically proliferating atomic weaponry.

Several near war tensions and the quasi war of Kargil, not to mention the current crisis, all in a space of 15 years, should occasion unease about the future. Islamabad needs to do a deeper and realistic thinking on the nukes as the ultimate guarantee of Pakistan's national security. The reason is that both India and Pakistan now have had a vicarious experience of a nuclear war in real life South Asian conditions after Kargil's half war. In point of fact, India is threatening an invasion with conventional weapons, if Pakistan went on doing what it says is doing in Kashmir, while supporting the Jihad there. Pakistan's realpolitik reply is: 'go ahead, try; we will nuke you'.

Arguably, India stayed deterred but just --- until December 13 incident took place in New Delhi. India, acting on its new doctrine --- that 'nuclear weapons deter only nuclear weapons and a conventional war is possible between India and Pakistan' --- has massed the bulk of its Army on the borders with Pakistan in an attack mode. Pakistan has mobilised likewise and both feel to be in a state of war in which shooting is being held up.

Some analysts think that thanks to the mistrust generated by the

said to do any deterring -- their calculation is obvious: In view of the fact that India can absorb Pakistan's first strike and still give a bigger riposte in kind --- the second strike capability --- no Pakistani commander can afford to take out two or three Indian cities, knowing that the India's counterpunch can wipe out all major urban-industrial centres in Pakistan. Or else they think that their massive pre-emptive strike can cripple the deterrent. Former Foreign Minister Agha Shahi's assessment, published by a

purposeful review of the policy concerning nuclear weapons.

Ever since 1990 when in his ebullience the Pakistani COAS of the day gave on a newer (Jihadi) orientation to the Kashmir policy in the belief that Pakistan's (then) putative nuclear capability was already deterring India. Didn't the threat spelled out by Dr. Qadeer Khan stop Gen. Sunderji in his tracks during Operation Brassstacks? Ergo we can safely go on doing what we like in Kashmir and India can do nothing except to

tinker's cuss? Pakistanis need to do deeper thinking after their vicarious experience of war between two competing nuclear powers. Nuclear arsenals have been of no use whatever vis-à-vis India or in pursuit of a basically militaristic Kashmir policy to them. On the contrary, their very presence has been destabilising. Look at Indo-Pakistan relations either since 1980s or after May '98. There has been no day of real normalcy. So long as nuclear weapons exist in Pakistan's armouries, no Indian Army Chief can

disobey it. Therefore recent changes do not disprove their old policies; we have bought American support. Indians were however smarter; they were able to sell their democracy to the Americans as something more valuable. At any rate, America has swallowed the current Indian stance on Kashmir, hook, line and sinker. No matter what the Americans say or do, we need to make policies based on Pakistan's inherent economic and political strength --- and not on atomic weapons that proved to be useless. We had better not play the big power. Nor should we seek to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the US. Let us be concerned only with the wellbeing and welfare of Pakistan's 140 million persons. As for the ties with the US, we should wake up. Convergences between India and the US are strategic in nature; the US wants to turn India into a counterweight for China in the Asian balance of power. Pakistan is, in terms of great power politics, a second rank developing country --- and it is already hooked thanks to its need for periodical bailouts. So, we have to live on the periphery of a strategic partnership between the US and India for as long as can be seen today.

We need to have an India policy of our own. Nuclear weapons stand in the way of a productive normalisation of relations and economic cooperation. Kashmir policy of the future should have no link with military strength, ours or India's. So why should we go on carrying the useless and expensive burden of a nuclear deterrent that does not deter those whom we want to be deterred. If we really believe in a denuclearised South Asia, we had better start building a nuclear weapons free area here ourselves -- Pakistan first. What India does, as an adjunct of American supremacy in Asia, is Indians' business. No matter what it says or does, we should start acting on what we say we believe in. The same goes for a No War Pact. If India hedges or puts conditions, ignore it. We enforce our peace policy on India. Let us join 182 other non-nuclear states and gain high the moral ground as Nelson Mandela did. Can we be more insecure than we are today?

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PLAIN WORDS

Nuclear weapons stand in the way of a productive normalisation of relations and economic cooperation. Kashmir policy of the future should have no link with military strength, ours or India's. So why should we go on carrying the useless and expensive burden of a nuclear deterrent that does not deter those whom we want to be deterred.

nuclear weapons what might be at stake is a true 'necessity' by both sides to make a pre-emptive nuclear strike --- the only thing that is logical in the circumstances --- if either can get away with it. That a shooting war has not happened is due more to the heavy US pressures than to the good sense of either.

Psychologically, the current phase has been a real war situation; even at this writing a war can be set off through an accident's escalation or miscalculation. No doubt the generals on both sides have gone through all the possibilities; in other words, the Indian General Staff has either taken the possibility of Pakistan's pre-emptive nuclear strike in their stride and still think that the war made some sense or means to nuke Pakistan first in a massive way. We in Pakistan have to tarry here and think deep. How could the Indian generals go as far as they have done, taking the obvious risks of (a) an all out war breaking out; (b) Pakistan crossing the threshold in the easily possible war and nuking a few targets in India. How could the Indian generals take these two initial risks?

No great expertise is needed to see the reason why. Since they possess, and the world knows, a far bigger arsenal of nuclear weapons -- which must do its own deterring, if Pakistan's smaller stockpile can be

contemporary tallies with the former view, though he has not drawn any conclusion from it vis-à-vis the efficacy or utility of nuclear armaments.

Needless to say no one has any defence against a nuclear attack; the result is sure destruction of a profound kind. It just kills men, women and children, would burn the earth, destroy both the flora and fauna, poison the air and water resources in the target area and beyond. Above all, it would maim the generation to come. That sort of death and destruction on either side is totally unacceptable. When in history did a man want his enemy's grand children to be born diseased and disabled? Having calculated all that, India has pressed the threat of a conventional war that can graduate into a nuclear war while toying with idea of a pre-emptive nuclear strike. The kind of concern the BJP regime has of humanity and future of South Asian people has been brought in sharp relief by what it is threatening to do. At least Pakistan's military regime has shown a distaste for war for whatever reason. Pakistan acknowledged it when it authoritatively declared that Pakistan was too responsible a country to use nuclear weapons --- at the height of the crisis. That underlines the need for a more

w rite in pain. Indians took some beating before realising that they too can play at the same game. Now, they have challenged Pakistan to a w a r and do its worst. Realising what nuclear weapons can do whether on Indian soil or Pakistan's, the final Pakistani choice, 'peace' needs to be praised for its sanity and commonsense.

The right of first strike gives absolutely no advantage to Pakistan if the enemy possesses a second strike capability. It is hard to believe that Pakistan possesses such an overwhelming advantage that its first massive strike can cripple all of India and for a generation at least. Otherwise it is pointless. Look closely. In real life conditions, Pakistan's vaunted nuclear deterrent has proved to be a dud. Earlier too, it did not at all deter Bush from forcing Gen. Pervez Musharraf to choose his side rather than go back to the stone age; the darned thing, along with the Kashmir policy -- already in tatters after this January 12 --- needed to be saved rather than its saving its owners. One does not wish to go on to the larger questioning of the doctrine of deterrence itself, although there is temptation to do so. But the question for Pakistanis is insistent: what has its vaunted nuclear deterrent done for it? Is it worth a

trust that Pakistanis will not, in a fit of anger, nuke them. And vice versa. The mistrust that subsists between India and Pakistan has been magnified by atomic weapons' existence on either side. No positive policy of friendship is compatible with keeping nuclear weapons aimed at --- whom? The enemy, who else! What kind of friendship can ever be possible while these evil weapons sit in the respective armouries?

In short, insofar as Pakistan is concerned, --- and one is not concerned with India, because there must be some Indians out there to use their own commonsense --- nuclear weapons have failed to deter either the US (that wanted us to change our basic foreign policies and succeeded) or India (which is the designated enemy but to which we had to assure that we will not nuke it). To repeat, the Pakistani Bomb has been of no use in sustaining Pakistan's 25 year old Afghan policy or 12 year old newer orientation of the Kashmir policy; both had to be changed under external pressure despite the expensive deterrent. It is a painful lesson. But we had better learnt it.

A profound change in policy stances is therefore urgent. It is possible that some Smart Alec will argue that the recent changes were due to American power; we cannot

India and Pakistan prepare for war: Doesn't victory go to the US?

AR SHAMSUL ISLAM

WHEN the Kargil war broke out in 1999 I wrote an article under the title "Isn't the Kargil war won by the US?" (DS, 25 July 1999). As I desire to write a few lines on the recent military buildup by India and Pakistan along the LoC my humble judgement goes for seeing it in the same perspective. Doesn't the victory go to the US again?

Of course there is a vital difference between the two circumstances. In the Kargil war the US did not think of gaining a preponderance. She was spoonfed so by "the blissful unintelligence of the governments and armies of the two countries which made the US subjugate both India and Pakistan without fighting any battle." Further contrary to her (India's) own principle of not involving any third party in the Kashmir dispute it was for the first time that India sent a special emissary to Washington to pressurize Pakistan to pull out its soldiers from Kargil. But this time in recent months it was the US that was looking for an opportunity to obtaining a strategic space for establishing her hold in South Asia in pursuit of her war on terrorism. The recent rising tensions on border between the two old enemies, India and Pakistan, perhaps have provided the US to click to materialise her dream.

Following December 13 attack on her Parliament India sensed it was her time to leap militarily and diplomatically. And India overenthusiasti-

cally made jump upon jump. The world has seen with what promptitude and selective conclusions India has worked. Within a couple of days of the attack India declared two religious militant outfits Lashkar-e-Taiba and Joish-e-Muhammad, based in Pakistan and sponsored by the ISI, responsible for that. She banned air space for Pakistani planes, stopped bus and rail jour-

those two militant sects Lashkar-e-Taiba and Joish-e-Muhammad and froze their assets. Unable to placate India who termed Pakistan's actions against the terrorists as cosmetics, Pervez Musharraf made a landmark speech on 12 Jan that practically admitted almost all the demands of India launching a crackdown on the terrorists, banning five radical groups and arresting thousands of

India forthwith jumped, on its own, to the lap of the US probably discovering in it a new instrument to cow down her arch rival Pakistan. Whereas Pakistan had to accept that new concept under duress and had the mortification of actively helping the US in its war against Afghanistan's Taliban government whose creation and upbringing were so lavishly fostered by her

is still insisting that Pakistan hands over 20 wanted men to India before any pull-out of military from the border, war tension seems to be somewhat thinning down.

Despite the intense bellicosity as being exercised by the two sworn enemies over the month though in a somewhat different manner, India posing as a haughty aggressor and Pakistan a cautious replier, both the

from richly worshipping the demon of war at the expense of morsel of food for the hungry teeming millions.

The core of enmity between India and Pakistan is the 54-year-old Kashmir dispute. Out of the three wars fought between them the two were on this issue. This time the shadow of a fourth war has lengthened to a menacing extent. To write off a probable combustion they must sit together and find out pragmatic means, free from old mindset and baggage of the past. Pakistan has proposed the participation and good offices of a third party in the dialogue to cut through the deadlock of the past. India is awfully allergic to this idea and has shown the obstinacy to keep it free from the touch of any third party declaring the dispute as a purely bilateral issue.

But hasn't India by sending a special emissary to Washington during the Kargil war of 1999 and by seeking growing US intervention to force Pakistan to launch a crackdown on religious fundamentalism defeated her (India's) own policy of solving Kashmir problem by bilateral means? Haven't the mounting tensions along the LoC offered the US an opening to dig deep in South Asia which region the leading Asian and Euro-Asian powers like India, China, Japan, Russia have wanted to keep off from the suzerainty of the US? While India and Pakistan make hectic preparations for war by amassing huge arsenals on the border, victory seems to slip into the pocket of the US.

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neys between the two countries, recalled her envoy in Islamabad with decision for 50 per cent downsizing her diplomatic staff there, mobilised her army, airforce, navy and also perhaps nuclear arsenal launching pads on the border having whipped up a war frenzy all over the country. She asked Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to make a crackdown on the terrorists Pakistan was harbouring on her soil and put forward a list of 20 terrorists to be handed over by Pakistan to India to expect that India did not attack Pakistan.

Pakistan found how hard put she was. Quite conversely she began to climb down and down swallowing her past fanfare of heroics. President Pervez Musharraf first banned

their activists. Interestingly, Musharraf's speech is said to have been okayed by the US before that was on the air and the superpower made India aware of the gist of the speech to calm her (India's) aggression against Pakistan. Amusingly, even then only two days before Musharraf's speech the Indian army chief Gen. Padmanabhan unnecessarily rang out a threat of war on Pakistan.

The post-11 September behaviours of India and Pakistan were products of a new world order contrived by the sole superpower, the US, of an intensely unipolar world following that carnage. In the suddenly announced concept of a new war on terrorism, embellished as a war of the new millennium,

(Pakistan). Recently the US Secretary of State Colin Powell came to India and Pakistan as a part of a peace mission to South Asia. He left the sub-continent expressing optimism that Musharraf would do what he said in his speech and India would restore pre-December 13 situation diluting border tensions. A three-stage process that Powell proposed for the resolution of Indo-Pak crisis contains: a toning down of rhetoric, examining tit-for-tat diplomatic sanctions imposed in recent weeks and finally effecting a military de-escalation on the border. These measures, Powell hoped, would bring the two nuclear-powered enemies across the table for a meaningful dialogue. Though India

combatants ought to know it very well that none can sustain a war economically. Pakistan, subject to a constant looting spree in the hands of its rulers regardless of being elected or military, has found its economy in a life-support drip. Through a constant democratic process India has indeed steadied country's finance but with about one hundred million populace it is as yet overwhelmingly poor. In number India's women and arsenals are somewhat bulkier compared to those of Pakistan but as both countries possess nuclear weapons there is no guarantee that limited war will not escalate into a nuclear conflagration engulfing the two alike. It carries little sense that these two poor countries will not depart

Shahastine in flames

SHAHABUDDIN AHMAD

ISRAELI soldiers blew up the 'Voice of Palestine' Radio and the TV offices in retaliation of the Palestinian shooting, a few days back. Israeli troops have laid siege around the office building of the PLO Chief Yasser Arafat in Ramallah; Arafat is virtually under house arrest. The current intensity of attacks on the Palestinians are in utter violation of all human rights. Israeli troops, under the leadership of Ariel Sharon and his hawks, bombed houses, homesteads of the Palestinians in the name of curbing terrorist activities from Palestinian settlements. The Tel Aviv Authorities are using rockets, helicopter gunships, tanks, bulldozers to kill children, women and grown-ups and to destroy their hearth and homes.

During the last many months since the assumption of the presidency of US by George Warren Bush the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinian has assumed murderous proportions. Not a day passes when the TV screen does not show processions taken out by the Palestinians to bury those killed in the attack of the Israeli soldiers. As if, the Palestinians were born only to die in their own land at the hands of the Israelis. In retribution, however, the Palestinians also kill the Israeli citizens and soldiers but their number in marginal. US is the main source of supply of arms, ammunitions and

also audacity to perpetrate such jelly killing in Palestine. The former President of USA Bill Clinton tried to broker a peace deal between the two feuding parties and personally visited the area at least four times. During his presidency the atrocities of both sides did not reach such high proportions as it is now.

President Bush, on one hand is fighting a war against Afghanistan to wage terrorism and due to the American bombing thousands of faceless and simple people of Afghanistan have been killed. On the other hand, he is offering soft diplomatic signals to stop the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians knowing fully well that the Palestinians are a weak party against the military might of the Israelis who receive visible and in-visible support and supply of most modern military hardware. It seems the Jews of Tel Aviv are fighting a proxy war for the American Jews. In both Afghanistan and Palestine due to these atrocities more Muslims have been killed in the name of terrorism and both the places are the rightful motherland of majority Muslims who are not necessarily fundamentalists. Thus the USA is perpetrating terrorism that she is trying to defeat. The leaders of international community are advising Yasser Arafat to control the terrorist organizations in Palestine while Israel's state terrorism continues to operate in Palestine. This is a diplomacy of a kind, which perhaps serves the interest of the US at the cost of regional and world peace.

Since early prehistoric times

Palestine has been held by virtually every power of the Middle East, among them Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Alexander the Great's empire and those of his successors (the Ptolemies and Seleucids), the Romans, Byzantines, Umayyads, 'Abbasids, Fatimids, crusaders, Ayubids, Mamluks, and Ottoman Turks.

Palestine was administered after World War I by Great Britain under a mandate of the League of Nations; the mandate incorporated the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which stated that British policy favoured the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in

1950 Jordan formally annexed 2000 sqm on the West Bank of Jordan River. In 1967 Israel occupied West Bank with Gaza strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. Under the terms of the Camp David accords (1979) Israel returned Sinai Peninsula to Egypt by 1982. Thereafter, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was recognized as the sole spokesman of the Palestine Arabs in an Arab League Summit held in Rabat in 1974. The PLO in its charter of 1969, claimed a goal to turn Palestine into an independent country of Muslims, Christians and Jews. In 1998 the PLO however agreed for a

question of Palestine' the leader of the delegation re-iterated the support of Bangladesh for the establishment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including their right to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. Excerpts from the statement are given below:

"It has already been three decades and a half since when the Palestinians have been under illegal occupation of Israel. Yet, their fundamental rights to self-determination and to a sovereign state remained unrealized. Millions of Palestinians still live in refugee camps deprived of their natural right

the region prior to the beginning of the peace process. The situation has once again become volatile. The Palestinian Intifada that followed the highly provocative visit of the then opposition leader Mr Ariel Sharon to Haram al-Sharif caused in the death of hundreds of Palestinian civilians. Tens of thousands were wounded and permanently disabled, a large number among them being women and children. Over a year now, not a single day passes without the media bringing to us news of the bloody events in the occupied territory.

"My delegation is appalled by the

We have every confidence that the ennobling spirit of the faiths which emanates from that holy land will ultimately prevail and time will indeed come when the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews shall live side by side in peace and harmony as all those faiths enjoin.

Palestine. Britain governed Palestine until 1948; its administration, however, did not satisfy the majority Arabs nor the growing Jewish population who came from other parts and settled there. After World War II Britain's continued rule of Palestine became untenable, and the problem was turned over to the United Nations General Assembly, which recommended on November 29, 1947 the establishment of separate Arab and Jewish States in Palestine. The State of Israel was proclaimed on May 14, 1948. Subsequently wars have been fought between Arab states and Israel. In

two-state solution creation of Palestine State which would co-exist with Israel. Since then meetings, conferences, dialogues have been held and diplomatic efforts made but the problem, instead of being solved, has been on the seasaw of killing (mostly of Palestinians), arson, destruction, siege and what not.

Bangladesh has given total moral, political and diplomatic support to the cause of the Palestine issue. The Bangladesh Government recently sent a two-member delegation to the 56th session of the UNG . In his statement on 'the

to return to their ancestral home. The report of the committee on the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people eloquently demonstrated the continued violation of rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people in the occupied territory.

"The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and successive agreements from Oslo to Sharm al-Shaik generated euphoria of hope and optimism in the region and peace seemed near and real. Regrettably, very soon the hope withered away and was overtaken again by the hostility and confrontation that had engulfed

recent aggressive re-occupation of Palestinian cities and villages. These have exacerbated the already volatile situation in the Middle East. The international community has already raised its voice rejecting this attitude and demanded that Israel must withdraw its troops from Palestinian self-rule areas without any delay in order to facilitate return of a climate of trust for making peace. We, therefore, reiterate our demand for full and immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian self-rule areas and return to positions held prior to September, 2000."

Israel has continued to pursue a policy of collective punishment in the form of imposing closures, blockade and restriction of movement on the people of occupied territories. On the pretext of security, these are being deliberately perpetrated by Israel with an ostensible purpose of demoralizing the Palestinian people. Restrictions on the movement of people and goods within the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories and other areas had a devastating effect on the already fragile Palestinian economy. This is unacceptable and we reiterate condemnation of this policy.

Israeli policy of confiscation of land with a view to expanding the illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian land has been the major source of threat to peace process. The international community urged Israel to refrain from such act, as this would create further imbalance in the population structure in the cities. This is also a clear violation of the relevant resolution adopted in the Security Council.

The present situation in the Middle East makes it incumbent upon the international community to put the peace process back on the track. In this connection, Bangladesh fully endorses the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee and Tenet plan as confidence building measures to restore the dialogue. We commend the Palestinian leadership for accepting the report in its entirety. But we regret that Israel, on the other hand, continues to impose conditions for implemen-

tation of these recommendations. We urge upon the sponsors of the peace process to exert pressure on Israel to start implementation of the recommendations in a comprehensive manner and without preconditions. In this regard we are encouraged to note recent initiatives indicating a more active involvement of the international community in this issue.

Bangladesh reiterates its total support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including their right to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. We reaffirm that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility in the Middle East until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached. We believe that the active involvement of the United Nations and the international community is essential in this endeavour. Palestinians are the victims of the worst tragedy of humankind and we all have a moral responsibility to support their legitimate cause.

We have every confidence that the ennobling spirit of the faiths which emanates from that holy land will ultimately prevail and time will indeed come when the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews shall live side by side in peace and harmony as all those faiths enjoin.

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