

New citizenship law in Israel: Another issue of discord



The Israeli cabinet has approved a motion requiring new citizens to declare their loyalty to a "Jewish and democratic state."

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M. SERAJUL ISLAM

ISRAEL'S Cabinet by a vote of 22-8 recommended a bill to amend Israel's citizenship law that would require non-Jewish new citizens to swear allegiance to Israel as a Jewish state. The amendment will become law after it is passed by a simple majority in parliament and Israel's Supreme Court accepts it; both expected to come without any hassle. The amendment, aimed at Israel's Arab population, has been widely condemned as a racist policy among Israel's Arab neighbours. Turkish Prime Minister whose country recognizes Israel said that no one can impose citizenship law the way Israel has done with this new law. Syrian President Bashar al Assad has condemned the new law as fascist and racist.

The new law will for the time being affect only a very small number of people; those from the occupied territories who marry Arab Israelis. That notwithstanding, the new law that requires an oath saying Israel is a Jewish and a democratic state, brings into question fundamental contradiction between religion and democracy; whether a religious or theocratic state can be democratic. There are more serious dangers lurking behind the law looking into the future. Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman who is the force behind the new law expects the new law to be applied to all Arab Israelis, one fifth of the population, eventually who would be asked to take oath under the new law and their citizenship revoked, if they refuse to do so.

The religious extremists in the Cabinet of Benjamin Netanyahu have taken advantage of the current status of Israel-PLO talks that has stalled over the settlement issue to push this

new controversial legislation. They have agreed to extend the moratorium on settlement that is crucial to carry the peace talks forward. The US President in his September 23rd address at the UN said that peace would be established in ME in a year. The US is thus putting a great deal of pressure on the Israeli Prime Minister not to allow the peace talks on the settlement issue. The legislation on citizenship is thus possibly the outcome of a deal between the Prime Minister, willing to please the US by carrying forward the peace process, and religious fundamentalists in the Prime Minister's coalition not willing to extend the freeze on settlement.

The citizenship law will ultimately carry forward the peace process. But the law acknowledges certain principles or the lack of it that have embedded in it the seeds of future conflicts that could be much more serious than those that are stalling the peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. First, it is taking away freedom of 20% of the population of Israel who are not Jews but Muslims. Taking oath as citizen of Israel as a Jewish state would take away the religious freedom of the non-Jews of the state of Israel by forcing them to take up religious obligations of another religion. Second, it is intended to target the non-Jews or Arabs in Israel and impose upon them conditions and obligations that are, under the UN Charter of Human Rights, unacceptable. Third, the law will turn Israel from being a homeland for Jewish people to becoming a Jewish state in the religious sense; thus destroying its secular character, totally. Finally, the Arab population in Israel and their ancestors who have been living for millenniums in what is now Israel would now be forced to live as citizens by the conditions set by Jewish

migrants who came to the region from Europe and elsewhere after 1948!

The nature of demography of Israel where its Arab population is growing faster than its Jewish population will mean that in the future the difference between the two will close creating a dangerous prescription for explosion. A new system of apartheid is in the process of being created in Israel right under the nose of the world with the US supervising it in the name of establishing peace in the region!

It is incredible that Israel is allowed to get away with its acts such as the citizenship law and many others like the attack on the Turkish flotilla a few months ago. At a time when barriers are falling all over the world, the Israelis have caged the Palestinians on the land locked West Bank, cutting them off from their livelihood; subjecting them to economic deprivation. While in possession of a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons that for some strange reasons is, with US and Western indulgence, taboo even for discussion, Israel urges the US regularly to attack Iran so that it cannot build nuclear weapons! In the ongoing violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians, where the Palestinians are fighting for their right of self determination and where many more of them are getting killed than the Israelis in the process, the western sympathy seems to be with those killing more and occupying land illegally with contempt. Such is the impact of the West dominated media that today after years of sustained propaganda for Israel, people have forgotten that the Palestinians are fighting for freedom. The victim has today become the accused!

The new citizenship law has been condemned even in Israel by its liberals. Yitzhak Herzog, a labour member of the Israeli parliament, has said on Israel radio "that there is a whiff of fascism on the margins of Israeli society". An Israeli writer Isaac Herzog disagreed with Yitzhak and said that fascism in Israeli society is no longer in the margins; it has now come into the mainstream. Surprisingly, the new citizenship law has not evoked reaction from those who matter in what happens in the region eventually. There has been no reaction officially to the new citizenship law from the US administration. President Obama wants this to appease extremists like the Israeli Foreign Minister and encourage them to extend the moratorium on settlement to bring the PLO back to the negotiating table.

The new citizenship law has sinister designs. Israeli Arabs think that this is designed to ultimately throw them out of Israel. It is a clear hint that Israel is firmly in the hands of extremists who have little or no desire for peace with Palestine. They may extend the moratorium on settlements and carry the peace negotiations only to get the concession on the citizenship law that Prime Minister Netanyahu would not have otherwise agreed to give not because he does not want to but because he has reasons to please President Obama. With such elements on the Israeli side in the negotiating team, it would be futile to expect that there would be any positive outcome of the current peace talks between Israel and Palestine. One wonders if President Obama is being utterly naïve in publicly declaring in his September 23rd speech in the United Nations that he expected peace talks to end successfully in a year's time.

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Marines test new threat detection system

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C.: Troops deployed to combat zones put themselves in harm's way on a daily basis, but due to recent innovations their mission may be a bit safer.

Marines and sailors with 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, began testing fiber optic cables with the ability to sense vibrations from the ground around them, aboard Camp Lejeune, recently.

In addition to being able to sense ground vibrations produce by a potential threat, the cables can also determine the source.

"The cables can tell you the difference between someone walking above them to someone digging a hole," said Staff Sgt. Alexander Abel, a combat engineer with 8th ESB. "This tool can prove to be very valuable in the fight."

The cables are placed in the ground and connected to computers in the combat operations center. In the COC, Marines and sailors watch the monitors for any disturbances.

The different types of vibrations are categorized by color codes, red being the most severe. When this code is received, appropriate actions are taken to defuse the situation and ensure the path is clear.

"This can keep so many Marines and sailors safe," said Abel. "We can have eyes on the roads without actually putting our own service members in danger."

Safety is paramount when in a combat zone. Anything that can help service members in the fight is a plus, and the Marines and sailors of 8th ESB are putting forth their best efforts in keeping their fellow ship mates safe.

"If we can send Marines out to stop someone while they are digging the hole for an [improvised explosive device], it will prevent a lot of unnecessary injuries," Abel concluded.

UK national security strategy published

THE Government has published its National Security Strategy, 'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty', today, which outlines our reappraisal of Britain's role in the world, the risks to our security and the implications for the UK.

Together with the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) which will be published tomorrow, the National Security Strategy (NSS) sets out our strategic choices on how to ensure the security of our country and how we need the structures in place to allow us to react quickly and effectively to new and evolving threats.

The NSS and SDSR together provide direction for national security policy, capabilities and resources for the next five years. The NSS allows Departments to prioritise their resources according to the risks set out in the document.

The NSS, which has been coordinated and developed by the Cabinet Office undertaking strategic thinking on national security issues in support of the National Security Council, sets out two high-level objectives which will guide our strategic approach overall:

- to ensure a secure and resilient UK by protecting our people, economy, infrastructure, territory and ways of life from all major risks that can affect us directly; and
- to shape a stable world by acting to reduce the likelihood of risks affecting the UK or British interests overseas, and applying our instruments of power and influence to shape the global environment.

The NSS decides our priorities for action, and identifies 15 priority security risks to the UK. The following Tier 1 risks are judged to be our highest priorities for UK national security:

- terrorism;
- cyber attack;
- major natural hazards and accidents; and
- international military crises.

Afghanistan will remain our top priority while British troops are deployed there.

In a written ministerial statement to Parliament announcing the publication of the National Security Strategy, the Prime Minister said today:

"The United Kingdom faces a complex array of threats from a myriad of sources. The National Security Strategy describes the strategic context within which these threats arise, and how they may develop in the future.

"It describes Britain's place in the world as an open, outward-facing nation whose political, economic and cultural authority far exceeds our size. Our national interest requires our continued full and active engagement in world affairs, promoting our security, our prosperity and our values.

"Our objectives are a secure and resilient United Kingdom, and shaping a stable world. In pursuit of these goals, our highest priorities are tackling terrorism, cyber security, international military crises and national disasters such as floods and pandemics.

"We will draw together and use all the instruments of national power to tackle these risks, including the Armed Forces, diplomats, intelligence and development professionals, the police, the private sector and the British people themselves.

"The National Security Strategy, together with the measures in the Strategic Defence and Security Review, will enable us to protect our security and advance our interest in the world."

Source: defencetalk.com



Mission accomplished: Securing the Commonwealth Games

BIBHU PRASAD ROUTRAY

NOTWITHSTANDING the glitches and shoddy preparations that went into organising the Commonwealth Games (CWG), India certainly delivered in terms providing full proof security to the athletes of participating nations. No terrorist attack took place during the games. In addition, no significant criminal activity targeted either the athletes or the foreign spectators during the entire period over which the games were held.

The sheer number of personnel deployed for the games is something to take note of. 28,000 police personnel belonging to the Delhi Police and 20,000 para-military personnel belonging to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were deployed for the Games duties at the eleven CWG venues, the Games Village and other key locations. The Delhi Police, with 65000 personnel, is the biggest police force in charge of capital of any country. It had recruited 12,000 additional personnel months prior to the CWG. Delhi Police's dog squad had been augmented by 123 canines before the Games. In addition, 1,500 commandos from the National Security Guards (NSG), the para-military forces and Delhi Police were deployed at the stadiums and the Games Village.

For the first time in the country's history, devices to detect CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear

assaults had also been deployed at key venues. The Indian Air Force (IAF) too had deployed its sophisticated radars to scan Delhi skies while UAVS kept a watch for air intrusions. IAF helicopters also hovered over the Games Village.

In spite of such elaborate arrangements, very few believed the repeated assurances of both the Delhi police commissioner and the Indian home minister that security will be full proof. A terror attack was highly anticipated. Such predictions appeared to be coming true with the attack carried out outside the Jama Masjid in Old Delhi area on 19 September. Delhi police believes that the terror group Indian Mujahideen had outsourced the attack to the local youths and criminal gangs. Moreover, the attack was directed at creating panic rather than killing foreigners.

On 9 October, a western intelligence input alerted Delhi police of the possibility of a frontal terror attack on a games venue with multiple weapons including rocket launchers. The input suggested that a retired major from the Pakistan military had trained terrorists in a camp on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to carry out the attack.

Few would know that apart from the deployment of a large number of security force personnel, security plans for the CWG were only an extension of the security architecture for the national capital that has evolved since the 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian parliament. Especially since the terrorist

attacks in Mumbai in 2008, such plans have been rigorously implemented. Delhi police has closely collaborated with countries like the US, the UK and Israel to finess its skills to deal with terror attacks. With the help of Israel, Delhi police put together its Delhi Police Special Weapons & Tactics (SWAT) Unit in 2009. Hundreds of Delhi police personnel who have undergone training in Krav Maga, an Israeli hand-to-hand combat technique, were deployed all across the city during the CWG.

Providing security to Delhi is no child's play. With 15 million population and spread over more than 1484 square kilometres, Delhi is the largest metropolis in the world. New Delhi with 42.7 square kilometres is only a tiny part of the National Capital Region (NCR). Security threats to the capital emerge not only from within the NCR region, but also from states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh with which Delhi shares its borders.

Thus, insulating New Delhi from the rest of the NCR was one of the key components of the security plan during the CWG period. Although such a plan has been implemented for a number of years since the 2001 parliament attack, terrorists have managed to carry out several attacks in the national capital. Multiple terror attacks that took place on 29 October 2005 killed 59 people and injured nearly 200. A series of explosions took place on 23 September 2008 killing 25 and injuring 150 persons. Another explosion

on 23 September 2008 killed three people.

What has helped the Delhi police enormously in this direction is its 'eye and ears scheme', initiated during last couple of years. It has strengthened the ground level intelligence gathering mechanism of the police by way of eliciting information from beggars, shopkeepers, vendors, etc on suspicious activities. In the last couple of years, information generated through this scheme has helped Delhi Police in busting several terror modules.

The screening of the foreigners entering the country prior to the games was another important component of the security arrangement. With the help of a Major Events Support Team (IMEST) of the Interpol, Indian authorities carried out screening on over half a million foreign visitors. Each foreigner's antecedent was checked against the Interpol's global database to ensure that no terrorist gains access to the country. The CIA too provided India its inputs and worked in close collaboration with the Delhi Police.

The Games are over, but challenges to terrorism continue to hover over New Delhi. However, it is without doubt that the Delhi Police would be enormously benefited both from its improved infrastructure and enormous experience in the years to come.

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