# Smell the Coffee, Taste the Blood

**S SHAWKAT**

I have always loved social media, particularly Facebook. People complain about friend requests from strangers, relationships they have left behind coming back to haunt them, and so on. But for me, Facebook has been an enjoyable place. Until now.

These days, whenever I sign in, I brace myself for the rush of blood to my head that inevitably comes from reading some of the posts on my newsfeed. From people whom I respected, people whom I thought well of, people whom I liked, yet so many of them seem to be talking absolute rubbish. Rubbish is perhaps too unkind a way to put it. But some of the posts range from misguided to mad, or so it seems to me.

The offerings that Facebook brings nowadays too often leave me feeling frustrated and angry.

The first category consists of posts from friends who are really against the death penalty. I do respect their view, I do. But death penalty is still part of the law of the land. Hardly is it asking for something completely alien to our culture, let alone something illegal. Furthermore, some of these well-meaning people don't seem to understand that we live in an imperfect world. One where war criminals who are given life imprisonment will serve at best a few years, if that.

Also, no matter how strong your opposition to the death penalty, there is such a thing as sorting out your priorities. At this moment in time, when Bangladesh faces such a real and present threat from fundamentalist forces, is the battle against the death penalty the most important thing to fight for? If you really believe it is, then you must be living in some utopian fantasy, not in Bangladesh.

The second category consists of posts from friends who are worried about the lack of fairness of the war crimes trials. It is doubtless true that there have been real concerns about some procedural elements of the trials. But the men under trial are almost certainly guilty. They are a handful among thousands, against whom the cases are particularly strong. We know this by virtue of the amount of witness testimony and information we have about their deeds. Do the admitted irregularities in the trials mean that those raising objections actually believe that the men under trial are innocent? Does anyone really believe that?

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So again I ask, is it the best use of our energies to go on shouting about the "unfairness" of the trials when the criminals and their henchmen are doing everything they can to intimidate witnesses and thwart the judicial process? I cannot understand why people who are worried about fairness are not worried about the unfairness of what was done to the victims of the collaborators during the war, and about the vengeance and intimidation of those victims that is taking place today.

The third category consists of liberals who are blaming those who have called for the banning of the Jamaat and the death penalty for war criminals, for the recent spate of violence unleashed by the Jamaat cadres and the Shibir. Are you trying to say that if people had not called for a ban on the Jamaat or if they had not called for the death penalty, none of this would have happened? Are you so naive?

The truth is, on any occasion when the Jamaat-Shibir has faced any form of opposition, their response has been brutal and murderous. It is not for nothing that they have actually created a new category of political violence known as rog-kata rajniti. The only way you can avoid violence at their hands is by total submission to their twisted philosophy. Don't fool yourselves any longer about this please, for all of our sakes.

The shameful and heinous attack on minority communities including the recent atrocities against Hindu villagers, are part and parcel of their