

Of war criminals and hypocrites



#ResearchMesearch
MUCH has happened over the last week including: 1) the executions of SQ Chowdhury and Mujahid and 2) the UN's call for abolishing the death penalty in Bangladesh. A few thoughts:

ONE.
I agree with the United Nations. The death penalty is inhuman and inhumane. What I don't understand, however, is how the UN can call for its abolition in Bangladesh while it [the death penalty] thrives around the world – from neighboring India to the land of the free (the United States). If we are to invoke stories of inhumanity, let us think about Glenn Ford, an African American man in Louisiana who spent 30 years in death row for a murder he didn't commit. Let us recall how Yakub Memon was put to death without reasonable evidence for "terrorism" only because his brother was Mushtaq "Tiger" Memon, a wanted criminal.

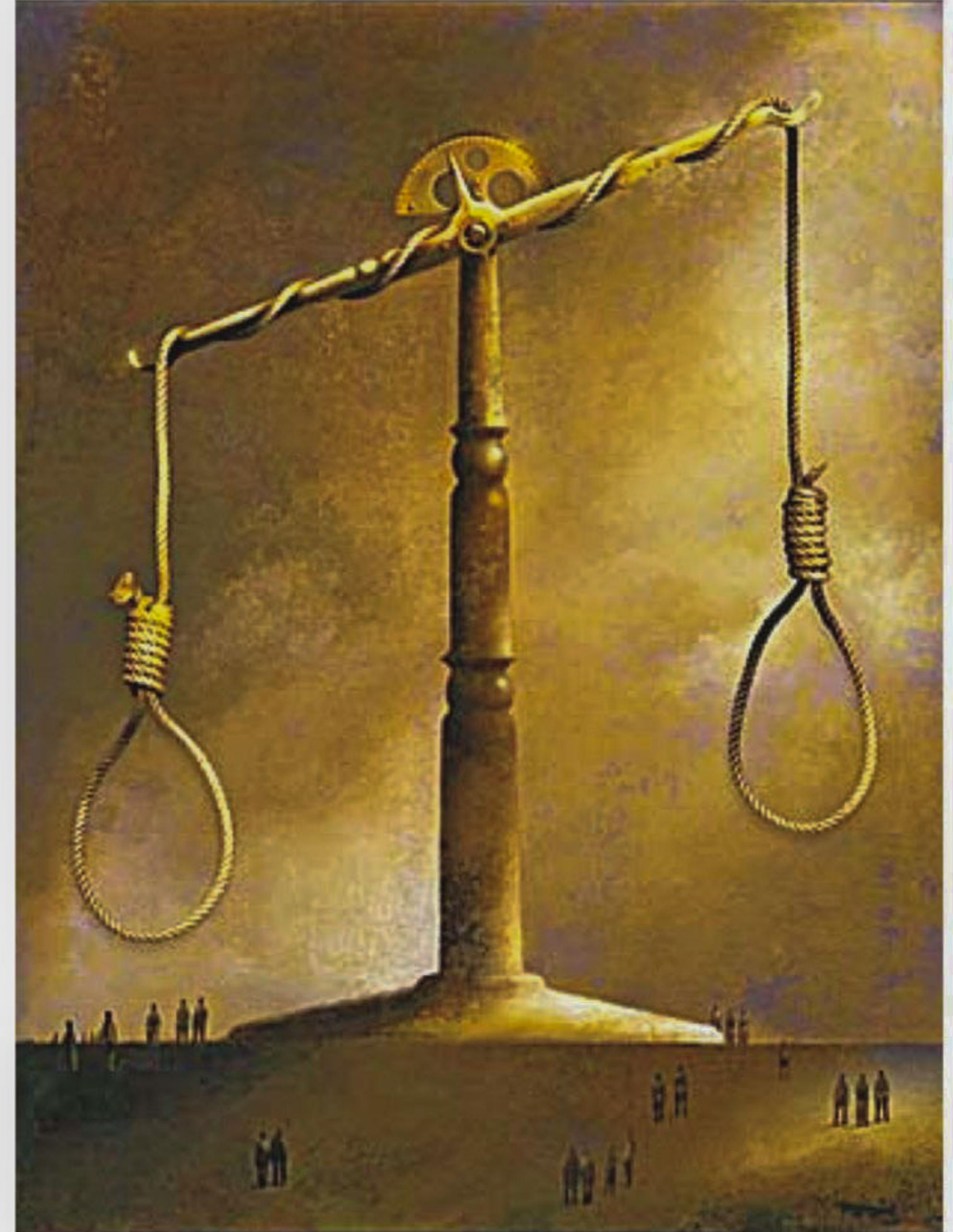
TWO.
When I read that SQ Chowdhury didn't want to get up on the scaffold, I could distinguish between a human being and a demonised war criminal. In some ways, I could empathise with the fear that he must have felt, as he was hanged, his head covered. This, knowing, that he was at the helm of a spate of terrorism against minorities in 1971; knowing, that his house was a terror cell. Knowing that he took my grandfather, Lutfe Ahmed Chowdhury, to have him killed (and saved by Nabi Chowdhury, who under the guise of a Peace Committee member, helped many Bengalis in Chittagong).

THREE.
As I see the various condemnations of the two executions from countries like Turkey and Pakistan, I can't help but wonder why they never stood up for the young Muslim man, Dzhokar Tsarnaev, who was, according

to his lawyers, compelled to help his brother carry out a bomb attack in which several people died during the Boston Marathon, and according to analysts was a convenient scapegoat (details here: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/fbi-evidence-proves-innocence-of-accused-boston-marathon-bomber-dzhokar-tsarnaev/5469773>). What happened to Muslim brotherhood in that situation? Why did the justice-hungry Muslim leaders of these two great nations shy away from the plight of a young man caught in the worst web of seemingly extremist values and Islamophobic propaganda?

FOUR.
Speaking of Dzhokar, if I was on the jury panel of Dzhokar Tsarnaev, I am not sure what I would have said to the other jurors, but I would not have condemned this man to death – even if I believed he was guilty. One court reporter said that Dzhokar's poise may have cost him his life; he stared at the table or ahead of him as witnesses recounted their anguish and pain on the day of the bombing for which he and his brother were found responsible. His lawyers painted the picture of a young man in the shadow of an older brother. Dzhokar, on the other hand, had no verbal or non-verbal response. He simply sat there. Many in the media called him "evil" and the crimes "mindless." What tore at people was the lack of empathy, perhaps. Because there was no "rationale" that they could buy into. But can his lack of empathy justify the lack of empathy shown towards him?

FIVE.
I personally find celebrations of death rather distasteful. The celebrations in Boston and Dhaka left me befuddled because I tend to think that most people understand that human beings consist of a complex web of traits and states that inform their actions. But clearly they don't, so here's a spiel: While traits are genetically determined, states can change, which means people are not static. They are capable of great change, but only when they are given the opportunity to do so, when they take the



opportunity to change their states. In pedagogical terms, it's like encouraging students by focusing on their strengths rather than beating them down by focusing only on the things they struggle with. It's like students who take responsibility for their own learning, instead of waiting to be

spoon-fed.
Point being (and I'm sorry if it sounds didactic): let us learn to give people a second chance. Let us give them a chance to repent. And if they don't, it's not on us. But if they do, we have helped a man redeem himself.

SIX.
Palestinian poet, Fady Joudah, while speaking at a panel at the Dhaka Lit Fest, mentioned his experience in India where he received a lot of support re: Israeli oppression against Palestinians but no one mentioned oppression in Kashmir. Just like no one mentioned any form of oppression taking place in Bangladesh against minority groups, be it in the Chittagong Hill Tracts or against Hindu minorities across the nation. And there lies the answer to how "hypocrisy" is created: some prefer to pick and choose causes to support.

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But, it is important to condemn all forms of oppression; picking and choosing creates a hierarchy that undermines the larger cause of fighting all systems that promote oppression and all the isms that plague the world today. Picking and choosing also speaks to camps we are in rather than standing up against oppression, undermining the 'causes' themselves.

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The Grand Theatre of War

ADNAN R. AMIN

FOLLOWING the French 9/11, the War on Terror is poised to shift into a higher gear. In fact, things were already in motion when Russia started bombing ISIS strongholds and oilfields. Reeling from criticism of its 'Leading From Behind' strategy, the US administration has been undermining Russian strikes for not hurting ISIS and for high collateral damage. The Paris Attacks, therefore, helped the Coalition better argue the inefficacy of the

ignores the region's history, tribes, politics, religion and culture. Indeed even in the War on Terror experience, regime toppling in the Middle East has only triggered and/or intensified sectarian conflicts. Western leaders have been caught out of their depth by schisms and violence that ensued after the fall of Saddam or Gaddafi. So, there is ample reason to doubt the appropriateness of 'regime-change' as the best strategy option in Syria.
The Syrian War has already waged on for four years, claimed over 250,000

four years, NATO members appeared unwilling to put boots on the ground in Syria. Ally regimes in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey were deemed enough to deal with Assad and later, ISIS. But things changed after the Paris Attacks.

Media narratives quickly and inextricably fused the Paris Attacks and the Syrian War into a single storyline. Politicians began advancing various pet agendas: expansion of surveillance, closing of borders, banning of encryption and closure of/spying on mosques, all accompanied by a deluge of xenophobic sentiments. The tired, ineffectual and exorbitant War on Terror was recalibrated to target ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Diplomatic and political undercurrents intensified too, driving what will probably be the next phase in the War on Terror. This time, there will be no repetitions of past mistakes: namely, declaring an 'illegal' war against an unrelated country, using the sanctity of 3000-odd lives lost on 9/11 as justification. On the contrary, WoT-2 seeks to establish a much broader consensus and institutionalise an indefinite State of War. To this end, Romania and Spain are leading an effort to set up an Anti-Terrorism Court. While that is an excellent idea, confusion remains regarding how to define Terrorism. The bone of contention has to do with whether actions by 'militaries' and/or 'freedom-fighters' can be labelled as Terrorism. The discerning reader will appreciate the conceptual and operational latitude and control retained through subjective and politically charged words like 'freedom-fighter'. The court, by dint of its status, will be able to dictate who is a terrorist and who is not. Such arbitrary arbitration power, combined with an

adjustable war-machine, may end up serving the interests of those who wield it.

There are also reports of efforts underway to set up, under the United Nations, a supranational agency with sweeping powers to counter terrorism. It is envisaged that an international terrorism intelligence and police force with universal jurisdiction can be developed to execute the ruling of the court. Readers may note that this proposed structure closely resembles that of a sovereign government. The objective of such institutionalisation is to discredit and delegitimise 'any' enemy; or more precisely, to claim exclusive rights to evaluate and determine the legitimacy of political claims all over the planet. Excuse the conspiracy-theory loan phrase, but that constitutes nothing less than a New World Order.

Changes to the War on Terror essentially represent a strengthening and legitimising of the military campaign, but fail to reflect a more nuanced understanding of the root causes of Terrorism. Cautions against Interventionism and brute force have gone unheeded. Lessons on funding and arming amorphous, fluid groups of rebels in countries have not been learnt either. The dire social-cost of cultivating 'Xenophobia' as political cover for military expeditions are still ignored or trivialised in media discourse. So, as it was with al-Qaeda, the West has again found itself fighting an enemy that it helped incubate and flourish. And as was done with Iraq after the original 9/11, Syria (and its refugees) is being pinpointed as the root of all evil; even

though the Paris attackers were not Syrian.

World War I was once thought of as 'the War to End All Wars'. But the hypothesis that "violence can be extinguished with greater violence" has since been thoroughly disproved and should have no place in modern statecraft. Yet it is the bedrock of anti-terrorism. Conversely, there has been little attempt to confront the Gulf States about funding, arming and supporting extremists. Israel's continued provocations have also been shoved under the rug. There is simply no evidence to suggest extremist organisations have been thoroughly tracked, isolated, infiltrated, hacked, harassed, starved or, in any meaningful way, weakened.

Each of the World Wars was triggered by relatively minor incidents, in the backdrop of larger, philosophical conflicts and global economic downturns. These conditions have come to prevail again. Further, the attacks in Paris, Beirut and Mali, US-French aerial and naval strikes and the Turkey-Russia standoff constitute a dangerous escalation. President Obama recently spelt out that Russia was now effectively in a coalition of two, with Iran. Everyday, the Syrian sky is abuzz with Russian, French, American and Turkish fighter jets and bombers; the coast is lined with warships and submarines. Syria is now a pressure chamber burgeoning with mutual resentment, dreams of war-time profiteering and fantastic firepower. If all parties are not united on the goal – the defeat of ISIS – this may turn out to be a long, drawn out conflict, with no end in sight.

The writer is a strategy and communications consultant.

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Russian campaign. The real concern, of course, was that Russia's campaign was only strengthening the Assad regime.

Unlike NATO, Putin's administration does not accept the western premise that ousting Assad is a prerequisite, or even a necessity, for defeating ISIS, or for lasting peace in Syria. Many Eastern societies identify the Syrian War with broader Arab-Sunni attempts to undermine and overthrow the (Shi'a) Alawite dynasty (empowered by the post-WW1 French Mandate of Syria). Identifying Assad as the root of Evil is a western narrative and one that somewhat

lives, drawn at least 10 countries into its unholy vortex, and now threatens to embroil the world in more bloodshed. Politicisation of the Paris Attacks and the reprised NATO-Russia cold war represent a precarious stage in this multifaceted, international nightmare involving Assad, the Syrian army, other pro-Assad forces, Syrian rebels, al-Qaeda affiliates and refugees. A CNN analyst estimated that there are 27 different parties and factions with varying degrees of capacity and loyalty present within Syria. Add to that the latest scourge of ISIS. For much of the

QUOTABLE Quote

The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion.

ALBERT CAMUS

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Certain	1 Dancer in the bible
5 Confession list	2 Quarter-back Johnny
9 Country estate	3 Spring bird
10 Take as one's own	4 Rocker Clapton
12 Suspect's defense	5 Sleuth Spade
13 Film	6 Wedding words
14 Catch sight of	7 Beginner
16 Check-cashing needs, for short	8 Web spinner
17 Fed	9 Like a stray dog
18 Sweet to the ears	11 Midterm, for one
21 "You bet!"	15 Building
22 More minuscule	19 Foot or furlong
23 Do some tailoring	20 Ignited
24 Verve	22 Garr of "Tootsie"
25 Lazy fellow	23 Crater part
26 Verbe	24 "Cut that out!"
29 Type of clock or energy	25 Urban force
30 Reasonable!	26 Prepared the hook
31 "Very funny!" in a text	27 Opens, as a pill bottle
32 Lead on	28 Track contests
34 Big and clumsy	29 Arkin of "Argo"
37 Worry	30 Map division
38 Specialized market	33 Bird abode
39 Dance units	35 That lady
40 Adolescent	36 Chick's mom
41 Turner and Danson	

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

S	T	E	M	B	A	I	T	S	
C	O	N	A	N	O	N	C	U	E
A	R	T	I	E	S	T	O	L	E
T	E	A	W	T	S	N	A	P	
S	U	I	S	S	E	S	I	N	S
P	L	U	M	S	A	U	C	E	
N	E	S	T	S					
P	R	U	N	E	F	A	C	E	
D	E	E	P	R	A	N	O	U	
W	E	T	T	A	U	O	R	O	
A	L	I	B	E	L	I	K	E	
R	E	N	E	E	T	R	I	K	
F	R	A	T	S	S	E	A	S	

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

CONSIDERING THAT WE LOST THE WAR GAMES, GOT SKUNKED AT FOOTBALL... ...AND FAILED THE PENTAGON INSPECTION... HIS SPEECH WASN'T AS BAD AS IT COULD HAVE BEEN

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

HOW WAS THE ZOO TODAY? GOOD, WE WENT TO THE MONKEY HABITAT... ...WHERE THERE WERE A BUNCH OF MONKEYS. AFFECTIONATE MONKEYS... ZOOS SHOULD BE RATED PG-13