

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

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## Medieval torture in the name of village arbitration

*Those involved must be punished*

**W**E are appalled by a report in this daily about a woman and a man being tortured and humiliated at the behest of a village arbitration meeting in Galachipa upazila. They were accused by neighbours of having an extramarital affair. What is most reprehensible about this shameful incident is that it was spearheaded by a former and a current upazila chairmen. These two former and present public representatives took the two individuals to the union parishad office and held the arbitration meeting after which they ordered that they be beaten up, the man fined TK 30,000 and the woman's head be shaved.

We have heard of other incidents where village elders have taken it upon themselves to act as the moral police and arbitrarily impose edicts of humiliating torture on helpless citizens, many of them women. The medieval punishments inflicted on the victims indicate that these self-righteous village elders, in this case, public representatives, have no regard for the laws of the land or for the constitution that prohibits the violation of rights of citizens.

The husband has filed a case against the two former and present officials as well as a few others involved in this barbaric incident. The police, till writing of this editorial, have said they are 'trying' to arrest the accused. The state must ensure that these men, one formerly in their payroll and another in their present administration as well as their cohorts, must be immediately arrested and brought to book. The more such arbitrary village justice that goes against the grain of our democratic ideals are tolerated, the further we will regress as a nation.

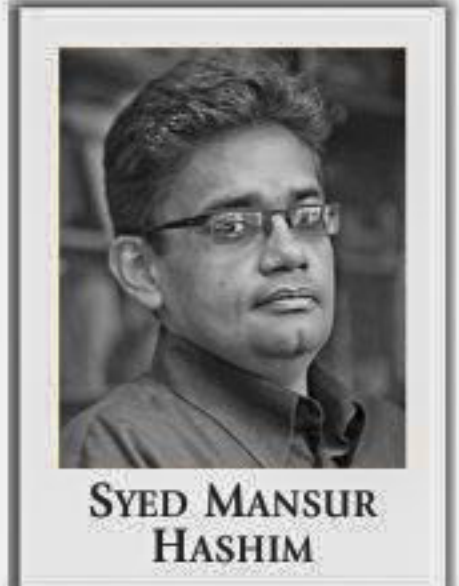
## Plunder of Gangamati Reserve Forest

*Take immediate steps to save it*

**W**E are shocked to note that a large number of trees have been regularly plundered from the Gangamati reserve forest in Patuakhali. The trees which form a green belt are half-a-century old and were planted to protect the coastal region from natural disasters. It is indeed disconcerting to note that local goons, in connivance with some forest officials, have reportedly felled as many as 100 trees in the last few months only to sell them in the illegal market. The destruction of the forest has been going on with impunity for some time now, which has allowed the plunderers to brazenly carry out their criminal activities. So much so that some forest officials reportedly harass anyone who protest the illegal felling by lodging false cases. The very people who were supposed to protect the forest are now preying on its resources.

This points to a serious systematic and operational flaw. Also, there are only three guards to protect a huge swathe of forest, making it rather impossible to patrol the entire area. It is indeed high time that we took concentrated efforts to protect reserve forests such as Gangamati, which is mostly populated by mangrove plants. The trees are crucial for the biodiversity of the region, work as natural buffer against cyclone and are used oftentimes as shelter by the local fishermen.

We demand the immediate arrest of the individuals responsible behind the pilferage of the trees from the reserve forest. The authorities concerned need to increase number of guards and other logistics. In this regard, involving the local people to help safeguard the forest by providing intelligence to the authorities is also pivotal.



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

**S**UICIDE bombers belonging to Jamaat-ul-Ahrar set off explosions at a park in Lahore on Easter Sunday killing more than 70 people and injuring some 300. A spokesperson for the group claimed in a telephone interview with Washington post: "It was our people who attacked the Christians in

Lahore, celebrating Easter...it's our message to the government that we will carry out such attacks again until Sharia [Islamic Law] is imposed in the country." The bombing happened in PM Nawaz Sharif's stronghold of Punjab and the city is home to the largest concentration of Christians living in the country. The group in question is one that split away from the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan in August 2014 and rejoined the Pakistani Taliban and one that is responsible for a series of suicide attacks.

This is not the first time Jamaat-ul-Ahrar has targeted Christians. On March 15 last year, it took responsibility for twin bombings that targeted a Roman Catholic Church and Christ Church during a Sunday service at Youhanabad town in Lahore. That attack claimed some 15 dead. The group has been actively involved with the Afghani Taliban which has been waging a war to retake the country since losing power in 2001.

Many analysts believe Pakistan's woes got worse since the military launched its offensive to pacify the country's north-western tribal belt a year ago. The conflict in the region over the last decade has left some 50,000 dead and has galvanised terrorist networks in an effort to destabilise the country through regular attacks on both the military and civilians. The outfit has proved to be more effective than others in carrying out three attacks in the month of November, 2014. It has no qualms about going after "soft targets" as has been shown in the Lahore incident. What is perhaps worrying is the mounting evidence of the presence of the Islamic State (IS) in the country, as reported by international press.

A report carried by *Newsweek* in January, 2016 outlined that an investigation by federal law enforcement agencies had uncovered a small group of "government officials was discovered to have been collecting information for IS, allegedly because they supported its 'holy war' on the West." This of course opens up the wider question of financing terror and carrying out operations in Pakistan and recruitment of Pakistani nationals for IS's war in the Middle East. Despite the official stance of the government about the non-existence of IS on Pakistani soil, outright denial merely strengthens the hand of the outfit.

One cannot refute the fact that the continued military action in the north-western provinces is bearing fruit. According to military spokesman Major General Azim Bajwa, more than 2,700 terrorists have



PHOTO: AFP

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been killed in the first year of operation and another 200 or so killed in various Pakistani cities; thousands have been detained nationwide. While allegations remain that the Haqqani network has been spared the brunt of the government onslaught, the removal of safe havens for militant groups in the bordering areas is putting a dent in the transfer of money and resources through North Waziristan. And that is perhaps one of the biggest concerns since militant outfits could inevitably turn to the IS for support. The problem of being "aligned" with the IS of course will intensify sectarian violence, which has been part-and-

parcel of IS strategy in Iraq and elsewhere.

One of the questions being asked today is why the Christian community was not given greater security. The fact that apparently there was no information on any impending attack rings somewhat hollow. In a country that has experienced a similar attack a year ago, that shows resolve on the part of some groups that have had no problems going after Christians, not placing tighter security around congregations on such an important religious event would have been thought to be the logical thing to do.

Needless to say, the Pakistani government finds itself between a rock and a hard place. It has faced severe criticism from the West that it has been perceived to be soft on militants for too long. And now that it has gone after some of the home grown ones and the imported variety from neighbouring Afghanistan, the war has arrived at its doorstep. The military operations must continue on the border territories, unfortunately despite the mounting casualties, mostly civilian. Security forces will have to contend with the reality that there will be future attacks, not just on Christians, but perhaps on other smaller religious sects and the State will have to step up protection for these vulnerable communities. But the hardest test will come when the Sharif government will have to act against all militant groups inside Pakistan. There is no such thing as "good" and "bad" militants. The war on terrorism is just begun and it is up to the government to take a strong stand or risk being consumed by the fires of extremism.

The writer is Assistant Editor, *The Daily Star*.

# HUMANISTANBUL

## World Humanitarian Summit



MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU

**D**ESPITE worldwide shock and indignation, it looks like little Aylan Kurdi's tragic death last summer changed little. This is a sad - but brutal - comment on our

collective humanity, if such a thing still exists.

The power of images and social media, so effective for celebrity purposes, seems to have fallen flat on its face in mobilising assistance to those less fortunate. Indeed, since Aylan's death six months ago, countless more innocents - men, women and children - have died completely preventable deaths.

It is true that we are now faced with major humanitarian crises, unlike anything since the last World War. But, there can be no excuse for the global indifference on display.

While major natural disasters continue to be a significant cause of death and displacement, what is most alarming today is that a great majority of humanitarian crises are conflict-related and of a recurrent or protracted nature. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Syria, where a mass murderer has, with outside help, targeted his own people indiscriminately and with impunity. Beyond Syria, whether in the Middle

East, Asia, Africa or elsewhere, humanitarian crises are transcending borders. Today, 125 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance around the globe. The number of displaced persons, 60 million, has almost doubled in just a decade. These numbers stand as testament to the human suffering caused by the growing complexity of humanitarian crises, our inability and unwillingness to tackle them, and the widening financial gap between increasing needs and limited resources.

Something has to be done and Turkey is leading the way, not only in terms of setting an example, but also in working to galvanise the international community towards action.

Today, while a major humanitarian donor, Turkey also hosts the largest refugee population - 2.7 million and counting - in the world. This is largely due to the war in Syria. Providing shelter and vital services such as free health care, schooling and vocational training for these refugees is a major financial burden that Turkey has had to assume largely on its own.

But our humanitarian diplomacy is not limited to our immediate region. Having received vulnerable persons, irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity as far back as in the late 15th century, Turkey today is responding to all manner of humanitarian crises from Haiti to Nepal, Guinea to Somalia and the Sahel to Indonesia. Our

humanitarian efforts seek, not only to relieve symptoms but also to treat the disease. This holistic approach covers humanitarian and development assistance, but also seeks to address the root causes and push factors of humanitarian crises. This approach is demand-driven and can best be seen in the countries of the Sahel or in Somalia, where Turkey has pursued an integrated policy conducted with a multi-stakeholder approach. It has combined official aid with the active involvement of the business sector and civil society, and has managed to dramatically improve countless lives.

While individual efforts like these of Turkey are crucial, the international humanitarian system is being deprived of available funds and the clock is ticking for those affected by the many crises we are witnessing globally. There are simply too many lives at stake, and inaction is not an option.

At this critical juncture, Istanbul will host the first ever UN World Humanitarian Summit on May 23-24, 2016. The choice of Turkey as host was hardly coincidental. It constitutes a timely recognition of the successful humanitarian diplomacy that we have been conducting.

The World Humanitarian Summit will provide a vital platform to address the challenges burdening the humanitarian system. In addition to such issues as responding to recurrent/protracted crises and waves of

displacement, other pressing issues such as ensuring sustainable, reliable and predictable humanitarian financing will be examined. Other questions such as, what innovative methods could be used, or how to promote localised humanitarian responses through more tailor-made and user-friendly approaches, as well as the question of dignity and safety in humanitarian action, will be addressed at the Summit.

The World Humanitarian Summit will be an occasion for all the nations of the world and their leaders to take action while millions stand on the brink of life and death. As I remember first seeing Aylan's image, I recall the overwhelming grief that came over me, thinking about how alone and without protection he was as an innocent toddler. I would like to believe that we learnt something from that image and that we do not need more images like this to compel us into action.

We are all responsible for what happens next to those vulnerable persons looking to us for help. Istanbul is an opportunity to step up and shoulder that responsibility. I am calling on all leaders of the world to come to Istanbul for the UN Humanitarian Summit and to work with us to find solutions for those who desperately need humanitarian assistance.

The writer is Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey.

## COMMENTS

**"Torn apart"**  
(March 27, 2016)

Refaul Islam

Forget the past and move on; many more opportunities will come in the upcoming days. Bangladesh Cricket has a very bright future. Good luck Tigers.

Sujash Kumar Sarkar

It's a game; someone will win and someone will lose. Best of luck to the Bangladesh team and hope they will bounce back.

**"Rab, detectives quiz Tonu's family"**  
(March 27, 2016)

Rezaul Karim

Parents should teach their sons how to respect women so that they do not end up becoming rapists.

Kishwar Kamal

They are busy quizzing the victim's family, while the rapists/murderers find time to get away. What irony!

Ayesha Arefin

Instead of trying to find the criminals, they are harassing the family members in the name of questioning. Shame on them!

Anila Seyit

Our law enforcers never fail to disappoint us! It has been more than a week since she was brutally murdered and the 'quizzing' is still going on!

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Wish for a peaceful country

Our valiant freedom fighters made the highest sacrifice to give us a free country but we are yet to experience freedom in its true sense. Innocent people are getting murdered every day, women raped and children violated. In many cases the perpetrators get away unpunished. In the 46th year of our glorious independence, we wish for a peaceful and prosperous country where the rule of law is upheld at all times.

Nafis Nihal Ferdous  
Anandaniketan School, Sylhet

### Politics in university halls

When a student hailing from other places than Dhaka enrolls in a university like DU, he feels enthusiastic and motivated. But soon, all his hopes and expectations start fading away, when he has to face the politics prevailing in the university halls. If a first-year student wants a seat in a DU hall, he has to attend all the political programmes of the ruling party's

student wing to show his loyalty and it greatly hampers his academic activities. Sometimes political 'boro bhaish' even force the juniors to engage in clashes between rival parties. I urge the political parties to take stern actions against this practice. We come to the highest academic institution to learn, not to become a political cadre.

Anonymous  
DU