

## Of protesters and white minibuses

*Police intimidation must be stopped*

WE are concerned by the way three university students, who are leaders of the recent quota reform movement, were unceremoniously picked up by detectives while they were travelling in a rickshaw and then shoved into a microbus and taken to the office of the Detective Branch (DB), allegedly blindfolded. Although they have been released, the incident has left a sense of unease in the public mind.

The detectives who picked them up have admitted taking them to the DB office for getting information regarding the vandalism of the Dhaka University VC's residence. If that were the case, why did they have to be picked up in such a frightening manner? Why were they blindfolded as claimed by the students? Couldn't they have been summoned to the police station for questioning as is the normal procedure?

The police have said that they had taken these students to verify information and show them some video footage but the released students have said that they were neither quizzed nor shown any videos. In a press conference the law enforcers have not denied apprehending the students but did not explain how they were brought to the DB office. They have also dismissed the allegations of blindfolding the students. Such contradictory versions from the DB officials and the students only serve to confuse the people.

While the police can take in anyone for questioning, given the fact that there have been enforced disappearances in the country in the past, such manner of arrest is sure to create fear in the public mind. And there are reasonable grounds to speculate that the purpose of arrest was to intimidate.

## Ensure compensation in Rajib case

*Extend all legal support to his family*

WE are deeply saddened to hear that Rajib Hossain, the student who lost his arm to a race between two buses in the Karwan Bazar area in the capital, passed away in the early hours of Tuesday at Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he was on life support. Rajib was a guardian to his two younger brothers as both their parents had died years ago. We would like to extend our condolences to the family as they grapple with the unspeakable tragedy.

The High Court had earlier ordered the owners of the two buses—BRITC and Swajan Paribahan—to bear Rajib's treatment cost and issued a rule earlier this month asking the government and bus owners to explain in four weeks' time why they shouldn't be directed to pay compensation of Tk 1 crore to Rajib. Now that Rajib has succumbed to his injuries, the case for compensation has only gotten stronger. The precedent has already been set by the landmark verdict in the Tareque Masud case where the High Court ordered the bus owners, bus driver and insurance company to pay Tk 4.61 crore in compensation.

Bus owners and bus drivers involved in Rajib's case too should be made to compensate Rajib's family. Rajib's two younger brothers depended on him for financial support for their education. Although not many are aware of it, the Motor Vehicles Ordinance 1983 allows victims' families to seek compensation, and cases can be filed with the district Motor Vehicles Accident Claim Tribunal. Filing such cases is an exception in the country despite the high number of road accidents that have cost way too many lives. But this trend ought to be reversed. We hope the authorities will extend all legal support to Rajib's family and leave no stone unturned in ensuring justice for his untimely death, which includes severe punishment for the bus drivers.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Tribute to Firoz Mia, a rickshaw puller

The Daily Star on April 14 reported that a rickshaw puller named Firoz Mia set an example of honesty by handing over Tk 1 Lakh, which he found on the road, to the authorities concerned. It was a really unbelievable and surprising incident. Firoz could have easily taken the money and use this for his poor family. Instead, he handed over the bundle to the authorities without even counting the money.

In a country where many educated people are involved in corruption, Firoz has rightly proved that poverty is not necessarily the cause of corruption.

We often award many scholars, players, businessmen, artists and other professionals for their exemplary accomplishments. It is high time we found out people like Firoz and paid them the due honour.

Pradip Das, By e-mail

### DSCC's cleaning campaign

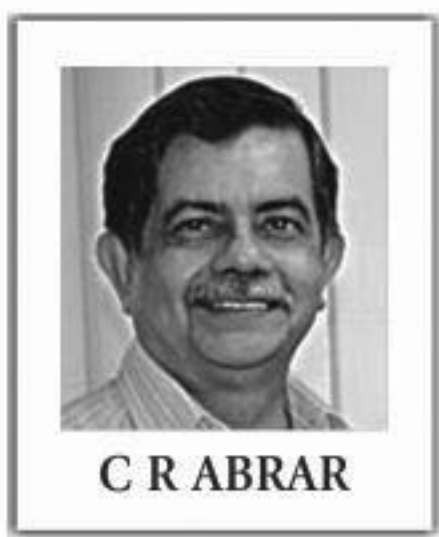
We thank Dhaka South City Corporation for their inspirational cleaning campaign to raise awareness about the importance of keeping the city clean. Through this symbolic event, intended to create a Guinness world record, a large number of people could be brought together to participate.

We hope that this initiative will motivate residents in engaging themselves to keep their surroundings clean. We believe it is possible to keep the entire city clean if every citizen does his part. We also call on the city corporation authorities to arrange more such events to raise awareness in the future.

Md Delwar Hossain Shohag, Sher-E-Bangla Agriculture University

# Right to return, repression and resistance

*70 years after Naqba (the Catastrophe)*



C R ABRAR

forces 70 years ago. Over this period Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank have been joined by thousands of Palestinian diaspora refugees in holding a Great March of Return along the Israeli border. The event is a reiteration of the Palestinian people of their claim to the land that they had lost to illegal occupiers.

Not surprisingly, on the first day of the resistance the state of Israel met the peaceful demonstration with disproportionate force with live bullets and drones dumping tear gas on the marchers. A row of one hundred snipers were posted to deal with unarmed non-violent protesters in the vicinity of the Israel Defence Force (IDF) declared a 350-metre no-go zone.

By April 13 thirty-one Palestinians were martyred and thousands were injured. In a shocking incident, a volley of a tank blew off a farmer to bits who was out of range of rifle-shot. As one observer put it, "The innocents were shot like fish in a barrel; no place to hide, no place to run, no chance of escape. The hunters were all around them: easy targets."

The protestors did not breach and were never a threat to the Israeli border. They were not armed; they merely burned tyres and threw rocks and crude petrol bombs that fell far short of the thirty-foot-high electrified security fence. Through these acts they wanted Israel and the world to know that they refused to accept their fate, they would not surrender to the machinations that made them strangers and unwanted in their own land. Human Rights Watch refuted the IDF claim that the protestors had threatened with firearms during demonstrations. In fact, IDF spokesperson's own tweet on March 31 accused demonstrators of "hurling burning tires, throwing Molotov cocktails, and attempting to harm or destroy Israel's security infrastructure," but did not make any reference to Palestinians using firearms at the protests.

Israel remains defiant of international criticism of disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force to quell the protest. Instead of castigation, the defiance was rewarded by the US veto of a UN Security Council resolution calling for an international investigation. The IDF leader Avigdor Lieberman claimed that his troops were only "doing their job" and all involved in the cold-blooded carnage "deserved commendations". This act of quashing protest through disproportionate violence, which may be deemed as a war crime, was publicly admitted by an IDF spokesperson when he tweeted "Nothing was carried out uncontrolled; everything was accurate and measured, and we know where every bullet landed".

The occupation of Palestine seventy years ago was legitimised by imperial

Britain and systematically and consistently aided, abetted and armed by the United States. Over a period of more than a decade, inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank were systematically "brutalised and terrorised" by the aggressors and were left to fend for themselves by the international community. The Israeli state continues its inhumane stranglehold of the territory through choking access of Palestinians to food, shelter, water, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities.

Conditions in the Gaza Strip has been described as, "as close to hell as one can get". With poor supply of food, residents are barely surviving, electricity is available for two to four hours a day, and the supply of potable water is almost non-existent. Added to the woe is the lack of employment opportunities due to the siege laid by the Israeli authorities.

In recent times, the apathy of the

grow up able to view the Mediterranean from her town without ever having received a permit allowing her to travel to its shore. Several Palestinian teens expressed dreams of one day touching the sea" (Global Exchange).

Palestinian homes are routinely subjected to demolition on various pretexts: security purpose, for building them without permits (which are expensive and difficult to secure by Palestinians), and collective punishment (for alleged attack on Israeli targets). On average Palestinians can access 73 litres of water against the WHO's minimum recommended level of 100 litres. In contrast, Israelis use 300 litres. Increased incidence of harassment and bullying by the Israelis of the Palestinian children in schools has resulted in their dropping out and diminishing enrolment. A legal support group informs that securitisation of the territory has resulted in a situation where forty percent of the Palestinian male

residents of Gaza successfully organised this prolonged massive passive resistance. The new strategy has baffled the occupiers. As another observer notes, "Israelis don't know how to deal with passive resistance. They shoot in order to turn it into violent resistance ... that they know how to deal with more violence".

The 17-year-old Ahed Tamimi has emerged as the new symbol of Palestinian resistance. Her valiant act of slapping and kicking two armed Israeli soldiers in the West Bank has gone viral. Distraught at the rummaging of her home and the shooting of her cousin in the face by IDF for throwing stones in their direction, Tamimi confronted the soldiers in full defiance. She was apprehended and subsequently sentenced to eight months of jail by an Israeli court which she declared as 'illegal'. Tamimi's courageous act has earned her the reputation as the new hero of the Resistance, the Joan of Arc of Palestine.



Palestinian demonstrators face IDF soldiers near the fence in the northern Gaza Strip, March 30, 2018.

PHOTO: JACK GUEZ/AFP

international community has encouraged Israel to intensify its settlement programme. Within the last few months the government has approved building of 3,736 new settlement units in the West Bank, clearly sending out the message that the settlers "are here to stay". The settler population now stands at 600,000—"a population growing at a rate two times higher than that within Israel" (A glimpse inside the West Bank, Global Exchange).

Palestinians are dispossessed of their land on alleged security grounds, only to find their lands being handed over to the settlers. While settler communities are served with bypass roads and highways, the Palestinian parts are infested with "checkpoints, walls, permit requirements, and Israeli soldiers tightly confining Palestinians to ever shrinking territory". As a recent visitor to the Gaza notes, "the maze of control makes it so (that) a Palestinian might

population are likely to be detained. This is no surprise as "unlike their Jewish counterparts, Palestinians exist under military, not civil law. This means that they can be held by administrative detention indefinitely, without charge, and without trial. Children are overwhelmingly accused of throwing stones, an offense that can lead to 10 to 20 years, depending on location" (Global Exchange).

The Israeli plan to create intolerable conditions in Gaza so that its residents are forced to migrate did not work. If anything, it made the Palestinians further determined to stay and resist, living up to the Palestinian adage: "The occupation will not remove us from our land. We will stay in our land as the roots of olive trees."

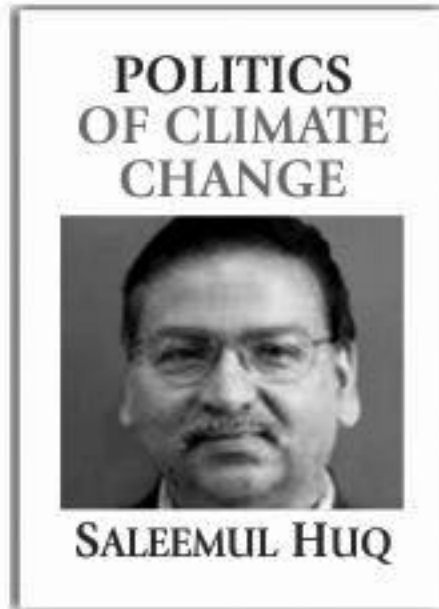
At a time when the Israeli politico-military establishment was beginning to think their mission of cowing down resistance was being accomplished, the

The much celebrated international legal regime and institutions such as the United Nations achieved almost nothing to work out a just and durable solution. The protracted negotiations at various paces over the implementation of the two-state solution in reality created an enabling environment for the Israeli state to pursue its long cherished genocidal agenda with complete impunity.

Princeton Professor and activist Richard Falk insists "the time for goodwill has long past". The situation calls for conscientious members of the world community, individuals and states, "to intensify the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. In the name of justice ... isolate Israel."

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## The 'Talanoa Dialogue' on Climate Change



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

SALEEMUL HUQ

of Parties (COP) to review progress on implementing the decisions. The COP moves to a different continent each year as each continent hosts it in turn.

The last (23rd) conference, known as COP23, was the responsibility of the Asia Pacific, and it was officially hosted by Fiji. However, as Fiji could not logistically handle a meeting with tens of thousands of international participants, the Government of Germany offered to hold it in Bonn in November 2017 on their behalf.

Thus, the prime minister of Fiji was the president of COP23 and will remain president of the COP until he hands over the responsibility in December 2018 to the next president, who will be from Poland (as COP24 will be held in Katowice, Poland).

Normally, the COP is a two-week-long event with the first week being between negotiators at technical level and the second week being a high-level one when ministers, and even heads of governments, attend the conference to finalise the decisions.

Another characteristic of the

negotiations is that they can be quite acrimonious at times as countries insist on pushing their own points of view forward.

Last year, at COP23, the Fijian presidency introduced a number of innovations under what is called the Talanoa Dialogue system practised in the Pacific islands.

The first characteristic of the Talanoa Dialogue system that distinguishes it

time is allowed for many rounds of discussions until consensus is reached.

However, as each COP has a tight two-week schedule, often the negotiations run all night over the last few days in order to finish on the scheduled time. This is a very tiring process for the negotiators and also for well-considered decision making.

So the Government of Fiji have



PHOTO: PATRIK STOLLARZ/AFP

At COP23 in Bonn last year, the Fijian presidency introduced a number of innovations under what is called the Talanoa Dialogue system practised in the Pacific islands.

from normal UNFCCC negotiations is that it is not adversarial but rather consensual. This means that decisions are arrived at by consensus after everyone has spoken, and if a decision is not agreed upon, then discussion continues. This requires that sufficient

decided to continue the Talanoa Dialogue with inputs from countries for the entire year between the end of COP23 and the beginning of COP24 in December 2018.

The second important innovation of the Talanoa Dialogue system is that it

is not confined to governments only, but rather is open to other stakeholders such as companies, mayors of cities, governors of provinces, NGOs, universities, the youth, indigenous and women's groups and many others who can also present their views.

Thus the Government of Fiji (as president of COP23) together with the government of Poland (the incoming president of COP24 in December) are jointly inviting inputs from all the countries and stakeholders under the Talanoa Dialogue system until October 2018, after which all the inputs will be compiled and synthesised for consideration in COP24 in Katowice, Poland.

There is, thus, a significant opportunity for Bangladesh as well as other stakeholders from Bangladesh to provide their inputs to the COP24 through the Talanoa Dialogue system.

A final point of importance is that since the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was agreed at COP21, the implementation of that agreement is no longer only the responsibility of governments but of everyone. Hence, everyone should be able to contribute to all future COP discussions. Thus it is to be hoped that the Talanoa Dialogue system will become a permanent feature of discussion and decision making in future COPs.

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