



# ELECTION VIOLENCE AND OUR EXPECTATION

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The 11th parliamentary election has sparked some age-old questions which remain unanswered till today. It is said that vote is for change but what change are we talking about? As we know too well, a change of parties does not guarantee a change in the quality of living and fulfilment of needs and basic human rights of the common people.

The next question that arises is, how can we bring about substantive change?

For the last two decades, the right to freedom of expression has always been grudgingly provided to the people—and often not at all. People have been persecuted in the name of maintaining peace, law and order, hurting sentiments, tarnishing the image of the state and most frequently, for defamation.

Freedom of expression bears significant importance for us—our independence from the British and

subsequently from Pakistan proves our thirst for the right to freedom of expression. But has the scenario really changed for the common people after all these years? What qualitative change we have achieved so far?

Are we in fact in a position to choose our representatives in Parliament? The Constitution (Article 7A), other than saying that the citizen of the country shall exercise their power through their representatives, has not given any other power to the people to make their choice or question the office of their elected representative, if he fails to perform his/her duty. On the contrary, Article 70 of the Constitution makes the elected representative accountable to the political party he belongs to, instead of to the people. We have been dreaming of democracy with all these latent defects and contradictions in our Constitution. These contradictions have been so obvious that we could never taste the flavour of democracy our fore-fathers fought for.

So, is the forthcoming national election going to make any difference at all? With all these questions, fear and confusion, people are preparing for the next national election.

Has the election preparation been peaceful?

Violence has become an integral part of our elections, be it for local or national elections. People are becoming casualties for no reason. The perpetrators do not face any consequences when crimes are committed in the name of "election violence".

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