

# Pakistan: Of a lesser God

Monday 11 January 2021, by [AKHTAR Aasim Sajjad](#) (Date first published: 8 January 2021).

**BALUCHISTAN bleeds again. Yet another episode of gruesome brutality against Hazaras — coal miners no less — has brought yet another protest movement into existence. Yesterday it was the death of a Baluch daughter of the soil on foreign shores, tomorrow it will be a Pashtun man falling prey to the Taliban or their makers.**

Khurram Husain [reminded us yesterday](#) that the Hazaras have been brutalised many times before, with the current prime minister mimicking the elected leaders he called out in 2013 for failing to show respect to the dead and those who mourn them by making a trip to Quetta.

There was of course another Hazara sit-in in 2018 which was only called off when the army chief went personally to the protestors and assured them that responsible officials would be punished, their killers identified, and their future security guaranteed.

Truth be told, even if PM Imran Khan finally relents and meets the protestors, he does not call the shots. The establishment and its ideologues have already set the tone in the aftermath of the Mach attack with the standard sloganeering about the 'enemy' fomenting 'terrorism' on our shores, and the fact that Pakistan's 'sovereignty' will never be compromised.

Hazaras are pawns in a bloody game.

Who cares that these slogans are like rubbing salt in the Hazaras' and Baluchistan's other ethnic nations' wounds, most of which have already bled dry? When the 'sovereign' state does not ask for sacrifice in blood, it takes copper from Saindak, gold from Reko Diq, Gwadar's coastline, gas from Sui, coal and innumerable more minerals, not to mention virgin lands for real estate bonanzas.

Baluch resistance to all of this has always rendered them 'suspicious', the Pashtuns a little higher up the official loyalty ladder. The mood of those on the streets of Quetta this time suggests a deepening consciousness amongst Hazaras too that they are but citizens in name.

The ill-fated miners were undoubtedly targeted on the basis of their Shia faith and butchered to death under the pretext of being children of a lesser God. But the placard-bearing protestors know that their suffering has in the past been used to give mandate to indiscriminate military force. There is a growing sense that the Hazaras now perceive themselves to be in the same boat as the 'Sunni' Baluch and Pakhtun peoples that they might otherwise be goaded into blaming.

What about the 'conspirators' operating from Afghanistan and India presumably responsible for these attacks? It is not rocket science that there are Muslims aplenty in both of those countries; Hazaras have in fact been regularly butchered in Afghanistan by the very same Taliban that our state champions as 'allies'.

What our powers that be refer to as 'strategic interests' has little to do with what might genuinely be called the public interest, and especially those segments of the Pakistani public that have been left behind economically, or deliberately suppressed.

Hazaras are pawns in a bloody game that instrumentalises brutalised Baloch and Pashtun populations too. Step outside Balochistan and sectarianism is fanned time and again in Gilgit-Baltistan too, especially when the Shia, Sunni and Ismaili masses unite to demand that they stop being treated as colonial subjects. Don't forget Kurram agency where two decades of the so-called 'war on terror' hasn't generated peace for the majority Shia or minority Sunni innocents alike.

Even where the machinations of the establishment are not as prominent, children of a lesser God can be found. In the Punjabi heartland, both Christians and low caste-Muslims, begging children on the streets, daily wage workers and katchi abadi dwellers are all considered scarcely human.

Across what is drilled into our head as 'enemy lines' in Afghanistan and India, one finds innumerable killing fields. In the former, almost daily bomb blasts can take the lives of Tajiks and Uzbeks (many of them Shia) as well as Pashtuns (mostly Sunni).

Meanwhile, in Modi's India, a special place in hell is reserved for Muslims, but Dalits, tribals, ethnic nations like the Assamese and Nagas, not to mention hundreds of millions of working people across religious, ethnic and caste lines, are certainly also children of a lesser God.

But forget other countries and rulers. Let's come back to the land of the pure. The current PM can certainly demonstrate some urgency by going to Quetta, just like opposition leaders have been forced to do after considerable coaxing.

But the very fact that the ruling party and the PDM have been slow to react suggests that they have no answer to the question: who are the 'namaloom afraad' (unnamed persons) that continue to wreak havoc against the Hazaras, their ethnic brethren in Balochistan, and so many others across this long-suffering land?

There remains no will to make these brutalised subjects into equal citizens. The plan is to keep them in their place, divided and ruled.

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