

Pakistan: A letter to Nawaz Sharif on KLB

Thursday 4 February 2010, by [SULEHRIA Farooq](#) (Date first published: 10 November 2009).

Dear Mr. Sharif,

Salam. To be honest, I was not surprised at all to find you and khakis on the same side of fence in case of Kerry-Lugar Bill (KLB). Only a naïve would have believed the radical statements you made about army's role in politics in the waning months of Pervez Musharraf. How unfortunate! our politicians oppose GHQ's intervention only selectively. The late Benazir Bhutto welcomed Musharraf's move on October 12, the way you had hailed her military-sponsored expulsion from Prime Minister's palatial secretariat. Back in 1980s, many believed her when she would challenge General Zia. On coming to power, she pinned Democracy Medal on General Beg's malicious chest. Many believed you too when you would grill Musharraf 'Saab' (you did not like to call him a general). A year down the line and Shahbaz Sharif was found sneaking his way to GHQ's in the thick of night.

While your teaming up with khakis is hardly surprising for me, I must confess, I found it pretty saddening. Having humbled a dictator through peaceful means, the lawyers' movement had restored masses' confidence in democratic-political struggles. Alas! Secret rendezvous at GHQ would only demoralise, depoliticise them yet again. That saddens me and many other. Even you yourself had to condemn it.

I know what you and your sympathisers reading restlessly these displeasing lines are thinking to say in reply. Yet again you will invoke the fib of *qaoumi waqar*, national dignity.

If I were your sympathiser, honestly I would have advised you not even refer to *qaoumi waqar*. The generals, both retired and serving, right-wing politicians and beards, columnists and anchor persons on ISPR pay roll, all of them should be the last ones to invoke *qaoumi waqar* they themselves have been trampling upon.

It was these generals who mortgaged our *qaoumi waqar* back in 1950s in the name of SEATO and Baghdad Pact. Our *qaoumi waqar* was lynched when on July 10, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Agricultural Trade Development Assistance Act known as Public Law 480 and we, the poor masses, were made to eat PL-480 wheat. Did anybody called forth *qaoumi waqar* back then? Yes. But not the beards, neither the domesticated columnists (mercifully anchor persons had not yet descended on us), nor any faction of Muslim League. It was a small band of radicals organised in Communist Party, conscientious journalists busy producing *Pakistan Times* and *Imroz*, committed DSF/NSF cadres, and trade unionists led by Mirza Ibrahim who valiantly defended *qaoumi waqar*. Khakis dispatched these "fifth columnists" to Lahore Fort. Rags heaped insults on these 'traitors'. Beards issued fatwas declaring them Red infidels.

In the passing, let me also point out how our *qaoumi waqar* was gratified in the eyes of Ummah when Karachi sided with Tel Aviv instead of Cairo in Suez War (1956) or when Brigadier Zia-ul-Haq unleashed Black September (1970) on Palestinian guerrillas.

For these meritorious services, Pentagon recommended him for a promotion. Call it a stroke of luck, Bhutto pole-vaulted him over half a dozen generals and he landed in army chief's office. He

dispatched Bhutto to gallows merely because Bhutto wanted to uphold *qaoumi waqar* even when he was told by Dr Henry Kissinger: "we will make a horrible example of you." A steady flow of dollars in the holy pockets of our pious mullahs back in 1977 did in no way compromise our *qaoumi waqar*. Instead it proved healthy for our economy as dollar, perhaps only time in our country's history, is said to have lost value against Pak. Rupee.

Our *qaoumi waqar* did not suffer when General Zia, who incidentally happens to be your mentor, refused to accept peanuts and demanded a whole family-size pizza as reward for reducing our *qaoumi waqar* to naught.

Our national dignity, however, was never invoked until 1988 by Khaki-Jamaat-League troika.

I remember national dignity was zealously invoked when Rajiv Gandhi visited Islamabad during Benazir Bhutto's first stint in power (1988-90). She was declared a security risk, ready to sell *qaoumi waqar*. It was, however, not undermined when you invited Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Similarly, when General Zia touched Sonia Gandhi's feet or his successor Musharraf Saab walked to shake Vajpayee's hand, *qaoumi waqar* was not undermined at all.

I can go on citing examples on selective invoking of our national dignity. But let's stick by KLB debate.

I personally am not in favour of foreign 'aid'. Basically the debt serves as pretext for bleeding third world populations, by slashing social budgets, for exploiting their natural resources and for imposing on these economies such measures that favour the creditors. 'Aid' reduces their sovereignty practically to nothing. The 'aid' has served as an instrument of re-colonisation. Pakistan's external debt, today, stands at \$ 52 billion (from \$ 33.352 billion in 1999). This despite the fact that Musharraf Saab received record US 'aid' (worth \$ 15 billion). 'Had the regime stopped borrowing, the debt would have declined to \$ 23.646 billion after payment of principal amount by end 2007', claims my friend Khaliq Shah, a member of Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt (CADTM).

Your opposition of KLB has different motives. You want aid but without strings attached. Ironically, three loan contracts you made with IMF, Uncle Sam's economic lever, had big strings attached. In 1993, you made first stand by agreement with IMF of \$ 205.40 million, out of which Pakistan secured only \$ 88 million. In 1997 your government contracted \$ 454.92 million under extended arrangement facility, out of which it secured 113.75 million. Similarly, your government made yet another agreement with IMF same year, worth \$682.38 million under enhanced structural adjustment facility, out of which Pakistan got \$265.37 million. In your two terms as prime minister, your government secured \$ 467.12 million from IMF.

Among other things, the IMF told you to privatise the national assets. Hence, in your first period as prime minister (1991-1993), 68 units were privatised. The privatised units included 2 banks, 7 manufacturing units, 8 cement factories, 5 chemical factories, 5 engineering units, 3 fertilizer factories, 16 ghee factories, 14 roti plants and 1 newspaper unit. This was most ruthless period of privatisation in last two decades. In your second term (1997-1999), another 10 units were privatised: 3 hotels, 2 ghee units, 1 steel unit, 1 motor factory, 1 roti plant, 1 engineering unit and 1 duty free shop.

The poor queuing up to receive sasta aata (cheap flour) your brother doling out, were once employed in these units. It is these humiliating aata queues that indeed undermine our wretched *qaoumi waqar*. Thanks to your IMF deals, today every Pakistani owes Rs. 24,000 (175 times more than an Indian) to foreign debtors. It is this colossal debt generating grinding poverty, fundamentalism,

prostitution, joblessness, crime and drug culture that undermines our qaoumi waqar. It is feudalism, lack of human rights, discrimination of women as well as minorities and a contempt for trade unionism that compromises our qaoumi waqar.

In March this year, workers at Choudry Sugar Mills and Hamza Board in Gojra (Toba Tek Singh) went on strike. Does that ring any bell? The striking workers were demanding implementation of minimum wages set at Rs. 6000 by PPP government a year before this strike. Most of these striking workers were paid less than Rs. 4000. These mills are owned by Sharif family. It is this contempt for law and workers rights that brings our inconsolable qaoumi waqar under question.

What indeed hurts our national dignity is Pakistan's ranking on Human Development Index or Pakistan's prominent place on the list of corrupt countries issued by Transparency International. It was your first stint in power that contributed making Pakistan the second most corrupt country in the world. Similarly, it is your villas and estates surrounded by poverty-stricken slums and villages graphically portraying the rich-poor gulf that undermine our national dignity.

Last but not the least, it is those disgusting pictures we watch in newspapers that jolt out national pride in which you as well as your rival, Musharraf Saab, are seen sitting on the edge of your chairs in front of Saudi monarch. When you invoked *qaoumi waqar* on the question of KLB, I was wondering the Khaki-Jamaat-League troika forgets all the *qaoumi waqar* when it comes to Saudis.

To restore our national pride and dignity, in my humble opinion, it will take a Hugo Chavez, an Evo Morales, a Che. Unfortunately, you opted for a safe heaven in holy lands when there was time to go the Bhutto's way and redeem our bedevilled *qaoumi waqar*.

Sincerely,

Farooq Sulehria
