

Why are the Hazaras being killed in Balochistan, Pakistan?

By Akram Gizabi (April 21, 2012)

There is a dramatic increase in the senseless and cowardly attacks on Hazara civilians in Quetta, Pakistan. People are being targeted for no apparent reasons. The attacks are indiscriminate and random and the victims are exclusively Hazaras. The latest attack took the lives of eight people who were gunned down in broad day light in a crowded part of the city.

Why are these people targeted in such a brutal fashion and where is the government security apparatus to protect the citizens? Is it the government policy to give a green light to the terrorists to subdue certain segments of the society? There are a number of reasons:

- 1- The first thing that comes to mind is the animosity of a tiny minority of the extremist Sunni group, Lashkar-e-Jangvi, toward Shias in Pakistan. The Hazaras in Pakistan are predominantly Shias and thus the victims of anti-Shia campaigns in the country. Are the Hazaras the only Shia group in Pakistan? Certainly not. Almost every ethnic group in Pakistan has Shias among their members. Sometime other Shias have also been the targets of assassinations in Pakistan, but the Hazaras bear the brunt of this ominous campaign. Why are the Hazaras being the main targets of this sectarian mayhem? The answer among other things is to be found in the vulnerability of the Hazara community and their distinct features.
- 2- The relative success of Hazaras both in business and education is also a cause for jealousy and hate among the disaffected groups in the province who find Hazaras a scapegoat for their miseries. The Hazaras have become an urban elite in mostly the impoverished Balochistan province where per capita neither the Pashtun nor the Baloch can match the Hazara success. Needless to say that their success has been achieved through hard work and not at the expense of others.
- 3- Being Shi'ites, the Hazaras are erroneously associated with Iran. At times there have been some moves by the Shia clergy, not necessarily of Hazara origin, in support of the Iranian political agendas such as the Quds Day(Roz-e-Quds) or Jerusalem Day. This has been organized by those mindless clergy who are working more for the interest of Iran than the Hazara or the Shia community in Pakistan. Since the Iranian political agendas are carried out in the name of religion, the Hazaras have taken part. Otherwise, the Quds Day or any other Iranian agendas have nothing to do with the Hazaras. The Wahabi and Deobandi followers have misconstrued these events as being instigated by the Hazaras. Creating enmity between the Shi'tes and the Sunni communities in Pakistan was the result of the Iranian hegemonic policies and exacerbated and intensified by the Wahabi inspired extremists who are supported and financed by regional powers. In fact Pakistan and Afghanistan are the victims of proxy wars being fought between regional powers that vie for position in the Islamic world.
- 4- If one is to believe in the conspiracy theories, the complicity of the Pakistani government and the security establishment and/or the weakness of the Pakistani state are also a reason

for the Hazara genocide. It is inconceivable to think that the ISI is not aware of the activities and whereabouts of the terrorist groups or their extremist elements in the country. Quetta city or Mastung is not Waziristan where the extremists reign supreme. The ISI is such an ubiquitous organization that practically nothing of importance takes place without its full knowledge or approval. Let us not forget that almost all extremist groups of note are being created, trained, financed, armed and directed by the ISI, both those that engage in terrorist activities in Afghanistan and the ones that occasionally operate in India including Kashmir. It looks as if it is the intention of the government or its policy to promote sectarian terrorism against certain groups in Pakistan. The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) reports that "militant outlets which are said to be financed by the ISI and trained with the collaboration of Frontier Corps and Military Intelligence in Balochistan. Their main tasks include counter-insurgency, spread of Talibanization, sectarian violence, Killings of Hazaras and Shias, attacks on NATO supply routes and targeting journalists and lawyers."

If one disregards the conspiracy theory, then it is a case of extreme incompetence on the part of the government. Since the start of the genocide against the Hazaras in Quetta, the government has only one suspect in custody. Two master minds of the terror, namely Usman Saifullah Kurd and Shafiq Rind were apprehended, but thanks to the complicity of the security establishment both escaped from a high security facility. One of them, Rind, was later rearrested, but Kurd is still at large and is believed to be leading the terrorist group, Lashkar-e-Jangvi in Quetta.

To add insult to injury, Aslam Raisani, the chief minister of Balochistan province commenting about the massacre of the Hazaras in Mastung, shot his mouth by saying that he would send a truck load of paper tissues for the Hazaras to wipe out their tears. How pathetic. His remarks published at the time in national newspapers were not only insensitive and irresponsible but downright inhuman. Instead of focusing on his incompetent administration where notorious terrorists escape from practically under his nose, he makes such a stupid remark. If he had some dignity, he would have resigned from his post. By the same token, his bosses should have relieved him of his duties.

It is ironic that he reportedly still enjoys membership of PPP, the party that is in power in Pakistan. He also holds the same position. It is a disgrace to the party and government to have clowns like Raisani as the chief minister of a province. In true democratic societies where the governments are responsible for the welfare of the people, the civilian as well as the uniformed authorities are held accountable for the safety of the populace. Sadly in Pakistan, sectarian attacks are carried out with impunity and almost always, the police seem to be on the scene right after the incidents take place as if they knew in advance something about the events. The government seems to be oblivious at best and paralyzed at worse.

- 5- The last and perhaps the most serious reason for the carnage caused by the terrorists is the vulnerability and the weakness of the Hazara community to defend itself. Terrorist groups more often try to attack the soft targets, the most vulnerable and weak. The Hazara community, numbering roughly about 600,000.00 people, is living in two main sections of

the city. Unfortunately it is customary for the criminal and terrorist groups to target those who cannot defend themselves.

#### Conclusion

In the absence of a credible and reliable national security force or law enforcement authority, the people have the right to defend themselves. As long as the Pakistani government turns a blind eye to the plight of the peaceful Hazara community, they can and should form neighborhood watch and civil defense force to defend themselves. Turning the other cheek would encourage the killers and make them more blood thirsty. This may sound drastic, but the alternative has not helped so far. As long as the Hazaras in Balochistan wait for the government in Islamabad to protect them, they will be deeply disappointed.