

Ethnic cleansing of Hazaras going on in systematic manner

Mumtaz Alvi

29 June 2012

ISLAMABAD: Every month around 50-60 members of the Hazara community are either gunned down or killed in bomb blasts, mostly within the precincts of Quetta city, claim the head of a political party and a legislator.

During the last five years, as many as 50,000 Hazaras have left Balochistan; a majority of them have managed to take 'shelter' in other countries, and nearly 300 lost their lives as some of the boats they were on board capsized. Meanwhile, some have fled to Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) President, Abdul Khaliq Hazara, while talking to The News claimed that in a systematic manner, ethnic cleansing of Hazaras was on and has dramatically intensified since 2008 onwards. "We don't see a light at the end of the tunnel, as on the one hand we are losing our dear ones while on the other, the state and its institutions have failed to fulfil their constitutional obligations and virtually turned their back on us," he charged.

He said after finding no security and protection from the provincial government and its related departments, the trauma-hit people had been left with the only option to hand themselves over to the Arabian Sea waters.

Asked what role his party and other political parties, particularly in the province, could play to defuse the situation, the HDP chief said things had gone out of the political parties' hands, as those behind this gory phenomenon enjoyed the full protection of certain forces. "Everybody knows it," was his terse reply when asked who these forces are.

He said a deliberate attempt was being made to give this gory act a colour of sectarian strife, as occasionally, mosques and seminaries were also targeted in Balochistan's provincial capital.

An upright PPP legislator, Syed Nasir Ali Shah, who recently declined to vote for Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, saying he could not repeat the sin he had committed in 2008 by casting his vote for Yusuf Raza Gilani, when contacted, billed the seething violence against Hazara community as a result of multi-faceted factors.

One of the factors, he pointed out, was the release of a hardened terrorist, who had been released a few months back, and he was now free to spread venom to trigger sectarian unrest: he referred to a June 19 gathering in which he again asked people to get ready to target Muslims.

"Is there anyone, who can stop this person? Is there any institution noticing what poison he is spreading here and there," Nasir Shah, who also belongs to Hazara community, wondered.

The outspoken lawmaker from Quetta contended that people had been left with hardly any other option but to feel increasingly insecure and depressed after a prime minister who called himself a representative of 180 million people, carelessly remarked during an interview with CNN recently that no one had stopped people from leaving Pakistan when told that one-third of Pakistanis wanted to leave the country due to bad governance and other problems. Nasir Shah noted this answer by Gilani had stunned the CNN journalist.

He said the rulers had miserably failed to ensure protection to life of people what to talk of safeguarding their rights. He lamented Pakistan not only stood alone today globally but also regionally, as all neighbours, including, Afghanistan, Iran, India and even Russia were not happy with it due to its policies.

The legislator called for a complete review of Pakistan's interior and foreign policies, with particular reference to Afghanistan.

"It is because of those disastrous policies that today people are being killed in suicide attacks and blasts while the state institutions are hibernating. Killers are on the rampage without any fear of being arrested and proceeded against. We must open our eyes wide before it is too late and I guess, it is already too late," he maintained.

A senior official of the Balochistan Home Department, when approached on phone, conceded that they were faced with a complex situation, as not only local but external factors were also to be blamed for the wave of killings in Quetta. He also said that local trouble-makers enjoyed patronage that needed to be handled now without any political consideration.

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