**Children of a lesser god**

On **Aug 2, 2022** [Sajad Jatoi](https://nation.com.pk/authorpost/columnist/sajad-jatoi/)

While most of us were busy watching the political drama unfold in Punjab, where the PTI and coalition parties were locked in a bitter battle for the throne of Punjab, parts of Balochistan, Eastern Sindh and lower Punjab were practically washed away in the recent monsoon rains that wreaked havoc throughout the country. Though not an unexpected thing because of climate change, monsoon rains have hit the country this year more severely than they have done in the recent past as the rainfall has been recorded high in many parts of Pakistan.

The rains, no doubt, wreaked havoc around the country and the cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Multan were submerged in water; however, it is the Balochistan, Kachho (area in the west of Sindh) and Saraiki Waseb (lower Punjab) which have witnessed destruction and devastation on a much larger scale, as hundreds of people have died in Balochistan alone, and thousands of houses have collapsed, thereby bringing life to a standstill for them. A few days after the end of the spell of the recent rains, reports have started coming from the affected areas, with unpleasant images and grim videos depicting destruction. The clips and pictures doing the rounds on social media platforms show mud houses falling apart, and people, cattle and vehicles being washed away on the roads in gushing waters. From watching videos circulating online, it appears that the roads have turned into rivers and channels. The scenes of destruction have moved ordinary people and netizens, and have made them feel disgusted. They have been tempted to start questioning the very role of the state in averting this crisis. The questions they put forward are: “Are these areas not part of Pakistan?”, “Are impoverished Siraikis, remotely located Balochs, and hapless Sindhis not citizens of Pakistan?”

There are no two views about the fact that little could be done to prevent the rains from occurring; however, what is being lamented and complained about is that the state institutions have failed the people, who have been ravaged. Even though the rains had been forecast, it appears people had not been informed of this catastrophe in advance. Moreover, the respective governments have left them on their own. Only the army is seen helping out people in some places. However, local governments have done very little to rescue stranded people and have been very slow in providing aid to them. One of the viral pictures is portraying a hapless father who is holding the dead body of his young daughter who has drowned in the water. Another picture from Balochistan depicts a rotting dead body of a man, who had been washed away, lying on a tree. What is even more upsetting is the photo of a dead toddler lying on a floating mat. This one is so moving that people have started drawing parallels with the dead body of little Elan Kurdi, who died in 2015 when his parents tried to flee their war-torn country Syria.

Never forget that these images emerge from the areas that experienced drought-like conditions about two months back when there was a shortage of water. Hence, it is natural for them to ask why they are always the ones to suffer. For instance, they die of thirst when the water is in shortage; and they get flooded when it is enough. What is the way out of this predicament? There is no doubt that the state can do little about the severity of the rains; however, what it can do is ensure that preemptive measures are taken to minimise the loss and destruction. An emergency could have been declared in the most vulnerable areas and people could have been relocated to safer places. Judging from how local governments respond to such calamities, it appears that officials have a misconception that they should only be concerned with facilitating the people residing in provincial capitals and other metropolitan cities. They must realise that other cities and regions also come under their purview.

In addition to this, the poor and faulty infrastructure of dams and other water reservoirs has made the situation worse in many areas. To illustrate, a dike of the Hub dam ruptured after it failed to sustain water pressure. It reportedly developed a 150-foot crack thereby submerging vast areas, which included the densely populated city of Karachi. So, such factors should not be overlooked either, and those responsible should also be held accountable. As an aside, the role of the media is not encouraging either. This is the reason why people are enraged at it and are terming it ‘biased’ because, they believe, it has not given much coverage to the victims. They lament that both electronic and print media are too busy covering politics that it pays little heed to the real issues of the flood-stricken people, who were already impoverished and downtrodden.

To sum up, local governments should expedite and maximise their efforts to provide aid to the affected people. Besides, the federal government should assist the Balochistan government in helping the victims to mitigate their loss, for the provincial government does not have many resources at its disposal. The victims belonging to Sindh and Punjab should not be neglected either, as they have also lost almost everything including their loved ones and livelihood. All of the affected citizens should urgently be given support and attention.

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