

Human rights and USA

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The world goes on observing the Human Rights Day from year to year. In every country, scores of lectures are delivered on the subject, articles appear in the print media, and the electronic media transmit features highlighting the importance of human rights. A number of countries and international organisations have taken it upon themselves the responsibility of ensuring that no segment of any society is denied the basic human rights under any circumstances. Regimes under which the sanctity of human rights is threatened, or is deemed to be under threat draw the wrath of these champions of human rights in the form of international censure. While a majority of countries remain content with exerting only moral pressure against governments violating the sanctity of human rights, the mighty powers of the world like the United States, Britain, Japan, etc, and organisations like the European Union, the British Commonwealth of Nations, and the World Bank go to the extent of imposing economic sanctions against the violators.

So far so good. The trouble arises when a powerful country arbitrarily gives a verdict that the human rights situation in a particular country is not satisfactory, and then takes extreme measures against the country concerned so as to force it to respect human rights within its domain. This is exactly what America did in case of Afghanistan when that country was under the Taliban rule. Although the main excuse for American attack on Afghanistan was the refusal of the Taliban regime to hand over Osama for trial in a US court, the US media had left no stone unturned to let the world know how the people of Afghanistan had been denied their basic human rights ever since the Taliban captured power in that country. This is a typical case of human rights being used as a shield by a powerful country to hide its own selfish designs. America's anxiety about the unsatisfactory state of human rights in Iran and Iraq is also not without her selfish motives, keeping in view the strategic importance of both these countries and their rich oil resources.

It would be appropriate to cite another important case in which the issue of human rights has been made a shield to cover up the real motive of the concerned organisation. This is the case of the European Union that has long been insisting that the admission of Turkey as a full member of that organisation be made conditional to the improvement of the human rights situation in Turkey. Here the real motive of the European Union is not the human rights of the Turkish people but the desire of most of the members of the Union to keep its doors slammed on Turkey, the only Muslim country that has been aspiring for the membership of the Union for decades.

There is another important aspect of the issue that requires the attention of the international community. This refers to the discriminatory attitude of the big powers, particularly the United States, towards the state of human rights in different countries of the world. While America has been expressing its displeasure against the regimes in Libya, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and even its close ally Pakistan, it has always kept its eyes shut as far as the state of human rights in the Israeli occupied parts of Palestine and the Indian-occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir are concerned. In both these areas, the people are not only being deprived of their basic human rights but are also being mercilessly annihilated. India has imposed draconian laws in the held state. These laws have deprived the Kashmiri people of every basic human right. The lowest ranking members of the occupation forces and the law enforcement agencies have been authorised to arrest on



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slightest suspicion anybody without a magisterial warrant of arrest, and put him or her behind the bars for an indefinite period without a judicial trial. Their houses can be searched at any time of the day or night without a warrant. On showing the slightest resistance, a person can

be shot dead and his house set on fire without a warning to the occupants to vacate the premises. Thousands of innocent civilian men, women, and children have lost their life and their houses destroyed. Anybody opening his mouth to protest against the high-handedness of the occupation forces or the law enforcement agencies is arrested and kept in jail for an indefinite period.

Of late, America's own human rights record has been badly tarnished. The American law enforcement agencies have been depriving people of their freedom of movement by arresting individuals without warrants and keeping them in unauthorised detention for an indefinite period. The inhuman treatment meted out to people captured from Afghanistan and those suspected of even the most remote connection with the September 11 attacks is really a matter of shame for a country that claims to be the guardian of human rights throughout the world. Even those arrested for minor violations of the immigration laws have been made to suffer untold deprivations in solitary confinement for long periods. Ask the Pakistani citizens arrested in America even for petty violations of law, or on mere suspicion, about the manner in which they were treated by the American agencies while they were in detention in the States, and during their repatriation to Pakistan. They will tell you about their ghastly experiences of the period during which their American custodians made them live in suffocating containers worse than the black hole of Bengal, and fed on a menu of diet that no civilised country in the world can feel proud of.

Every one of these unfortunate victims of American high-handedness can speak for hours about his traumatic personal experiences of the state of human rights in the United States. A number of them were recently repatriated to Pakistan by special planes, duly escorted by American guards. Even then they were kept in handcuffs and glued to their seats for a journey lasting eighteen hours, in such a cruel manner that they could not even scratch any part of their bodies. Even those who had been married to American citizens and had been living in the United States for many long years were not spared. Pakistani students who had spent millions of Rupees to get admission into the American universities and were in various stages of their courses were thrown out of that country like bad eggs, without following the proper judicial procedures to prove their guilt.

This is the inside story of how a country like America has been violating the sanctity of human rights without any compunction. It falsifies the officially inspired claims that have been appearing in the Pakistani media for the last few weeks, to the effect that foreign Muslims living in America are enjoying the status of free citizens with all their basic human rights fully guaranteed by the US government and the American community. If the present Osama phobia continues to rule the minds of the US administration for some more time, one would not be surprised to see the common US citizen also being subjected to the treatment now being meted out to aliens, notwithstanding the World Human Rights Day. It is high time the American public started raising its voice against the violation of the sanctity of human rights by their government.