[**More equal…**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1743499/more-equal)

[Adeel Wahid](https://www.dawn.com/authors/8629/adeel-wahid) Published March 22, 2023

The writer is a lawyer.

Listen to article

ON Saturday morning, March 18, there were quite a few cases listed before the judge, who is presiding over Imran Khan’s Toshakhana case. All the cases, except for one, were adjourned to a future date. For that one case, the judge waited at a place which is not his usual place of conducting hearings, as the caravan moved from Lahore to Islamabad, with immense fanfare, weaving through a crowd of supporters, blockades and police. The wait continued even after the usual court hours. The case, after all, has been instituted at the behest of one ‘more equal than others’, against another who also happens to be ‘more equal than others’.

The lived experience of everyday life in Pakistan is a constant reminder of George Orwell’s Animal Farm that despite the promise of our Constitution’s Article 25 there are some who are, essentially, not equal to the rest of us. The hearing on Saturday was a multifaceted, layered and an ironic example of how the inherent discretionary flexibility in our system is a one-way ratchet operating for the benefit of the ‘more equals’, and to the detriment of the ‘lesser ones’. The quality of life in Pakistan is contingent upon where on that divide one is born, or with what future opportunities.

The juxtaposition of that divide is the material Charles Dickens’ novels, and the reality in Pakistan, is made of. The images of ‘less equals’ getting beaten up on the streets, the brutality of violence on display, with abundant teargas and water cannons, as the bruised and bloodied bodies of people made rounds on social media, could be compared with a reality of life right across the wall they guarded.

Meanwhile, the blood, flesh and lives of the ordinary people, the ‘less equal’, remained cheap, as they readied themselves to lay down their lives to avoid the arrest of one ‘more equal than others’ for cases which are only significant because of who is pursuing them.

Our society is designed to create and perpetuate these differences.

Our society is designed to create and perpetuate these differences. Not only do the ‘more equals’ consider themselves as more equal, the entire society functions in a manner that ensures more equal treatment. This reality manifests itself in many shapes and sizes: the judges, for instance, demand servility and sycophancy from lawyers, more from some than others, and complete and absolute submission from litigants in courts, who are required to appear with bent knees and bowed heads; the stiff-collared bureaucrats demand that the citizenry not look them in the eye; and the otherwise rich and affluent with multiple round-the-clock modern-day slaves at their service, with no contracts or rights, are at the mercy of their masters’ whims.

And above all, are the personnel of the institution, who can apparently have 45,000 acres of land granted to them, without any ifs and buts, and without even feeling the need to be hush-hush about the matter, living in heavily fortified lands, ever acquiring more. At their nod, the Kafkaesque judicial and law-enforcement mechanisms, a usual norm against the ‘less equals’, can also begin to operate in their raw, menacing and intimidating forms against the slightly ‘more equals’ as well.

It does not even require an astute observer to notice that in and around any of the major metropolitans, it is invariably the motorcyclists who are getting fined for violation of one traffic law or another. These traffic laws do not even exist for the ‘more equals’, as the rest of the population needs to freeze, be cordoned off and reminded of their place in the society, as the ‘more equals’ traverse the length and breadth of the city without any restrictions — with their guards frantically and often belligerently shooing away others on the road.

We are a dismal and highly unequal society, not only in terms of how wealth and power are distributed, but also in how our fundamental state institutions and officials interact with civilians on a day-to-day basis. As a people, our efforts have been primarily directed at establishing a network of friends and acquaintances, cultivating relationships, that can ease the force of these interactions with the state. When possible, we have banded around our baradaris and, at times, our professions, in attempts to find strength in numbers and blind loyalties. Those for whom it has been possible, have moved to other pastures, aspiring to a different life.

But efforts now need to be made to stop the ‘more equal than others’ from being just that. Those who have risen too high, for whom the law becomes malleable, need to be cut down to size, and the poor, the miserable, the lowly, need to be raised, elevated and cherished.

*The writer is a lawyer.*

*Published in Dawn, March 22nd, 2023*