**Dealing with Perpetrators of May 9**

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After having been elected as leader of the house Shahabaz Sharif in his speech on the floor of the house was right on money to stress the need for national reconciliation and inviting the opposition for collective endeavours to pull the country out of the economic and political crisis it was confronted with. However, he categorically made it clear that those involved in the 9th May incidents will not be spared and will be dealt with according to the law.

The Corps commanders meeting held on 4th March expressed full spectrum support to the government in dealing with the confronting challenges and also reiterated that in line with the resolve of the honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, planners, instigators, abettors and perpetrators/ desecrators of Shuhada Monuments and attackers of military installations on 9 May, would certainly be brought to justice under the relevant provisions of the law and Constitution.

What happened on 9th May without any doubt was an attack on the state and a well-planned move to orchestrate coup within the Army in connivance within elements sympathetic to PTI within the establishment. Thankfully the plan did not succeed and all those within the Army who were suspected of being part of this conspiracy were dealt under the Army Act without any loss of time. However, the civilians involved in executing that dastardly plan and arrested in the due process have still to face the consequences of their actions. The inordinate delay in bringing them to book is quite puzzling to say the least. Had it been done speedily the country would not have to face the political crisis that it is wading through at the moment and the heinous campaign against Pakistan Army on the social media by PTI about which concern was also shown in the corps commanders meeting.

What happened on May 9, without any doubt, was an attack on the state.

It may be recalled that a statement issued by ISPR immediately after the 9th May incidents explicitly called it the dark day in the history of Pakistan and also minced no words which political party was responsible for it. The Corp Commanders meeting on 15th May resolved to try the masterminds, planners and those who actually carried out the plan under the Pakistan Army Act and Official Secret Act. The National Security Committee that followed huddle of the Corp Commanders endorsed the decisions of the latter and decided to observe 9th May as a dark day.

The formations commanders Conference in addition to the endorsement of already taken decisions also took notice of the campaign by the party and its supporters both internal and external who were trying to stoke the issue of arrests made in regards to the attacks into a situation of human rights violations. It rightly pointed out that they could not take refuge behind this façade because the government and the establishment were in possession of irrefutable evidences of their criminality.

It is an undeniable reality that the party and its leadership instead of expressing remorse over what it had done upped the ante against the establishment. Its social media warriors and foreign elements supporting the party unleashed an unrelenting campaign in regards to violation of human rights and seeking intervention of the foreign powers to put pressure on the government and also link military assistance to human rights and rule of law.

Imran Khan in a video chat with US Congress woman Maxine Moore Waters emphasized that Pakistan was facing an immensely challenging situation and it was the most difficult period in the history of the nation. Shifting the blame for attacks on military installation on the military establishment and intelligence agencies he insisted that these institutions wielded significant power within Pakistan. He pleaded her to support him and raise her voice in his favour.

Imran had also been involved in discussions with several representatives of California including Ted Lieu, Eric Swalwell, Brad Sherman, Mike Leven. Representative Sherman composed a letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in which he expressed apprehensions regarding infringement upon human rights, and the rule of law in Pakistan.

Reportedly PTI’s US chapter campaigned for linking Washington’s military aid to Pakistan to the human rights situation. Sajid Burki a focal person of PTI for USA met US congressman Greg Casar along with another party member Atif Khan and requested him to play his part in bringing a resolution against the human rights violations in Pakistan.

The senator pledged his support for democracy, human rights and rule of law in Pakistan adding that he was co-sponsoring a bill concerning military aid to human rights conditions in the country. It is pertinent to point out that a campaign by Pakistani-American Political Action Committee (PAKPAC) also led to more US Congressmen approaching US Secretary Antony Blinken to pressurize Pakistan government to improve human rights situation in the country. A rally organized by PTI outside the White House also appealed to President Biden to refrain from engaging with Pakistan.

It was also propagated that Army had killed 30 people on that day. It was also alleged that the women arrested in connection with these attacks were tortured and raped in the jail. None other than Imran Khan himself tweeted in this regard. Doctored pictures of women showing marks of torture on their bodies were also circulated on the social media.

This was followed by a deluge of such fake stories on the social media. Based on these reports some voices were also heard from foreign countries showing concern on human rights situation in the country. Interestingly the allegations regarding torture and rape of women were rubbished by the incarcerated women themselves during their appearance in the court exposing the party and its leaders.

It is quite interesting to note that Imran Khan who in May last year in a tweet from his official handle said that his party had ample evidence to prove that agencies men carried out arson and shooting during the protests to blame it on PTI, while talking to the journalist in Adiala prison endorsed the Corps commanders resolve to take severe action against all those involved in the 9th saying” We are neither anti-Army nor want a clash with forces.” However, he demanded constitution of a commission to probe 9th May incidents.

I do not think there is any need for constituting a commission when there is irrefutable evidence available against those who indulged in nefarious acts against the state on 9th May and those who planned and masterminded it. They should not be spared at any cost and no further time should be lost in completing their trial. National reconciliation be left to the politicians but law must take its course so that no one in the future dares to repeat 9th May like rebellion against the state.

*The writer is a former diplomat and freelance columnist.*