**Time for some soul searching**

**Do we see in our country any appetite for such bold efforts for self-reform?**

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To the Pakistan Police: it is time for some soul-searching. If we do not honestly hold ourselves account­able, others will do it for us, and the re­sults may not be to our liking. As they say, it is ‘resistance to change that is painful, not the change itself’. Life’s best lessons can usually be learned from the most horrible mistakes and the most unpleasant times. Look at what Germany and Japan did and where they are now.

The London Metropolitan Police once used to be a role model; Not seen any­where but appearing from all over when needed. Professionalism was its pres­tige, deliverability, its symbol. Then, somehow, it started losing its respect in the eyes of the people it was supposed to protect. In March 2021, a young wom­an, Sarah Everard, was abducted, raped, and murdered by a serving police offi­cer, Wayne Couzens. Couzens was subse­quently sentenced to life imprisonment.

[President Alvi condemns Israeli aggression against Palestinians](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Apr-2023/president-alvi-condemns-israeli-aggression-against-palestinians)

It may not have been the first incident of its kind, but it shook the whole so­ciety. As a result, London Mayor Sadiq Khan demanded Police Commissioner Cressida Deck resign. Before stepping down, however, she formed a commis­sion to review the Met Police’s perfor­mance. The review was led by Louise Casey, a member of the UK parliament’s upper house. It took her two years to produce a comprehensive 363-page re­port highlighting some startling facts and findings and included tough deci­sions that were to be implemented by the new police chief.

Such a report could not be brushed under the carpet in a civilised society like London. So, the overhauling had to be done, and bravo to the Met Police, they are doing it.

Do we see in our country any appetite for such bold efforts for self-reform? Sadly, though many incidents like Eve­rard’s rape and murder have been re­ported here at home, not a finger has been lifted to hold deviants to account. In the absence of self-accountability, the power imbalance between the law en­forcer and the common citizen is wid­ening by the day. The police officer here is respected not for their service to so­ciety but out of fear of the nuisance they may cause. This is even though the of­ficer places their life in mortal dan­ger while they hunt down criminal elements and protect the innocent, nev­ertheless even when a cop is martyred in the line of duty, another is quick to replace him and face the same dangers with stoic bravery.

[Foreign vets give new lease of life to ailing elephant at Karachi Zoo](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Apr-2023/foreign-vets-give-new-lease-of-life-to-ailing-elephant-at-karachi-zoo)

Regrettably, our history is replete with examples of protectors turning oppres­sors. The acquittal of Rao Anwar will al­ways remain a black spot—what an iro­ny that the court acquitted him for want of evidence and, in the same breath, de­clared the death of Naqeeb Ullah Meh­sood an extrajudicial murder. Who will now give justice to the family of the de­ceased? The case is almost closed, and there is no remorse or even an iota of shame on display.

The Sahiwal killing may still be fresh in a few minds; the rest would have surely forgotten; In January 2019, Counter-Terrorism Department per­sonnel opened fire on an innocent fam­ily in broad daylight. It was nothing but a brutal murder. They killed the moth­er and father and did not even spare a 13-year-old daughter. They slew the victims in front of other innocent chil­dren. Even the head of the state could only feel ‘sorry’ over the incident. Pity the system where such impunity exists.

[Imran decides against appearing before IHC tomorrow](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Apr-2023/imran-decides-against-appearing-before-ihc-tomorrow)

Go a little further back. On May 12, 2007, all of Pakistan witnessed how the city of Karachi became hostage to gang­sters in service of a political party. The police had given them a free hand to kill anybody. Law enforcement had orders not to react. How many conscientious police officers resigned afterward? For­get bringing the perpetrators of inter­national crimes to justice; do we even have the courage to bring the perpetra­tors of ‘12 May’ to the gallows?

These are just a few examples. Many more incidents continue to remain un­reported—especially rape. The injus­tices are not solely perpetrated by the police; every institution of the state ap­pears indifferent to the need for a radi­cal revamping.

It is no wonder that many law enforc­ers continue to believe that staged ‘en­counters’ are the only way to eliminate crime. But though this legacy has car­ried on for decades, has it achieved the desired results? If not, then why do we continue to stick to it? Enforced disap­pearances have become a norm these days. They infuse more hatred in our community and are seen as indefensi­ble acts in the global community.

[SC stands up for constitution by rejecting doctrine of necessity: Imran Khan](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Apr-2023/sc-stands-up-for-constitution-by-rejecting-doctrine-of-necessity-imran-khan)

A recent report on the state of human rights in Pakistan, issued by the US De­partment of State, has condemned the practice; it is clearly a reprehensible policy, and the longer it is allowed to continue, the worse its impact on soci­ety will be. In the recent past, we have also witnessed the registration of doz­ens of FIRs against a single crime in all cities of the country. This is nothing but a blatant disregard for the rules.

I am reminded of K.K. Aziz’s book ‘The Murder of History’ in which he discuss­es how myths and narratives are delib­erately perpetuated to achieve selfish ends. Aside from listing flawed lessons used to spread disinformation, he high­lights the moral and institutional blun­ders of the men who ruled and con­tributed to the breakup of the eastern province—alas a forgotten chapter.

But there is no reason why our law enforcers cannot act with more civility. They clearly have the capacity to do so. Our Motorway Police is an enlightening and encouraging example. Its officers have earned a reputation as being very cultured and polite, yet firm as profes­sionals. While always in the field, they are now earning even less than officers in other police departments. If they can deliver, why not others?

[PAF chief meets Iranian ambassador](https://www.nation.com.pk/05-Apr-2023/paf-chief-meets-iranian-ambassador)

There is no doubt that Pakistan Police is quite professional and knows its job well. However, there is a dire need to plug the gaps in its professional conduct and build capacity in this regard. Nepo­tism and disregard for merit are eating it out from the inside. As said earlier, the time has come for some soul-searching.

An objective review—along the lines of the one conducted by Louise Casey for the UK’s Met Police—should be ordered, and its findings be implemented in let­ter and spirit. The Casey report should be a must-read for all law enforcement officials. Realistically, it should be read by all government departments.

In the past, some joint investigation re­ports have attempted to uncover in detail the missteps of our law enforcement per­sonnel. However, these have remained too focused on particular incidents. It has also been observed that as soon as such investigations start pointing fingers at powerful people, they are hushed up.

Can we finally take a bold step for­ward? Accountability must start some­where. Or in nutshell ‘Execute what our hearts already know’.

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