**Indispensable Reconciliation**

**The party on the anvil i.e., PTI must also display the unity of thoughts, vision, and sagacity during the dialogue.**

[Saleem Qamar Butt](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/saleem-qamar-butt)

December 27, 2024

The act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement, and the action of making one view or belief compatible with another is called reconciliation; where on earth reconciliation is needed more than in Pakistan, which is suffering from the worst ever political polarization. The just commenced and much longed for commencement of the Reconciliation Process between the nominated PTI and the incumbent government teams is considered a step in the right direction, which must succeed despite venomous outbursts and spoiling efforts by the unenviable rented professional loudspeakers, who regard it as a threat to their unholy existence. The other feint voices by some toady journalists and politicians from smaller parties with tainted past and present against the possible rapprochement is disgusting though, yet insignificant. It is an ongoing journey that reminds us that while generations of Pakistani people have fought hard for meaningful change, it is an unavoidable national imperative for the restoration of normalcy in a society standing at the brink of implosion.

It goes without saying that Reconciliation should be accompanied by justice, otherwise it will not last. While we all hope for peace it shouldn’t be peace at any cost but peace based on principle, on justice. Empathy is a necessary step for truth and reconciliation. Therefore, the government team must have the vision as well as due mandate by the enablers to listen with open heart and mind to the two main demands of PTI i.e., the release of all incarcerated political leadership and workers, removal of all politically motivated cases against PTI and initiation of Judicial Commission inquiry to establish facts for 9 May 2023 and 26 November 2024 horrific incidents. Reconciliation and forgiveness can actually help all of us move on in a healthier, happier way. Most Pakistani people agree that our criminal justice system is failing all of us. It is not keeping us safe. It is contributing to a vicious cycle of crime and punishment. The expediency of the trial of civilians in the military courts notwithstanding, it is considered an aberration and insult to the Superior Judiciary in Pakistan on the one hand, and brings Pakistan under sharp scrutiny from the international human rights organizations besides diplomatic snub from developed countries on the other hand; with potential undesirable politic-economic ramifications. But most hurting of all, it is tantamount to creating a wedge between the military and the people who have always adored it beyond measure.

The party on the anvil i.e., PTI must also display unity of thoughts, vision, and sagacity during the dialogue especially with respect to the charter of demands and should refrain from asking for the moon. Desmond Tutu said, “Before Nelson Mandela was arrested in 1962, he was an angry, relatively young man. He founded the ANC’s military wing. When he was released, he surprised everyone because he was talking about reconciliation and forgiveness and not about revenge.” The cessation of anti-establishment and anti government rhetoric especially in the public processions must be avoided and the political discontent should better be spoken without the use of unparliamentary language on the floors of both houses. While the release of the PTI leadership and workers must be high on the agenda; nevertheless, the establishment of the Judicial Commission, subsequently its findings and recommendations will have to be respected and implemented in order to maintain the bounds of the law and for control of the outspread of the harmful political divide touching ethnic as well as geographical boundaries. Keeping in view the lessons from Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Egypt and just recently from the debacle in Syria, the national cohesion against all internal and external threats ought to be the top priority for all persons sitting on the dialogue table. Only that can pave the way for the restoration of peace and unfluctuating security situation in the country; which is obviously the bedrock constituent for seeking economic stability.

Jill Stein said, “The Holocaust of Nazi Germany is certainly no less of a historic crime than the Holocaust that went on for centuries against African-Americans. That process of reparations, and a truth and reconciliation discussion, was extremely helpful in the country of Germany, and we need to have that here.” If today the voice of the Muslim world and especially that of Pakistan is not heard against the unprecedented genocide of Palestinian, Syrian, Iraqi, Libyan, and Yemeni Muslims; it is more to do with our house divided on many counts for which none other than us can be blamed. ‘The world is not dialectical- it is sworn to extremes, not to equilibrium, sworn to radical antagonism, not to reconciliation or synthesis. This is also the principle of evil.’ Nagasaki and Hiroshima remind us to put peace first every day; to work on conflict prevention and resolution, reconciliation, and dialogue; and to tackle the roots of conflict and violence. The work of community, love, reconciliation and restoration is the work we cannot leave up to politicians. This is the work we are all called to do.

**Saleem Qamar Butt**
The writer is a retired senior army officer with experience in international relations, military diplomacy and analysis of geo-political and strategic security issues.