**The countdown has begun**

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In accusing former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of inciting rebellion in the army, the selected Prime Minister is himself making the country’s respected armed forces controversial. Nawaz Sharif said what he had to say – after duly appreciating the role of all the jawans in our military, especially the greatest ones that laid their lives so we can continue to live – but now it is Imran Khan that drags the military high command and the country’s premier intelligence agency into the argument whenever and wherever he opens his mouth.

It’s come to the point where one can literally tell in advance what the Prime Minister is going to say at any of his public engagements. First he’ll call everybody in the opposition traitors, which is what one is reduced to doing when one runs out of all plausible accusations, then rant about not giving anybody an NRO. The situation sometimes becomes hilarious because he’ll say the NRO part even if he’s asked about something completely different like the state of the economy and out-of-control prices. Then he’ll make a point of saying, even when the situation doesn’t demand it in the least, that the government and army are on the same page; as if that is what everybody is wondering about.

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Any legitimate, genuine government that worked for the people would have simply pointed its finger at all the good work it had done so far to diffuse any manner of protest by the opposition. Yet all this particular administration has to show for its two-and-a-half years in office is breakdown in governance, an economic collapse that began well before the pandemic, high inflation especially in necessary items of daily use, record corruption, and sharp rebuke on the international front by some of our dearest friends.

That is why people throng to the opposition’s rallies. A very large number of people in Pakistan live under or just around the poverty line, and the past couple of years of rising prices as well as unemployment have simply broken their back. Never have so many people in this country not been able to provide for their families simply because an incompetent government has been placed on top of us all.

It is time to put all these things right. And the long road to change will begin with the disposal of this government. That is what has brought the 11-party opposition alliance onto the streets, not any lust for power as the selected prime minister likes to say to deflect blame away from himself. If our motives were selfish then why would ordinary people come out in the tens of thousands every time we hold a protest and join our platform to voice their own grievances?

The fact of the matter is that this government’s time is now over. When the people turn against you, it is simply time for you to go. And the sooner you accept this fact, the better for everybody. The selected prime minister should now do everybody a big favour and walk away on his own. Otherwise the way the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) is building momentum, it is only a matter of time before our protests snowball and he is forced to go by the same elements that raised him to the big seat in the first place.

Our rallies are set to continue yet the government has already exhausted its arsenal. Even after throwing all sorts of accusations at us and our leadership, from corrupt and thieves to traitors and Indian agents, it is unable to stop people from joining our cause in ever-increasing numbers. Soon they will decide who this nation’s real traitors and saviours are and have been. The countdown has begun.

*The writer is an entrepreneur and one of the youngest female members of the Punjab Assembly. She tweets @hinaparvezbutt*