**Taking ownership**

On **Aug 30, 2022** [Dr Farid A Malik](https://nation.com.pk/authorpost/columnist/dr-farid-a-malik/)

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Pakistanis can sometimes be considered a disowned nation. In the words of Comrade Aitzaz Ahsan, “Riasat Ho Gi Ma Jaisi” (The state should be like a mother). The journey of freedom has been unending and long-drawn.

On August 14, 1947, a new republic did emerge on the world map but after 75 years, we remain a shackled nation where human rights are trampled with impunity and without remorse of any kind. Despite being a constitutional democracy since August 14, 1973, the state is run under the Government of India Act 1935. In its 75 years of chequered political history, there has been only one free and fair election in 1970 which led to the unfortunate dismemberment of Jinnah’s Pakistan.

While Jinnah was consumed by the struggle, his sister challenged the hegemony of the first usurper in the 1965 Presidential Elections, though she was made to lose, yet she seriously dented the invincibility of the dictator and his coercive state apparatus. She was declared a traitor by the mighty Field Marshal Ayub Khan but she refused to bow down till her mysterious death in July 1967. Since then, we have been ‘La-Waris’ (disowned). After Quaid-e-Azam, Quaid-e-Awam Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) tried to win back our lost freedom but he too met a tragic end at the hands of the cruel State. Now, Imran Khan (IK) the 22nd Prime Minister (PM) of Pakistan has decided to lead the freedom crusade. He has termed his struggle as ‘Haqiqi Azadi’ (real freedom).

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is looking for someone who will take responsibility for the 220 million suffering souls; a person who will serve not rule, with a focus on nation building and not personal empires and estates. With a bulging youth population of around 60 percent, the republic faces unique challenges. Mentors and role models are required to steer the young. Unfortunately, in the land of the pure, impure people have moved up the ranks of society. Our heroes have been portrayed as zeros and zeros as heroes and that has resulted in confusion and misdirection, which needs to be corrected. Past mistakes should not be repeated.

Pakistan is at a crossroads once again. The will of the people has to prevail through free and fair elections, any attempt to manipulate the electoral process will be disastrous. The purity of the land has to be restored; a major course correction is needed. Moral standards have to be raised and then followed. Corruption cannot be condoned as a way of life as being projected by the leadership of the old parties that have been in power in the last four decades. There is a serious dearth of role models for the youth to emulate. A national role model campaign is needed to project our heroes.

Without ‘Haqiqi Azadi’ there is no future, slaves only toil for others and are subject to exploitation and subjugation. In the year 1952, Pakistan discovered one of the largest natural gas deposits in the world. Today, the country is energy starved. Today, the people of the republic have to pay for the sins of its leaders by buying the most expensive power and gas which is out of their reach. The balloon of debt keeps swelling and can burst at any time. People are out on the streets protesting against inflated bills they cannot pay.

Today the country faces total institutional collapse while the rulers continue to party. Vital human development sectors like education and health have been ignored for decades. Private educational networks are thriving at the cost of ordinary folks. Healthcare has also been monopolised by the rich and the powerful. The big question is who will lead and build the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for its future generations to thrive and live in peace. Jinnah was perhaps right when he said, “No power on earth can undo Pakistan”, the challenge is to ‘do’ and keep ‘doing’ what is in the best interest of the many instead of the few, as has been the case.

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