**[Power of violence](https://www.dawn.com/news/1771488/power-of-violence)**

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IN this rollercoaster ride called life in Pakistan, each exhausting drop after the contraption slows down brings the hope that this nail-biting moment would be the last one.

After this, we can finally get off and be allowed some rest. But each time, we are proven wrong — all of us, in this country we call home (if there is no second passport or a secret bank account abroad as a backup plan).

With this bit of illogical hope in mind, some of us thought the [caretaker setup](https://www.dawn.com/news/1770625) would give us a break and spare our nerves, even for a bit. But then, never do those who lord over us consider our feelings.

And so it was this past week when the efforts to collect brilliant minds for our caretaker cabinet coincided with an [attack](https://www.dawn.com/news/1770582) on a minority community, the death of a child who had been abused and mistreated, and more arrests.

In Punjab, our cruelty to the vulnerable is shameful, and the line the province draws is on the basis of religion. The [terrible acts](https://www.dawn.com/news/1771276) against the Ahmadi community continue unabated and in between, we also managed to destroy the lives of a Christian community. Their homes, their churches, nothing was spared.

Anyone reading this will take objection to the vague terms in which I refer to the perpetrators, blaming simply hate rather than the individuals who carried out these acts. But what else should one call it, for the hate is far more widespread than we realise.

We have inculcated it for decades in society, for generations, so much so that when such a crime takes place, the details reveal how many more are involved than we realise. For one, the paralysis afflicting law-enforcement personnel who not just watch the crisis building up but also don’t stop the rampaging crowds: how much of it is due to fear and how much because those in uniform may agree with the attackers?

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Or observe the aftermath of such incidents — only in the case of the right victims, the ones it is safe to sympathise with — when the leadership sent out to soothe the nerves is religious. Rarely ever does a mainstream politician turn up at such places. And it has been no different in Jaranwala. Ever wonder where the multiple politicians from Faisalabad are?

And why we don’t even ask when they will show up? Because those who are aiming to win an election, rarely ever turn up to wipe the tears of vulnerable non-Muslim citizens, for it would cost them the votes of the majority which has been fed on hate and a version of religion we seem to cling to.

So occasionally, we will find images of our mainstream politicians with leaders who promote sectarianism but never with the [victims of crimes](https://www.dawn.com/news/1771458/damage-to-jaranwala-churches-homes-estimated-at-rs67m) such as Jaranwala. And no one has a clue how we can address this, regardless of how many times we spout Jinnah’s Aug 11 speech.

But then, if this be our only wound. For the week past also brought us the news of the [death of a child](https://www.dawn.com/news/1771231/autopsy-finds-khairpur-housemaid-raped-tortured-before-death) working in a local influential’s home, along with the video of her writhing in pain on the ground.

Rarely is it possible for a soundless film to communicate such horror, but this one did. But more was in store; the postmortem revealed physical and sexual abuse.

And if anyone wants to console themselves by thinking this was simply the ugly feudal culture now restricted to the rural corners of Pakistan, the [child](https://www.dawn.com/news/1767025) who had had her bones broken while working in a judge’s home is still undergoing treatment. Urban, rural, feudal, or professional, it seems there is little respect for those less fortunate or less privileged.

All these incidents show that violence continues to be the dominant way in which we manage society. The legal system is an alien one that has been imposed on this traditional one and continues to function as an accessory after the fact. That it doesn’t help provide justice is simply adding to its irrelevance.

Not just for the vulnerable ones but also for the more privileged among us.

Imaan Hazir and Ali Wazir were [arrested](https://www.dawn.com/news/1771196) in the dead of night. And while we know little about Wazir’s arrest, Imaan and her mother live-tweeted the event, so to say.

Doors were broken down and Imaan dragged off in her night clothes, and we know this not just because of her mother’s tweet but also because we saw the video of her court appearance the next day. No one has any doubts why she was arrested but the law has little to do with it and neither will her release, when it happens.

As I was writing this, news came that she had been handed over to CTD for three days. Few have been surprised by this or will wonder what she may have done to deserve this.

After all, if the law were enough, [Khadija Shah](https://www.dawn.com/news/1755561) and others would have been released by now; thanks to Pervez Musharraf, women should have an automatic right to bail. But they haven’t and for similar reasons, one can’t have high hopes for the quick release of Ali Wazir. His incarceration, the last time around, also was a lengthy one. And the way the law was managed to ensure his continued captivity has since been used to hold on to so many others.

Others who earlier didn’t protest for Ali Wazir are now finding out how easily such traps can be used for them also, for their privilege was also not as great as they thought it was. Not as unprivileged as the minorities forced to live among us or the poverty-stricken as the children who work in homes, but unprivileged compared to the powerful ones. There is always a power relationship involved, and our law can provide no protection against the violence of the powerful.

And till this is addressed, I wonder if there is any reason or meaning to what we write or say. It just seems so pointless.

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