

The killer of 100 children still has some 'secrets' to tell the

court, writes

Waqar Mustafa

Two years ago, pictures and television footage of weeping parents poring over piles of children's clothes recovered from a Ravi Road house had stunned Pakistani society, which questioned the depth of its concern for its vast, impoverished underclass.

It was here that Javed Iqbal, 40, father of a 16-year-old girl, had confessed to have committed his crime. He had dispatched a letter of confession and a photo album of his victims to the police, claiming he had been killing runaway children and dissolving their bodies in acid for months. "I have killed 100 beggar children and put their bodies in a container," he wrote.

Police found vats of acid in his house, human bones from two bodies and piles of children's clothes.

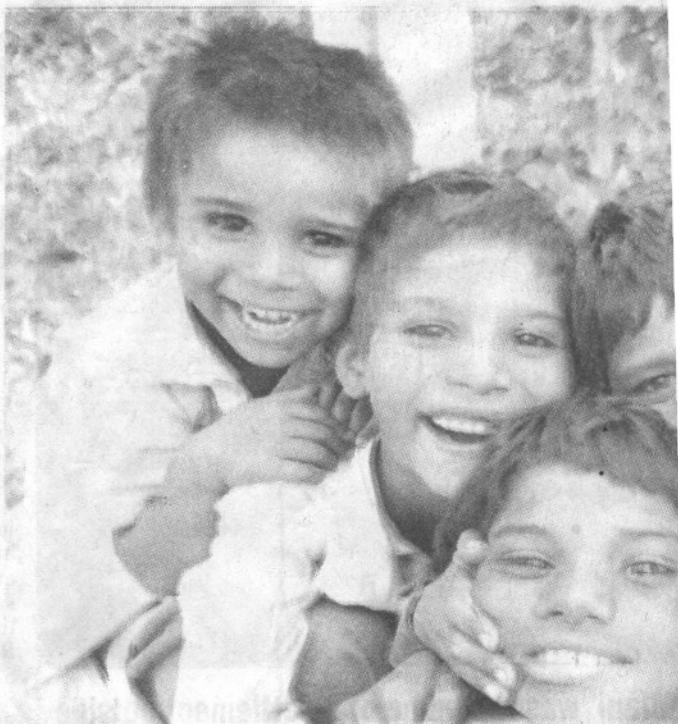
Despite a manhunt in which dozens of people were detained Iqbal eluded police for a month. He was arrested only after he walked into the *Jang* offices to give himself up. "I am Javed Iqbal, the killer of 100 children," he told the newspapers' staff. "I hate this world, I am not ashamed of my action and I am ready to die. I have no regrets. I killed 100 children."

Javed said his killings were a revenge for the brutal treatment received at the hands of the police after his arrest in the past.

Later he withdrew his confession and pleaded not guilty, saying he had invented his story to highlight the problems of runaway children.

Police said they had found

Javed Iqbal



Street children: Sharing a happy time.

evidence to support claims made by him that he murdered 100 young boys in just a few months. No forensic evidence linked him to the crime and no more bodies were found.

A year ago a judge convicted him of murdering 100 children and sentenced him to be strangled with an iron chain, chopped into pieces and these pieces dissolved in acid in front of the parents of his victims. A 17-year-old boy was sentenced to death as an accomplice and two other men accused in the case were jailed for 14 years.

"What about the real killers," had been Javed Iqbal's last word after additional district and sessions judge Allah Bukhsh Ranjha

announced the verdict.

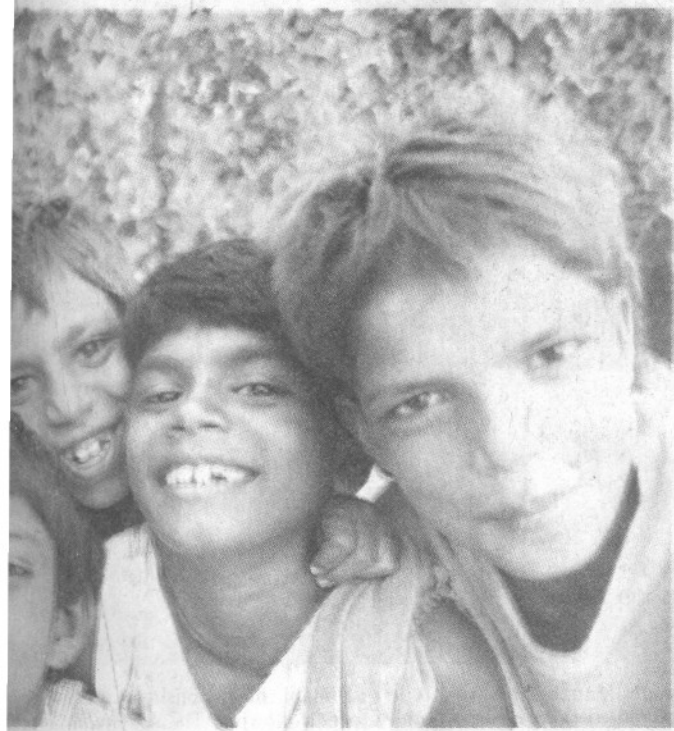
Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider criticised the sentence. "This will be challenged in the high court. Such punishments are not allowed," he said.

And Javed Iqbal's lawyer Najeeb Faisal Chaudhry appealed the conviction. Javed, who had admitted the killings and produced a diary of his crimes, has again retracted his confession.

The convict of murders of hundred children claims he still has some secrets up his sleeves to tell the Lahore High Court whenever it takes up his appeal against conviction.

Javed is undergoing imprisonment at the Kot Lakhpat Jail

case takes a new turn New Society 1-4-01



statement which was an extrajudicial evidence. "The judge had chosen the evidence which was against Javed, while he ignored the one which did not carry weight whereas the evidence should have been examined in toto."

Javed Iqbal, in the letter written to his counsel from Kot Lakhpat Jail, says the jail authorities wanted him to commit suicide and for the reason provided him with razor and icepick. "What sort of a person are you. You should commit suicide," Javed quotes jail officials in his letter.

Though Javed has appealed

was turned down by the then LHC Chief Justice Mian Allah Nawaz.

Javed, who was twice married and divorced, appears to have been widely known as a practising paedophile. He was the subject of a number of police complaints and was briefly imprisoned on a sexual assault charge ten years ago.

Neighbours and childhood friends said he had an unhealthy obsession with guns. He also appears to have collected snakes and police believe that he may have used them to draw the children into his home.

Campaigners say that

"Javed Iqbal claims he had 16 accomplices who actively participated in killing children and none of them were either summoned by the trial court or found involved in the case by the police," said his counsel, Najib.

from where he has appealed for early hearing of his trial pending with the LHC. "I want an early decision on my appeal to root out hatred in people for me," Javed Iqbal has written in a letter to his counsel.

Najeeb Faisal Chaudhry says new facts would surface when Javed Iqbal would be tried once more. "Javed Iqbal claims he had 16 accomplices who actively participated in killing children and none of them were either summoned by the trial court or found involved in the case by the police," says Najib.

Javed's counsel feels once Javed's appeal is taken up, his punishment would be set aside for it was not in harmony with

the law of the land. He cites Section 12 of the Constitution that says: "No law shall authorise the punishment of a person beyond the penalty prescribed by the law for that offence at the time the offence was committed."

Najib says the judgement delivered against Javed was based upon his confessional

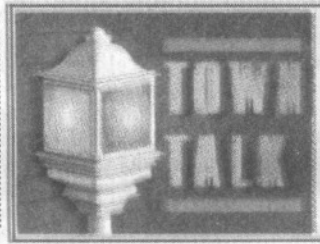
for an early hearing of his case, the routine work at the Lahore High Court suggests his appeal may have to wait for some time. At present the court is dealing with murder appeals filed in 1995 while Javed's appeal reached it in year 2000.

While filing the appeal, it was prayed that the appeal be taken up at the earliest but the petition

although child abuse is widespread in the country it is still a taboo subject and is seen as a problem of the west.

Shelters for children, called Nigehban, were set up after *The News* called for a 'safety net, ensuring that vulnerable children are provided shelter'.

The Punjab government says it has upgraded the Nigehban



Exhibition

• Exhibition of contemporary furniture, today from 12:00pm to 9:00pm at Xinhua, 94-C-2, Gulberg III.

• Old masters' work on display at Permanent Art Gallery, Alhamra Cultural Com-

plex daily from 9am to 6pm.

Book Launching

• Book launch of **Kalam-e-Nanak** on April 3 at 5:00pm at the **Lahore Press Club**. APNA (Association of Punjabis in North America) has published the poetry of Guru Nanak in

centres for lost and kidnapped children in all divisions of the province. "They are being converted into focal points and also linked with universal number of help line 111-22-44-55," says Minister for Social Welfare, Women Development, and Literacy, Ms Shaheen Atiq-ur-Rehman.

A Task Force for Children said all Nigehban centres had been provided computer and transport. "Lahore centre is equipped with more facilities."

These centres will act as information centres regarding children and to facilitate the public Lahore Centre is linked with universal number 111-22-44-55 other than phone number 7532091.

"Lost children kept in Nigehban centre are handed over to parents," Shaheen said.

The murder story pointed out the daily struggle for survival by children living on Pakistan's streets. They highlighted a range of failures in fulfilling children's most basic rights to survival, protection and development. It all died down as days passed.

According to a survey conducted by a non-government organisation, about 1.2 million children turn up on the streets in Pakistan's big cities every day as beggars, vendors or shoeshine boys. Children become homeless because of abuse and poverty. Once on the streets, they are exposed to countless hazards, including child labour and sexual exploitation. Acid is sold without any restriction. Nobody seems in a hurry to find out cure for the ills the incident has bared. Things have not changed much.

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Shah Mukhi (Persian) script for the first time in Pakistan.

Puppet Show

• Puppet Show for children at 10.30am at Alhamra Art Centre's Puppet Theatre every Sunday. ♦