

Scenario 45

PAKISTAN'S CJ GREETED IN KARACHI:

[In this essay the author depended less on Pakistani and more on foreign media to keep intact the impartiality & his personal opinion non-existent unless some authentic enquiry report comes up]

On **12th May 2007** Karachi had launched an uproarious greet for a chief justice by offering him a banquet of 43 dead bodies amidst other nearly dead or mutilated 'tributes'. Let us recall those gloomy and miserable moments in the name of Justice - Hurray, Justice in Pakistan - Zindabad.

Referring to a magazine '**Slate**' dated **17th May 2007** which told that on 12th May 2007 with the help of press, electronic media, and Internet blogs, the real face of MQM was exposed. Upon the orders of an army dictator, with complete support from intelligence agencies, once MQM used to blame those for all evils, resulted in huge political damage for Altaf Hussain and his MQM. To minimize the damage, MQM crafted a video presentation for its supporters that other political groups were also involved in this heinous crime of killing innocents, which was not termed true. Detailed account of events presented by foreign press on the very next day told the whole truth.

Question arises that was it really MQM's job; if so, had MQM alone performed that task.

Nicholas Schmidle, the author of ***Two Tumultuous Years in Pakistan***, released on 12th May 2009 writes his account of arrival on 11th May night as:

"I arrived in Karachi at 2 am on Saturday. The MQM had blocked every possible exit and entry point to the airport using shipping containers, buses, and water tankers. There were no taxis. People were sleeping in the terminal, and babies screamed. Food and water supplies at the airport were already running low, 10 hours before the chief justice was expected to land.

It seemed entirely possible that these people would be marooned at the airport for a day or two. Fearing that I would be stuck there, too, I shouldered my luggage and headed in the direction of the main road. On the way, a security guard warned me that there was gunfire and burning tires just outside the airport. Karachi is not a city that you walk around on a good day; but the longer I waited, the tighter the blockade would be.

Fortunately, I met a moustachioed man in his 40s along the road who happened to be a police officer. He said he had a jeep, with an armed guard, waiting on the other side of two layers of MQM-arranged cordons. After a few minutes, we reached the jeep and began navigating through back alleys and roads still under construction, any path that the MQM might not yet have blocked.

There were no vehicles on the streets other than the commandeered tankers and buses, most of which flew the MQM's tricolour flag. The trip from the airport to the hotel where I was staying typically takes about 15 minutes. I finally checked in at 4:30 am."

Question arises again that was it really MQM's job; if so, had MQM alone performed that task.

In the last week of November 2009, the then Provincial Home Minister of Sindh, Dr Zulfiqar Mirza, announced in a press meeting that his PPP government would order an inquiry into the events of 12th May 2007 and would like to unveil the real faces behind that utter cruelty. That dawn was never seen.

Let us peep deep into that page of our forgotten history..... When chaos had gripped the streets of Karachi on that day! The day when Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, the then suspended Chief Justice, had landed at Karachi Jinnah International Airport for onward move to Sindh High Court premises to address the Karachi Bar Council. Karachi had witnessed 'orchestrated mayhem', a well organized event, wherein about 43 lives were lost, and about 150 were injured, threatening a complete breakdown of law and order in Pakistan's largest and most volatile city.

Referring to UK's daily ***The Telegraph's*** '*Pakistan on brink of disaster as Karachi burns*' appearing on **13th May 2007:**

'Karachi with plumes of black smoke billowing over the city of 12 million people, there were extraordinary scenes as gunmen on motorbikes pumped bullets into crowds demonstrating against, while police stood by and watched.

Bloodstained corpses lay where they had fallen in the streets and bodies piled up in hospital morgues. As the sense of crisis deepened, the military General resolved to send in Pakistan rangers (paramilitary troops) to restore order, and to place the army on standby.

Yesterday's violence erupted as 15,000 police and security forces deployed in the city stood idly by as armed activists from Karachi's ruling party, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a coalition ally of Gen Musharraf, blocked Mr Chaudhry's exit from the airport and took control of the city's central district.'

When events of killings in Karachi were published in the Daily Telegraph of UK on 13th May 2007, the MQM Chief Altaf Hussain had called the news people at Edgware Road London to correct the facts. That interview with The Daily Telegraph was published on 14th May 2007 in which Altaf Hussain had insisted that they held a 'completely peaceful gathering' and that it was opposition supporters who provoked the violence, in which at least nine MQM activists were (also) killed. Mr Hussain addressed the party at Karachi on telephone that day and '*it was a completely peaceful gathering by MQM supporters that was targeted by a collaboration of three other parties.*'

[In the same newspaper another report titled '**Violence as Musharraf's power fades**' said in the (Karachi) city's Jinnah Hospital yesterday, Adil Bashir, aged 23, was recovering from three bullet wounds after narrowly escaping a street execution. '*He said he had not taken part in the rally but was rounded up by armed, teenage MQM activists along with four others. He alleged that he and others were lined up against a wall before being sprayed with automatic gunfire. He and one other survived.*]

Question arises that were they MQM's boys really; if so, who might have ordered them to act so.

That article of daily '***the Telegraph***' dated **14th May 2007** ends with the conclusion that '*the actions of the MQM may have been not so much a sign of support for the eight-year rule of Gen Musharraf, but a demonstration of its own power in what could be the first round of a new turf war in Karachi. Gen Musharraf's options are becoming more and more limited as he struggles to have himself re-elected and to continue as army chief.*'

The MQM's most senior leader in Pakistan, Farooq Sattar, said that '*the opposition wants to show that Karachi does not belong to the MQM. We have accepted the challenge.*'

The fact remained that despite denials by the MQM, almost all the British newspapers of 13-14th May 2007, in their reports, comments and editorials put the blame of violence on MQM

workers and had asked that 'to what extent the man running MQM from London could be responsible'. Imran Khan in his statement accused the British PM Tony Blair of giving sanctuary to a politician whose party he claimed was linked to killings in Pakistan. However, Mohammed Anwar, head of international relations for the MQM, denied that Altaf Hussain was responsible for any violence in Karachi, saying:

"He is living here [in Britain] since 1992 so how could he stir up violence when he is not even living in Karachi? If we wanted to commit carnage, would we bring our mothers and sisters and daughters [Pointing towards the women and children in MQM's rally in Karachi that day] on to the streets with us? It simply isn't plausible. Imran's criticism of Altaf was motivated by the MQM's success in making inroads into other parts of Pakistan".

It was a factual belief that Gen Musharraf had hoped to create a compliant judiciary ahead of elections which he had promised to hold later that year. But it started as a political confrontation then emerged from the purposefully instigated ethnic rivalry in Karachi. Referring again to the above quoted article of **'the Telegraph'**,

'Inside Mr (Justice) Chaudhry's intended destination, Sindh's High Court, hundreds of lawyers, some of them bloodied after being beaten up by MQM supporters, milled about chanting slogans and receiving news on their mobile phones about the trouble engulfing them. Outside, MQM activists with pistols tucked into their jeans, blocked the entrance.'

Again question arises that were they MQM's activists really; how the Telegraph people assessed so.

The record later revealed that Gen Musharraf, PML(Q) government at Islamabad and an army officer [subsequently known as Brig Huda] controlling the Sindh Home Department had purposefully allowed conflicting rallies to go ahead to create the requisite level of disorder to justify the declaration of an emergency or Martial law.

LIVING EPISODES OF 12th MAY 2007:

The prologue to violence was familiar to Karachi, where hundreds of people were killed in ethnic violence in the 1990s but first time in Pakistan live television cameras captured the situation for viewers to see government tankers used to block off routes to the airport, police and rangers prominent by their absence or standing idle as armed men ran armed & free on the streets of Karachi; corpses and wounded bodies lying by the wayside in pools of blood.

The security plans chalked out for that day were abandoned overnight. The Sindh Home Department withdrew the weapons of most law enforcement personnel in Karachi. Armed only with batons, the 15,000 policemen deployed in the city avoided the violent areas. Rangers who were to hold key positions on the 'flyovers' on the main airport road were nowhere in sight. Instead, armed men in civilian clothes held those posts, and fired into the crowds trying to reach the airport to receive the Chief Justice stranded inside.

Over at the Sindh High Court, as a lawyer Ayesha Tammy Haq witnessed, at about 5 PM the things were getting worse. Judges were not leaving the premises as there would be a rampage. City courts were being attacked. The lawyers were expecting to have army rule in Karachi. Later it transpired that:

'... It was a part of "the political activity" of a party attempting to show its strength to its constituency and of course a loyalty show to see and feel by Gen Musharraf too.'

'Not only was the Sindh High Court under virtual siege by armed activists, but lawyers attempting enter the Court were repeatedly beaten and roughed up. The armed activists did not even spare the Judges of the High Court.'

One judge was held at gun point and his car damaged. "While holding me at gun point, the youth called someone and stated 'Yeh bolta hai kay High Court ka judge hai...kya karun is ka? achaa theek hai, phir janay daita houn.' (He says he's a judge of the High Court. What should I do with him? Ok then; will let him go)."

*Many judges, unable to drive to the Sindh High Court, had to leave their official 'flag' cars and make their way through menacing crowds and climb over the court's back wall in order to reach their chambers.' (Ref: an interview with **Talat Hussain, 'Aaj TV', 18th May 2007**)*

An extract from an essay titled 'Story at the airport' appeared in '**the News**' of **20th May, 2007**:

[Munir A. Malik and his fellow 24 lawyers accompanying Justice Chaudhry from Islamabad to Karachi were forced to remain inside the airport. The Sindh government representatives offered to transport the Chief Justice by helicopter but this offer was for him alone. Since the lawyers with him had already foiled the attempts of 'two uniformed officers' to 'snatch the CJP and take him from the other side,' he refused.]

Armed men attacked lawyers at Malir District Bar, Justice Chaudhry's scheduled first stop in Karachi, killing a lawyer and injuring several others, including female lawyers. Justice Chaudhry and his team, of course, were 'extradited' to Islamabad after arguing and struggling for several hours at the airport.

Late that night; residents in the low-income housing of 'Ranchore Lines' were awakened by loud banging on their doors. One resident narrated that it was two young boys distributing freshly cooked '*biryani and suji*' in plastic bags: "*Yeh chief justice ki wapsi ki khushi mein hai*" (This is to celebrate the Chief Justice's return [to Islamabad]).

Another account can be seen here:

"On the Karachi streets, Uzi's press card had saved her again at around 05:00 pm as she and a colleague tried to reach the Rangers Headquarters in Dawood College. "A car chockfull of ammunition passed in front of us, stopped, backed up and stopped in front of us, Kalashnikovs pointing at the two of us from the windows. We showed our press cards and the car moved on. NEVER in my LIFE have I felt more grateful to my press card than I did then."

At around 06:00 pm, she and her colleague were trapped by gunshots all around. "Short of climbing the walls and entering one of the houses around, there really was no other place for us to go." They stopped a police mobile and asked which way would be safe to go. The answer, accompanied by laughter: "You can be killed wherever you go. Choose your place."

(Ref: **Eyewitness: Karachi 12th May 2007 by Beena Sarwar** published in www.Chowk.com dated 30th May 2007)

In published reports, journalists prudently avoided naming the parties involved. See another reference:

"Young men toting flags and banners had set up camp outside the airport departure lounge. They hid, however, when policemen came by. Reporters in the vicinity were asked whether they had seen any political activists around. Munawar Pirzada (from "Daily Times") said that he had seen some nearby.

After the policemen had left, the activists came up to the reporter, dragged him by the hair and took him aside. They then proceeded to threaten him with dire consequences if he said anything the next time the policemen came around.'

(By **Urooj Zia in 'Daily Times': 14th May 2007**)

But the affiliation of these gangs was visible in the live coverage provided by several private television channels, which showed plainclothes men brandishing weapons on the deserted roads, using government tankers as cover, exchanging gunfire with unseen opponents, the tri-colour MQM flag visible on their motorcycles.

After **Aaj TV's** continuous live coverage of such scenes, armed men attacked the television station, firing at it for several hours. Instead of stopping the coverage, *Aaj* showed live footage of reporters ducking behind a desk, shots being fired at their office, as anchor Talat Hussain provided an account of the situation on phone. Reporters in the area asked the Rangers posted nearby to help the *Aaj* workers trapped inside their building. The answer was:

'We're helpless. We can't do anything unless we have orders from above.'

Another eye-opening narration:

'The local media received a call from a hospital, apparently sent by a doctor who had been at work for several hours attending to multiple gunshot wounded victims in his hospital lobby, where a makeshift emergency room had been set up. Nothing but he told:

'Struck down my soul more than what nine fully armed workers of a local political party along with 2 sector office bearers did. They tried to drag out a wounded and dying body of a 'poor politico-religious worker' (whose identity they later learnt) for presumably finishing him off.'

The protesting doctors were slapped around and dragged by their legs to the back of the gurney alley. With shotguns, pistols and ak-47's in hand, the men ran back to the lobby presumably to find their target again.

The doctor ran out to the rangers and police at hospital's front gate. Their answer was:

'Jaante ho inn logon ko phir bhi kyon larte ho...hamain upar se order hai ke inn ko char baje tak karne do jo karna hai. Char baje ke baad kuch dekhainge' *(When you know who these people are; why do you still fight them; we have orders from above to let them do whatever they want until 4pm. After 4pm we will see).*

As a previous party supporter, the doctor had recognized some of the assailants and called a friend related to their deputy leader Farooq Sattar. Five minutes later the men received a phone call and left; threatening the doctors (and stealing one of their cell phones, "Chikna set hai" – (it's a costly set, isn't it).

The guy they had come looking for had been shot one more time in the head. The OT dress we had dressed him 10 minutes earlier was freshly bloody.'

(Ref: www.karachi.metblogs.com / archives / 2007)

Those were the MQM's men as the media undoubtedly believed so; but who was controlling the Rangers in Karachi then.

There was a story behind each of those who were killed, some belonging to one or the other political party, and others just because they were there. Masked men stopped ambulances and sprayed them with bullets, killing an Edhi Ambulance driver, Faizur Rahman Khan, aged 65, when he refused to throw out a wounded person he was transporting to hospital from near the airport; the wounded man was also shot again. Armed gangs herded passers-by into an alley and shot dead a young over-lock machine operator along with another man, in front of two colleagues who were also shot but survived to tell the television source.

As per written facts in *'They shot us one by one...'* by **Munawar Pirzada** in the **'Daily Times'**, there have been reports about an SHO who guided a procession into an ambush and

a pregnant woman who had to deliver her baby in the car when armed men refused to let her proceed to the hospital with her husband. The Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) reported that several journalists were manhandled and nine wounded. Some TV cameramen were beaten and their cameras snatched or damaged, mostly in front of the police and Rangers.

Zaffar Abbas was correct when he wrote that Karachi was only at peace for the past many years because it suited its militants.

'Finger pointing is necessary, because throughout our history, instead of a catharsis, we simply go through a 'jo ho gaya ab bhool jao, aagay daikho' (forget what has happened; look ahead) attitude. Already, with the President's pat on the back at an emergency meeting of the ruling party in Islamabad (on 14th May 2007) the MQM is back on the front foot.

Although it is unlikely that the perpetrators of Saturday's violence will ever be brought to justice, at least they should continue to be exposed before the entire country. More importantly, they should face the consequence of such exposure.

Public image is very important to the MQM and the national outrage at their conduct may be the best prospect of compelling them to change their ways'.

(Ref: 'Back to the Future?' Published in **Daily the 'Dawn' of 14th May 2007**)

In the light of above facts, narrations, opinions and analysis one can read in between the lines. MQM's activists were no doubt there to participate in the killing spree of that day but questions arise:

- Were all the armed activists or killers really belonged to the MQM? [The facts should have been ascertained that no other political party or ethnic or religious group was involved in that mass murder.]
- Did MQM's high command really wanted to 'show their strength' through street killings?
- Could a political party like MQM aspiring to move at national level adopt such harsh strategies?
- Who was controlling the Rangers & ISI & IB and the Police on that particular day? [The fact remains that MQM could muster the Police but Army and Rangers NEVER accept orders from any one except their own commanders; it is in-built in their training.]
- Who were the army OICs at ISI, Rangers and Home Department (only police comes under Home Deptt.) making 'contingency plans' to control the CJ's visit to Karachi that day?
- What was the possibility that some hidden hands had used the MQM activists 'on payment' without knowledge of the MQM or under an 'implied consent'.
- What were the possibilities that some of the 'hired killers' might have crossed their limits when once MQM commanders had asked them simply to 'help the agencies'.

One would like to find the answers of above questions and many more similar; see below.

Later Gen Musharraf was in the Chief Minister House Karachi to review the law and order situation following 12th May carnage. At that occasion a Provincial Minister Irfanullah Marwat (from Pakhtun Community) asked Gen Musharraf to order an inquiry into who had opened fire, arrest the culprits and take action against the elements responsible. The minister stressed that the people would not be satisfied till the arrest of the elements responsible and strong action against them.

The Pakhtun Action Committee Chief Shahi Syed stated on the occasion that all it was due to Adviser to the CM on Home Affairs MQM's Waseem Akhtar. The Advisor kept silent giving an

impression of denying charges; virtually he was the Home Minister with all the powers more than the delegated.

Gen Musharraf heard it and that's all; military people find it hard to say sorry. In 2008, MQM joined hands with the PPP as a coalition partner and raised voice that MQM was not involved in the incident. MQM also asked for the enquiry which never held, at least till today. In Pakistan enquiries are never held when the fools and poor political workers are targeted in daylight on roads because never a political leader's kin is killed or even fired at in Pakistan.

AGENCIES DID THAT ALL?

Dr Zulfikar Mirza, later the PPP's Sindh Home Minister, was probably pointing out towards this core issue on the basis of his personal knowledge being a staunch political worker of the PPP and may be depending upon the reports of western press as quoted above. Being a Home Minister he had definitely got access to the secret 'Special Branch' reports of the Sindh Police and floated his wish of conducting this enquiry at such belated stage so vigorously.

Whether MQM was involved in that whole scenario or not; is a subject of detailed enquiry based on solid evidence but the people still consider that the master mind behind that episode was Gen Musharraf, who had claimed those killings as **'his success and show of power'**. Hats off to his Army Commanders in Rangers & ISI or elsewhere in Karachi too, who were bent upon to prove their loyalties for their Army Chief. Reference is being made to an open **jalsa** [big gathering] held, organized and patronized by the PML(Q) at Islamabad on the same evening of 12th May 2007 showing strength of Gen Musharraf.

Very few people know that it was one Brig Huda of the ISI who had contributed most in show of power in Karachi on 12th May 2007 and was given due credit by Gen Musharraf the same evening.

Initially, the MQM was reluctant to hold a rally in Karachi on 12th May. The then DG ISI Gen Ashfaq Kayani also had the same opinion that MQM should not come out on the streets when Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry would visit Karachi. **It was Brig Huda who played an important role in convincing the MQM not to cancel its rally.** He assured the MQM leadership that there will be no riots on that day; but it happened and the whole episode brought bad name for Pakistan [and of course for the MQM too, may be inadvertently] in the world media mainly due to that extra-loyal Brigadier.

Fact remains that the Chief Secretary of Sindh, Shakeel Durrani, had strongly opposed the 'counter productive' strategy of the provincial government designed for 12th May 2007. He had written in advance to his seniors, proposing that hurdles should not be created and that the CJ be given a smooth passage. His recommendations were in clear contradiction to the ill-conceived strategy already worked out by the **Sindh Home Department, headed by former Commander of Military Intelligence, Brig (rtd) Ghulam Muhtaram.** The Home Department, due to unknown secret planning in top minds, insisted that the CJ should not be allowed to come out of the Karachi Airport.

Shakeel Durrani's recommendations, however, got a deaf ear from those who mattered in decision-making in Sindh. Durrani had also held responsible his provincial government for Karachi mayhem. Meanwhile, the Sindh government had refused to order a judicial inquiry into the killings. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz wanted to order a judicial inquiry into the incident and for that purpose he had especially gone to Karachi with this plan but faced opposition from his ruling allies in Sindh.

The PM had gone to Karachi with a plan to announce the judicial inquiry in a press conference after holding meetings there. Information Minister Mohammad Ali Durrani and Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao had also accompanied him during this visit. The PM's plan could not materialize following stiff opposition from his allies in Sindh who said that such an order would open up a new Pandora's Box.

The then Federal Secretary Interior Division, Kamal Shah, had miserably failed in estimating the real danger incorporated in 12th May's situation of Karachi or he wilfully played in the hands of 'certain hidden people'. Reasons understood were that earlier the MQM had desired to join the Islamabad rally but was stopped by the Interior Ministry. Some MQM lawmakers blamed the 'bureaucracy at Islamabad' for 'pushing' them to hold a separate rally in Karachi instead of joining the PML(Q) rally in Islamabad held the same day. Thus an enquiry was direly needed into the Karachi affairs of that day to unearth such hidden planned 'green signals' from 'some' to keep the history intact.

The MQM kept the feeling that the 12th May incidents had left an adverse impact on their strategy to expand to other provinces so as to become a mainstream political party. The Karachi tragedy had put the MQM in dock as its offices in the Punjab and rural Sindh faced a virtual closure following protests by the public of respective areas who blamed them for this bloodbath in Karachi. MQM leadership should not be so wrong to take such negative decision of killing the innocents in the open streets; sane politicians would not like to cut their own wings at the brink of their flight at least. A serious mistake was done by the MQM; OR 'secret agencies' used them in a brutal way; only a thorough probe into the events could have revealed.

Why the enquiry was not ordered by the Sindh or Federal Governments; or by the PPP's new regime; or even by the superior courts; or by the provincial or national assemblies though all the stake holders, ***including the MQM***, have been raising their demands to do that. Till today, tens of cabinet meetings have been held in the Presidency and the Prime Minister Secretariat; dozens meetings have been convened by the Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik in the Governor House and CM House at Karachi on the subject of these killings but no body ever dared to seriously order for an investigation into the said affairs.

The Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, in whose honour a tribute of 43 dead bodies and about 150 injured persons were presented, stands comfortably saddled back in his mighty chair since March 2009 but the SC could not find time to ask CJ Sindh HC that what happened to those proceedings which were initiated in this respect. SC is always pleased to call the Chief Secretary, Sindh Home Secretary, IGP Sindh, DG Rangers, DIG City Karachi and others in less important *suo moto* actions into kidnapping of girls or beating of women by cruel husbands but never considered to call any of the above officers to come with FIRs of 12th May 2007 (if any case was then registered); and if registered, with the final reports of those cases or any one case got through investigation.

The Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry himself was an eye witness to the whole scenario; he himself was kept in illegal confinement along with 24 prominent lawyers in Karachi Airport Building. Many of his judges at Sindh High Court were beaten & manhandled and lawyers killed, but no action.

The CJ, the judges and courts who cannot ensure 'Rule of Law' [just to keep the soldiers happy] being the witnesses themselves, can hardly provide justice to the people; thus we'll continue to suffer, my countrymen.

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