

9---11: TEN YEARS AFTER.

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On the 10th anniversary of the 9-11 tragedy, it would be instructive to reflect on the disastrous impact of that tragedy upon the entire human family.

One, hundreds of thousands, perhaps a couple of million, lives have been lost in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Afghan-Pakistan border and other places as a direct or indirect consequence of the so-called “war on terror” that followed 9-11. It is not just the violence generated by the US helmed occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan that is responsible for this. Terror groups that resist occupation or are seeking to avenge the death of innocent children and women at the hands of the occupiers, or those who are embroiled in the tussle for power or enmeshed in inter-sectarian and inter-factional feuds---like Al-Qaeda--- are also culpable.

Two, it is estimated that at least 3.7 trillion US dollars have been poured into the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This colossal military expenditure has emasculated the US economy and is one of the major causes of the nation’s chronic debt crisis which in turn has serious implications for economies everywhere.

Three, the war on terror has led to the marginalisation of other more important wars that the global community had pledged to fight at the beginning of the 21st century, such as the war against global poverty and global illiteracy. It has also diverted attention from the challenge of widening disparities between those who have a lot and those who have a little which has become a global phenomenon threatening social cohesion and stability in many parts of the world.

Four, the obsession with terrorism has prompted a number of governments to introduce or expand repressive laws that curtail legitimate civil rights and liberties. Illegal incarcerations, torture and assassinations have been carried out in the name of fighting terror.

Five, the terror war has spawned a new wave of Islamophobia. Fear and hatred of Islam and Muslims which is deeply embedded in the psyche of a segment of Western society has been thrust to the fore through the equation of the

religion and its adherents with terrorism. Some politicians, religious leaders and a section of the mainstream media are responsible for this diabolical bigotry. Consequently, Muslims and their religious symbols have become targets of venom in various parts of the Western world. A fanatical fringe within the Muslim ummah(community) has reacted to this by venting anti-Christian and anti-Jewish bile in their sermons and their writings. The end result is a general deterioration in relations among people of different faiths.

How do we overcome, or at least reduce, the negative impact of the 9-11 episode? Both the centres of power in the West and certain elements in the Muslim world should be prepared to come to grips with some irrefutable truths.

One, those who are committed to truth and justice in North America and Europe should try to convince their fellow citizens through all the democratic channels available to them, that Western elites are the real perpetrators of terror and violence. In their quest for hegemony—often related to oil, or geostrategic interests or Israel or simply power --- these elites have created fear and terror among millions of innocent people by subjecting them to continuous bombing raids and missile attacks for months on end. This is the terrorism of the militarily powerful, of the hegemonic state or empire. In the last 10 years since 9-11, we have seen that invariably it results in much more death and destruction than the terrorism of those who act in retaliation. Western elites should be made to understand this simple truth by their own people.

Two, in order to reach out to the truth, these elites should begin by re-visiting the 9-11 tragedy. There are many unanswered questions about that event that men and women of conscience have continued to ask in the last 10 years--- questions such as the actual identities of the hijackers; why the hijacked airliners were not intercepted; what was the real cause of the collapse of the Twin Towers and Building 7 of the World Trade Centre; and whether the Pentagon was hit by a Boeing 757. Scholars of repute in Europe and the US like Hans Kochler, David Ray Griffin, Peter Dale Scott and James Fetzer have challenged the official version of 9-11. It is because the doubts about 9-11 are so widespread that JUST is of the view that the UN General assembly should

establish a truly independent international panel to ascertain the truth once and for all.

Three, while Western governments and peoples have their roles to play vis-à-vis 9-11, the Muslim ummah as a whole has also got the responsibility to ensure that the militant fringe within the community renounces terrorism as a weapon to achieve its goals. Apart from the vile and vicious cruelty inherent in terrorism, it is a mode of operation that has tarnished the image of Islam and Muslims worldwide. Whatever its short-term gains, the use of violence and terror against civilians has encouraged a sort of obscurantism which prevents both Muslims and non-Muslims alike from realising that the essence of the Islamic message is the struggle for justice and peace without force or coercion.

This is why it is in our interest, in the interests of everyone ---10 years after 9-11-- to strengthen our resolve to combat terrorism, and its underlying causes, in all its manifestations.

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