



Great expectations Dr A Q Khan

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From Print Edition



From the large number of reactions I have received to my columns, both from within the country and from abroad, it appears that all are extremely worried about the current state of affairs in the country and the danger posed to the very existence of our beloved motherland. There is mortal danger hanging over our heads like a sword of Damocles. Every sane citizen is worried about our future.

I had earlier written two columns on our judiciary and expressed my reservations about its functioning and its inability to dispense quick and cheap justice. A friend of mine from Lahore, Dr Fareed Ahmad, sometimes sends me thought-provoking messages along with his good wishes. Last week I received the following from him:

- Name: Fazal Din, age: 75. Crime: loitering around at night. Justice: rotting in jail for the last 38 years.
- Name: Akbar Shah. Crime: stealing a bicycle. Justice: rotting in jail for 13 years.
- Name: Abdul Khaliq. Crime: cutting a tree (to cook food for the children). Justice: rotting in jail for 14 years.
- Name: Yousuf Raza Gilani. Crime: refused to comply with the orders of the Supreme Court to write a letter to the Swiss Court for the return of \$60 million plundered national wealth. Justice: 30 seconds in an air-conditioned courtroom (smiling), surrounded by governors, chief ministers and ministers. Result: Yet more ridicule and insult to the Supreme Court and acting as if though the conviction was a feather in his cap. More luxury trips abroad, costing millions to the exchequer. Insaf ho to aisa ho. Wah, wah. Pakistani Qanun Zindabad.

The above message moved me to write yet another column on the judicial system. The purpose is not to insult or question the wisdom and intelligence of the honourable judges. I only wish to discuss what is bothering me as a layman.

As expectations in the judiciary rose after the restoration of the judges, so the disappointment was the greater at the lack of realisation of these expectations. Who created these high expectations from the

judiciary? one may ask. Was it not the “captain of the ship” himself who presented his case to the public and sought their support in his fight against the corrupt leaders? But what happened when he was honourably restored after the people responded and rallied behind him?

People from all groups across the political spectrum participated in this long arduous struggle. They offered tremendous sacrifices for bringing justice to the door of the common man. They held supreme the principle of justice for all-whether rich or poor, powerful or powerless-a system of speedy and easy justice and above all, restoring peace and bringing prosperity to the country. All these objectives were voiced in public statements by the honourable chief justice, broadcast by the media and registered by the whole nation. But what happened after the restoration?

There were claims of delivering justice and upholding the Constitution “even if the heavens should fall,” restoring law and order and bringing back looted money from foreign banks. Was the Constitution upheld? Has law and order been restored in Karachi and Balochistan? Has the looted money been brought back? The answer is no on all counts, leading to widespread disappointment, despair and despondency.

Crime rates are on the rise, corruption has never been as high as it is now and it has penetrated the whole political body of the country, essential civic services are breaking down, inflation is skyrocketing, unemployment is high, the education system is deteriorating and becoming increasingly commercialised, health services are practically non-existent and terrorist attacks, theft, dacoity, rape, murder and kidnapping for ransom are on the increase, making the life of the common man almost unbearable.

Which promise made by the judiciary has then, thus far, been fulfilled? What is the fate of the NRO case? What kind of justice is it that has been delivered to the chief executive of the country in the contempt of court case against him? Had it been an ordinary citizen charged with the same crime, would the honourable judges have punished him in the same way? What is the reason for this leniency other than the high office he occupies?

When a whole nation is disappointed, its collective anger needs to find an outlet, which is often violent. Look at the fate of the Shah of Iran, Saddam Hussein, Qaddafi, Zein al-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak. And let us not forget the ultimate judgement-that of the Almighty. The court of the All-Powerful, All-Knowing is the Absolute Court. In His Court there can be no delaying or deceptive tactics and none can claim immunity.

Many respected investigative journalists have reported extensively on important ongoing cases involving influentials. Unfortunately, their detailed and biting reports have not produced the desired results. As a matter of fact, they do not seem to have had any results at all. We still see the same game continuing. Not a single high-profile case has been decided or its judgment implemented. On the contrary, the accused are strutting around with heads held high.

In one of my earlier columns I had named the virtues of the old judicial system. It was cheap, quick and fair. It was not intended to imply that our honourable judges should sit on mats in mosques. I am fully aware that, under present-day circumstance, this is not feasible. However, they should deliver quick, cheap justice, equal for all, irrespective of position, influence or wealth