

# VIPs and Rule of Law

(Very Important Predicament)

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I found recent Headlines in Dawn Metropolitan 'MPAs raise alarm over breakdown of law and order' quite amusing (29.11.08). You may find this sense of humor a bit queer but don't we all feel that the parliamentarians, with the exception of a few, are actually part of the problem. I see no irony in the fact that the biggest enemy of 'The Rule of Law' is the VIP culture that we have been nurturing since the last sixty years. 'Order' vanishes when the 'rules' are applied unequally.

We are all aware of the details of what is happening in our lawless environment, almost everybody has a harrowing tale to tell and what is conspicuously missing is a political will to arrest this situation. We are also aware of the record of LEAs and the criminal justice system, and that it has failed us but what is most scary, as felt by many is that the criminals, even if they are apprehended, are back on the streets within no time because of their connections or corruption. The rumor is that kidnapping and street crime is such a big business that it cannot be done away with, as it thrives with the backing of some 'influentials' who easily manipulate the systems. The other peculiar crime pattern that we all witness has a political color to it. Every change of government brings in their own gangs of 'racketeers' and 'criminals' on the street, who are sometimes operate without the knowledge of the landed aristocracy.

The 'Police department' meant for our protection actually paints a shameful and horrific picture and so do our 'Courts of law' and their systems. Unlike other countries as soon as the words 'police' or 'courts' are mentioned a serious gloom

takes over our faces. Some who have experienced the systems are actually terrified. These words have become a threat to the people rather than a relief. Yes, the reasons for the rot are many, rampant corruption and other faults within the system, lack of investment in the system and political will to strengthen Justice, law and enforcement but one of the biggest problem is its misuse and abuse and shameless violation of laws of the land by VIPs and this creates serious law enforcement and implementation problems. Many a journalists have declared this as one of the main reasons for failure of our present criminal justice system and perhaps complete judicial system.

Karachi is witnessing yet another surge in street crime. Although we have been to this road before but the crime calendar posted in the press or acquired through word of mouth actually terrorizes its citizens. There can be two approaches to this mega-menace, one, the 'long term' solutions of 'Reform' and 'Redesign' while the other 'short term' solutions of 'Vigilant Enforcement'. If the present regime is seriously looking for Solutions then both the approaches should be mobilized on a war footing. Let us start the process of reform which is long overdue. Rekindle a national debate on Judicial and Police reform, let us re-examine all the deliberations/reports of previous committees, let us create a new think tank of retired justices, bureaucrats, police officials and jail wardens and do some serious restructure and redesign. Let us also try some out of the box solutions like forming a Think Tank of creative citizens like architects, designers, engineers, doctors, psychologists, entrepreneurs and senior citizens to give their personal time once a week, discussing the evils that afflict our society in this regard and devise solutions. Initial brain storming can happen in closed rooms rather than open forums of TV channels where a lot cannot be said because of various reasons. The deliberations can be summarized, compiled and later brought live for debate and finalization. I am sure some very creative but long term solutions may emerge.

The biggest challenge and most interesting of all, for our Think Tanks would be seeking solutions for the elimination of the VIP culture. Guess who would resist such a scheme. Recently when a project was undertaken to remove tinted films from automobiles which are against the law, it was abandoned on the resistance

of an MPA. It is felt that some serious effort and creative out the box solutions may be required for the short term solutions of Law enforcement. The idea is that no one should be above the Law. Once someone had offered a bizarre idea of instituting a DDS, a “Deaf and Dum squad” for traffic violators, a pair of commandos with 6/6 vision but unable to hear and speak. No verbal arguments or wheeling dealing. No VIP should be able to impress upon the DDS their status or connections. The punishment for violations should be instant, heavy, and on the spot, for big cars or small cars. If one is unable to pay fines then one after another the automobiles tires are sacrificed. The times are asking for instant justice, no arrests, no trials, and no connections.

Perhaps a bloodier solution for armed dacoits would serve as a deterrent, who many a times resort to rape and murder besides depriving citizens of valuables. What we need is a team of fully armed vigilant commandos in camouflage. Travelling in pairs dressed as ordinary citizens posing as potential victims. Once they come in contact with the dacoits, shoot to ‘injure’ them on the spot. No arrests, no trials, no connections, render them incapable of future criminal activity. Punishment akin to that of Islamic injunctions; chopping off hands for theft. I would not go as far as to suggest ‘shoot to kill’ but in the recent ethnic riots, I was not surprised when the government achieved instant results by issuing shoot to kill orders. A question does arise then why not do the same to professional criminals who pull a gun on you and your family. This might help cleanse the streets of the criminals.

Well, the ideas may seem weird and unworkable but we all desperately need solutions for our endemic Law and order problems. One has to understand that it is not a ‘revolution’ in the making situation where the proletariat pick up arms to attack its bourgeois. Crime has been institutionalized by the powerful few who have learnt how to beat the systems. Yes, the inequalities and injustices of a society breed crime, but with us our society is far too fragmented, politicized and complicated, there are many other forces that are brutalizing the society. Therefore curbing the crime is as critical as eliminating the inequalities. Drastic times call for drastic measures.

'Rule of Law' is the only way to survive and unfortunately that does not take root here. The violators of law and the perpetrators of all crime in our society, may it be the landlords who feel that they can make the women parade naked in the bazaar, the so called elders who find 'honor' in killing, to organized crime gangs, defrauders, extortionists, kidnappers, murderers and petty thieves, all are convinced that they can get away with their crimes easily, because of the ineptness of our LEA and judicial systems. The truth is that majority of offences and crimes are not reported because Justice is hardly available. This is what emboldens the criminals. Although enshrined in our constitution, the safety of life, limb and property of every citizen, but the citizens are the ones who feel most insecure. Therefore the most important project for this government should be to fix the VIP culture and enforce rule of law and strengthen the judicial systems and the LEAs.

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