

**Is desperation an illness?
(Traffic signal jumping)**

Dear Editor,

Karachi is trend setter for Pakistan in many ways. We can safely say that in recent years a new trend has taken shape. Unfortunately it is a very dangerous one. Some bizarre phenomenon blinds us all to see the inherent dangers that lie in there yet we all have become a part of this death roulette. The trend is Traffic signal jumping.

When the traffic signal turns green, I tell my friends to STOP, look both sides and then go as the new population of signal jumpers may either kill you or hurt you or leave a very deep scar in your life. The most baffling part is that in the process these signal jumpers also put their own life in danger and also whosoever travels with them, their family, children or even passengers.

Yes, there could be an element of contempt for law, the law enforcing agencies, the government functionaries who have excelled in this stupid habit but why risk your own life? Hard to explain. Could it be the muggings and the news of stationary vehicles being hijacked on a red signal? I am sure it is not rushing to the hospital, train station or the airport, because every second person is doing it. Are these just the pressures of the urban life, to make ends meet but why have the people become suicidal. Why gamble with life?

Can it be just a case of anxiety and restlessness as the driver behind you is not prepared to wait for a fraction of a second on the go signal and honks the hell out of you. Is it the mad urban rush, to be there *first*, but I am sure that it is some sort of grave desperation, a wild beastly phenomenon that drives you to put at stake your own life. It's not just the village idiots or up-country drivers who are doing it, it's the sane looking, educated and civilized people who have taken up this nasty habit.

Is it the sense of pride of defying or tricking a mandatory hurdle in the way or is it just plain foolishness. It is definitely a crazy state of mind of every urbanite that is going out of control.

With the help of the columns of Dawn I would like to pose a question to curious readers and even doctors of psychology and behavior scientists to explain this phenomenon and suggest remedies if possible. A temporary solution is suggested. I think that the SDMs and DIG traffic should take this as a personal challenge and organize special anti-jumpers' squads or a task force headed by some civil magistrates like in the CPLC. This is to create an "on the spot" punishment to offenders. I am sure this will control the situation considerably and reduce daily accidents, near misses and mental harassment. Obviously this not the only solution but can work until the urban scientists come up with viable solution. The most important part of this exercise is that the squad should not spare anybody and it means anybody, even if it is an SDM or the DIG.

DAZ

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