**White in our Flag**

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I was browsing Twitter when suddenly I came across the “Save Our Soul” message from Bishop Azad Marshall which shook me from the core of my heart. It said, ” Words fail me as I write this. We, Bishops, Priests and lay people are deeply pained and distressed at the Jaranwala incident in the Faisalabad District in Pakistan. A church building is being burnt as I type this message. Bibles have been desecrated and Christians have been tortured and harassed having been falsely accused of violating the Holy Quran. We cry out for justice and action from law enforcement and those who dispense justice and the safety of all citizens to intervene immediately and assure us that our lives are valuable in our homeland that has just celebrated independence and freedom”.

I felt so ashamed and helpless, but I still wanted to do something and find a stronger shoulder than myself to unload the burden of my conscience, which was none other than the president himself, and I forwarded Bishop Azad’s message to the president knowing him very well, and I was confident that this wise man, who has a lot of compassion in himself for anyone in distress, would do some magic.

My broken heart was not satiated, so I felt compelled to go through the comments offered by our Pakistanis on Bishop’s “SOS” to find some consolation. I was relieved to see that the majority of the comments were in solidarity with the Christian community, condemning the heinous and abhorrent act of burning the church and desecration of the Holy Bible and demanding that the perpetrators be tried under the country’s blasphemy laws to give the perpetrators exemplary punishment to at least give some respect to “white part of our national flag” that represents minorities. Many sane-minded Pakistan registered their anguish and pain in the following words. Mr. Abbasi wrote: “As a British Muslim from Pakistani background I am sickened of these extremist hypocrites who scream Islamophobia at the world and persecute minorities within Pakistan, sadly the problem is getting worse as no one can confront this jahil fanatic mindset except feed it further”.

Momin Mukhtar wrote: “Being Muslim, I am ashamed of this. Deseceration of churh has nothing to do with Islam. This is vandalism and extremism. We are ashamed”. Cyanide Wrote” “A blasphemy case should also be filed against those who set fire to the church in Jaranwala and insulted the Bible Contribute positively to this campaign by retweeting”

Kulsoon Mughal: We are ashamed, sorry we failed to protect! An immense shame to all those Parliamentarians who voted to strengthen these blasphemous laws so we can witness such disgusting days

If we do not believe in the previous messengers and the divine books that were revealed to them, we forfeit the right to call ourselves Muslims.

Farhan Rizvi: “I am deeply saddened to hear about the incident in Jaranwala. The burning of a church, desecration of Bibles, and the mistreatment of innocent Christians is a distressing and unacceptable act. Such actions go against the principles of respect, tolerance, and freedom that any society should uphold. My thoughts are with all those affected. Condemning such acts and standing for justice is crucial to ensure the safety and rights of all citizens”,

Mr Ahmad Qureshi wrote: “This is a moment that has shamed us all Pakistanis. Those Pakistanis involved in burning a church must be punished to the fullest extent of the law. As a Pakistani citizens, we stand by our Pakistani Christian brothers and sisters in this hour of deep pain and anguish”.

The prime-time talk programs were much more uplifting and gave me even more optimism. Participants expressed dismay that as a country, we are unable to give protection and safety to our minority, who live in continual dread for their lives and property. They are mostly excluded from mainstreaming and have been demoted to lower social strata. They demanded that all those involved in this heinous act be identified by Geo-fencing, arrested and subjected to due process of law, given exemplary punishments, and the victims be compensated in the best possible ways. To my dismay, Twitter was also full of justifications for this act as a response to the burning of copies of the Holy Quran in Sweden and elsewhere, but their founding father, Khalifa, and prophet may not have provided them with guiding principles and guidelines on how to protect the followers of other religions and their religious symbols and places of worship, but we have.

Our beloved Quaid said, “In the course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens …

The historic journey of Hazart Umer Bin Khattab who was holding the reins of a camel (in some references donkey) while his slave was riding when they reached Jerusalem, as it was his turn to ride. Seeing this incredible sight of a Khalifa having, half of the known world under his sway, Mr. Sophronius, the Guardian of the city, immediately realized that this man would do justice to them and handed over the city keys to him. When he offered Umer to pray inside the church, Hazart Umer refused saying,” If I prayed there, later Muslims would use it as an excuse to convert it into a mosque – thereby depriving Christendom of one of its holiest sites. Instead, Umar prayed outside the Church, where a mosque (called Masjid Umar – the Mosque of Umar) was later built.

Mr Sophronius got another surprise in his life when he signed a treaty that protected the rights of the people of the city of all religions. In the treaty, Hazrat Umer assured them of safety for themselves for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and healthy persons of the city and all the rituals that belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited by Muslims and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their property will be damaged. They will not be forcibly converted.

Let us also recall another out-of-this-world agreement that was signed by our beloved Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) with the citizens of other religions of Medina. The first article of the constitution said, “All the inhabitants of Medina, the Muslims as well as those who had entered the pact from the Jews, Christian, and idolaters, were “one nation to the exclusion of all others.” All were considered members and citizens of Medina society regardless of religion, race, or ancestry. People of other faiths were protected from harm as much as the Muslims, as is stated in another article, “To the Jews who follow us belong to us and will merit help and equity. They shall not be harmed nor their enemies be aided.” Any attack on another religion or tribe was considered an attack on the state and upon the Muslims as well. The lives of the practitioners of other religions in Muslim society were also given protective status. The Prophet said: “Whoever kills a person who has a truce with the Muslims will never smell the fragrance of Paradise.” (Saheeh Muslim). Since the upper hand was with the Muslims, the Prophet strictly warned against any maltreatment of people of other faiths. He said: “Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, curtails their rights, burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment.” (Abu Dawud).

We or anyone with a sane mind will not justify the desecration of copies of the Holy Quran in Sweden or elsewhere. However, as Muslims, if we desecrate the symbols of other religions or their places of worship, we become equally culpable and deserve to be hated and treated the same way.

Therefore, as a nation, we must censure with the loudest voice and strongest possible manner any act of desecration of Holy scriptures, which are, in fact, sacred to us and a fundamental tenet of our faith. If we do not believe in the previous messengers and the divine books that were revealed to them, we forfeit the right to call ourselves Muslims. The same cannot be said about people of other religions, as their prophets and revealed books on them did not command them to believe in the Holy Quran and our Prophet (PBUH) in as many words as our Holy Quran did and as our Prophet did by his words and deeds. This has given us a greater responsibility than devotees of other religions to respect and care for people of other faiths and their beliefs. As our faith would be incomplete if we did not believe in any or all of the following articles of faith: “Belief in the Oneness of God, Belief in the Angels of God, Belief in the Revelations (Books) of God, Belief in the Prophets of God, Belief in the Day of Judgment, and Belief in Pre-Measurement (Qadar).

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