

Pakistan: After Salman, Shahbaz silenced in the “sacred” state! Who’s next?

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In the National Assembly all the parliamentarians observed 2-minute silence to mourn the brutal killing by rising from their seats except three members of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam who kept sitting as this was against their brand of Islam.

In less than two months time a sitting Governor of the largest province and the only Christian minister in the federal cabinet, both from the ruling party, have been gunned down in broad daylight, in the most secure city of this country. So who remains safe in the holy land? The simple answer is nobody.

Four months before his murder, in an interview with BBC, Mr. Shahbaz had openly expressed his apprehensions regarding threat to his life for voicing his concerns against discrimination targeting the weaker sections of society, and defending the rights of the poor, generally from communities which constitute 3.7% of our total population and are so very often subjected to the worst kind of injustices, under the blasphemy law. In the same interview he said that “he was not afraid to die “and will not stop “speaking for the oppressed and marginalized Christians and other minorities”.

The Blasphemy law stays whereas the body of Shahbaz Bhatti rests in a cold storage in the Federal capital. Not very far is the Parliament building, where the Prime Minister, on the floor of the house, suggested that a discussion may be initiated on the murder of Shahbaz. That appeared to be the optimum he could do. However, in the National Assembly all the parliamentarians observed 2-minute silence to mourn the brutal killing by rising from their seats except three members of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam who kept sitting as this was against their brand of Islam. Also not very far from the mortuary is the Presidential Palace where the PM’s boss Mr.Zardari said that a particular mentality had killed Shahbaz. The same expression he used while referring to the murder of his wife. The electronic media, always in search of some hot stuff immediately focused on the events and dynamics of the breaking news, while maulvis of different brands appeared on talk shows. In one, hosted by Sana Bucha, Tahir Ashrafi of Pakistan Ulema Council, Abulkhair Zubair of JUP and Mohammad Naeem of Jamia Banuria, rather than looking at indigenous factors, as usual, labeled it a conspiracy against Islam and Pakistan aimed at destabilizing the system. This is a clever tactic where you throw the onus on someone else; secure your belief system while avoiding the real issues manage to get ample time to bash others and sermonize too. Soon they were fighting among themselves until the host had to intervene. Maulana Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, currently in exile in Malaysia, due to grave threat to his life, in his own country, because of his progressive views on Islam, clearly stated that since the militant outfits were and are still being patronized by the security establishment for its own vested interests, the chickens have come home to roost. He expressed concern that presently it had become impossible in Pakistan to express an opinion on a sensitive issue, lest, someone might misread you. He further added that the bulk of responsibility, under the current circumstances, fell on the shoulders of politicians and Ulema.

On another channel Maulvi Sirajul Haq of Jamaat-e-Islami(JI) refused to condemn the brutal murder

and went on to the extent of praising Mumtaz Qadri, the murderer of Salman Taseer. Not quite unexpected from one of its leaders the JI, equipped with twisted mindsets, played the most obnoxious and bizarre politics during the last 63 years.

Mujeeb-ur-Rahman Shami, the right wing stalwart, on another channel remarked that it was terrorism and the beneficiaries are enemies of Pakistan and it has nothing to do with religion. Well it has to do with religion Mr. Shami because this state has a religion and nothing is left in this country from politics to dress code to fine arts to curricula which you people have not tarnished with your particular brand of Islam.

While countrywide protests were held against the horrific act, the response from the outside world was also strong and swift. The murder was strongly condemned by US, UK, European Union, Germany, Italy, Church of England and the Vatican.

I contacted some of my Christians friends to express my grief and anger over the sad incident. Believe me they appeared so scared that they did not even openly express their anger on these atrocities being committed against them. A little later I received an e-mail referring to a news item which read as under:

“TOBA TEK SINGH, Feb 11: Christians of Chak 95-JB (Adda Korian) **agreed** on Friday to withdraw a case against 150 Muslims who burnt their houses on July 31, 2010, after an alleged incident of desecration of the Holy Quran. This **desecration** incited riots in Gojra on July 31 and Aug 1 in which nine Christians were burnt alive by charged Muslims. Elders of the two communities were part of a gathering where Christians **agreed** that plaintiff Mehnga Masih would withdraw his case against 150 Muslims who burnt the minority community’s houses.

Shahbaz Bhatti is gone like countless Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Ahmadis whose near and dear ones would shortly agree to withdraw their respective cases against the perpetrators, as these classes of individuals are not entitled to the application of law even if they are burnt alive.

I watched on television when a poor old man from the Christian community was crying near the dead body of the slain Minister in the hospital and as the PM arrived he asked “assi kithay jayae” (where do we go). Neither the PM nor anybody else has the answer.

One thing however, is intriguing. The killers left pamphlets behind, containing their future manifesto for the “Islamic Republic”, and declaring war on all *kafirs* and *murtads*. The pamphlets had names of Fidayan-e-Mohammad, Tanzeem al-Qaida and Tehrik-e-Talban Punjab written on them. This has not been their modus operandi in the past. Perhaps they have shifted to a new Standard Operating Procedure.

It is likely that the purifying proxies in collusion with the deep state have decided to give a crushing blow to the already weakened democratic dispensation.

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P.S.

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