

Pakistan: gouvernement still fails to understand the Pashtun question

Sunday 17 November 2019, by [KHAN Ghulam Qadir](#) (Date first published: 12 November 2019).

This comment from a retired civil servant reflects the frustrations of those Pakistanis who oppose the regime's repression of the Pashtuns.

In September, MNAs Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir [leaders of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) - editors], were granted bail after being imprisoned for their alleged involvement in the May 26 incident in Kharqamar. [1]

During their time in jail, they were reportedly denied basic facilities like provision of newspapers and books, and also deprived of being issued production orders (granted to all other accused MNAs) to attend key parliamentary sessions.

Nonetheless, they stood their ground; a commitment acknowledged by their followers in the reception they received upon their release. Out of prison, they gave their version of what transpired that day, obviously very different from the FIR or government's version.

In their absence, elections were held in former Fata for provincial seats. Those who won took the oath of office while those who lost took their complaints to the ECP. Another milestone towards mainstreaming and integration of tribal districts was achieved.

No matter what the government says, however, the transition from FCR to regular law or the merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has not been smooth. In addition to the inevitable hiccups that come with change, delayed decision-making, hasty and ill-conceived decisions, and attempts to retain parts of the old system are a hallmark of the transition. Champions of the status quo have not given up yet, and often it is these government-induced crises that make us feel as though we are still perceived as the hostile subjects we were under the FCR.

Champions of the status quo in former Fata have not given up.

In the first year of this government, not a single mega project was initiated in the tribal districts. The special allocation of Rs10 billion out of the committed Rs 100bn per annum, could not be spent, and was conveniently parked in one government account or another. In the current financial year, it seems that the amount allocated for development of the tribal districts will also be surrendered, as apparently there are no PC-1s in the pipeline awaiting approval. Designing and approving a PC-1 for a mega project takes at least a year, and we haven't even started yet. The gestation period is even longer; when will we see the fruit of this labour is anybody's guess.

The KP chief minister recently agreed to create an 'education city' in North Waziristan (a proposal floated by a young NGO with no education experts) and announced that the programme will be included in the 10-year development plan. According to the proposal, among other institutions, a university and a medical college are to be established. One wonders if such institutions were already included in the Fata Sustainable Development Plan designed and funded by UNDP.

Moreover, the prime minister's desire for fast-paced 10-year development plan resulted in a new proposal designed with support from the UK government agency DFID. Did they also leave huge gaps in their education plan? Then we have a large bureaucracy to look after the education sector. How can so many experts not design a proper plan, and how can a group of non-experts overrule them? Either they didn't make any effort, or the chief minister announced this programme without referring to approved plans. Either way, it points to inefficiency.

In law enforcement, though the Levies and Khasadars have been merged with KP police, the pay and allowances structure remains the same. They don't receive their monthly salaries on time, and are getting desperate. They are out protesting, with no end in sight.

During the British Raj, the Fata/Pata regions were administered directly by Delhi. Despite the fact that they had the likes of George Cunningham, Olaf Caroe and scores more competent people as governors, the viceroy didn't leave matters to them. The area was too important to be ignored. All policy decisions were to be cleared by Delhi before being implemented.

Whereas we might have the luxury to oblige our friends elsewhere, KP needs our best. A wrong decision by an incompetent friend in ex-Fata/Pata could translate into lives lost. Take the Kharqamar incident. Tragedy could have been avoided had there been one wise voice in the chain of command to advise that the MNAs be allowed to visit their people. Though they had no intention of shutting down the road, even if they had done so, within two days the people of Macha Madakhel would be out of basic provisions and would be begging for a face-saving measure to reopen the road. Unfortunately, there was no one, from the governor to district commissioner, to give sane advice. As a result, more than a dozen lives were lost. Except for the MNAs going to jail, no government official was held accountable.

To those in decision-making, by all means, oblige your friends by sending them to exotic locations as ambassadors or making them heads of autonomous bodies — but send the best, most committed people to work in ex-Fata/Pata. Every wrong decision has consequences. The frustration born of these poor decisions is growing.

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Footnotes

[1] See Pierre Rousset, "Pakistan: The international solidarity campaign with Ali Wazeer and

Moshi Dawar, http://www.europe-solidaire.org/ecrire/?exec=article&id_article=49650