

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**
Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
Managing Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
Bureau Chief Karachi: **Saleem Zaman Khan.**
(mszk786@gmail.com)

Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
(afrazalishah@gmail.com)

Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.
Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.
Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.
Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.
Email: spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com
Whatsapp: 0346-5008408

Humanitarian facilities in Rafah are forced to close ‘one after another’

With no let up in Israel’s bombardment across Gaza on Thursday, UN humanitarian officials warned that the flow of vital lifesaving aid into the enclave has fallen by more than two-thirds since the Israeli military stepped up its campaign in Rafah and seized the key aid conduit. “Humanitarian facilities in Rafah are forced to close one after another... The flow of humanitarian aid supplies into Gaza, already insufficient to meet the soaring needs, has dropped by 67 per cent since 7 May,” reported the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, amid reports that kitchens, clinics and hospitals are shutting down.

Until Israeli troops seized and closed the Rafah border crossing in the very south of the Strip, it had been the key entry point for food, water, fuel and medicine into Gaza as well as the route for sick and wounded people to leave for treatment. Echoing those concerns, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) warned that there was little the agency “can currently do in Rafah, with stocks very low and mobility severely restricted”. According to WFP, the West Erez crossing in northern Gaza “is functional, but not reliable”. Gate 96 further south and the Erez crossing are also “inaccessible” and access is so “constrained” to southern parts of Gaza that it risks causing the same catastrophic levels of hunger witnessed in the north. The development comes as the Israeli military said that it had secured “tactical control” of a narrow 13 kilometre (eight mile) stretch of land between Gaza and Egypt. In a statement on Wednesday, an Israeli military spokesperson reportedly claimed that rocket launchers had been used to attack Israel from the Philadelphia Corridor. After nearly eight months of war, the entire population of Gaza of 2.2 million people is almost exclusively dependent on humanitarian assistance, including food. Although desperately needed supplies have been delivered on the Palestinian side of the Kerem Abu Salem, or Kerem Shalom, crossing located close to Rafah, UN humanitarians have repeatedly stressed that it is not safe to fetch them amid ongoing hostilities, impassable roads, unexploded weapons, fuel shortages and delays at checkpoints. “Adults and children are beyond exhausted from constant displacement, hunger, and fear,” WFP said in its latest situation update. “They are desperate for the war to end, as are humanitarian workers on the ground, who are largely displaced and dispersed along with the people they are meant to serve.” Aid officials have frequently reiterated the responsibility of Israel as the occupying power to ensure that aid reaches those who need it, in line with international humanitarian law. The UN food agency meanwhile confirmed that lifesaving aid relief and fuel from Egypt had crossed into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing. “This is an important step, but we need sustained access. We need all border crossings and crossing points within Gaza to be open,” it said, adding that although some commercial goods had reached the enclave, “people cannot afford the high prices”. “We need more aid to enter through the south because people need dietary diversity, access to healthcare and water.” In its latest update, the UN food agency said that in the north, aid teams are distributing food parcels, wheat flour, hot meals and supporting bakeries. In central areas, WFP is prioritizing hot meals to reach more people with fewer resources. It noted that faster assistance is now possible thanks to a recently introduced self-registration tool that allows people to update their location. Just four bakeries now operate in Gaza City, and one recently opened in Jabalia, providing bread in the north. Out of the 17 bakeries WFP operates in Gaza, only 11 are functioning owing to the lack of fuel and other essentials. In Rafah the healthcare situation remains perilous, with only one hospital still functional, the World Health Organization said, referring to Al Emirati Maternity Hospital.

AJK, Protest and Rangers - II

Entrusted with the dual duty of safeguarding both nature and people, rangers play a crucial role in upholding law and order throughout Pakistan’s expansive wilderness. Amidst the challenges posed by poaching, illegal logging, land invasion, and environmental degradation, rangers stand as frontline defenders, steadfast in their commitment to enforcing the rule of law and conserving the nation’s natural heritage for future generations.

At the heart of their mission, rangers are charged with enforcing laws and regulations designed to preserve biodiversity, protect natural resources, and combat wildlife exploitation. This encompasses patrolling protected areas such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and forest reserves to deter and apprehend poachers, illegal loggers, and other perpetrators of environmental crimes. Through surveillance, intelligence gathering, and law enforcement operations, rangers disrupt illicit activities that threaten Pakistan’s ecological balance and natural landscapes’ integrity.

Moreover, rangers play a pivotal role in raising environmental awareness and educating local communities, nurturing a culture of conservation and sustainable resource management. Through outreach initiatives, community engagement programs, and capacity-building workshops, rangers empower communities to become custodians of their natural resources, forging partnerships based on mutual respect, trust, and shared responsibility for environmental protection. By bridging government agencies, civil society organizations, and grassroots communities, rangers promote collaboration and collective action toward environmental sustainability.

In addition to their conservation efforts, rangers are entrusted with maintaining law

and order in remote and often inaccessible regions of the country. Operating in challenging terrain and conditions, rangers serve as a visible symbol of authority, deterring criminal activities, and providing security to local communities. Whether combating illegal timber smuggling, preventing land encroachment, or responding to natural disasters, rangers exhibit bravery, dedication, and professionalism in the face of adversity, earning the respect and admiration of those they serve.

Furthermore, rangers play a crucial role in border security and national defense. Rangers collaborate closely with law enforcement agencies and military units to patrol sensitive border zones, monitor cross-border activities, and intercept the smuggling of illicit goods, weapons, and drugs. Through their vigilant presence along Pakistan’s borders, rangers bolster the nation’s security and sovereignty, fortifying defenses against external threats and upholding the integrity of territorial boundaries.

Despite their invaluable service, rangers frequently confront substantial challenges and risks in the execution of their duties. From armed encounters with poachers to encounters with perilous wildlife, rangers operate in environments fraught with tension, where the stakes often involve life and death. Furthermore, inadequate funding, insufficient training, and limited resources present hurdles to effective law enforcement and conservation endeavors, adding further pressure on ranger teams.

From countering terrorism to addressing civil unrest and preserving peace in urban centers, the Rangers have frequently been called upon to serve on the front lines of law enforcement, ensuring the safety and security of Pakistan’s populace and safeguarding its borders. Karachi, the country’s largest city and economic nucleus, has long grappled with issues of violent crime,

terrorism, and political instability. In response to escalating violence and criminal activities, the Rangers have been deployed to execute targeted counterterrorism operations in collaboration with local law enforcement agencies. Through intelligence-driven raids, search operations, and focused arrests, the Rangers have disrupted terrorist networks, dismantled criminal syndicates, and restored a semblance of peace and security to Karachi’s streets.

During periods of civil unrest and political turmoil, the Rangers have been tasked with maintaining peace and order, ensuring public safety, and safeguarding critical infrastructure. Amid protests, riots, or large-scale demonstrations, the Rangers collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to ensure protester safety, prevent violence, and enforce curfews or limitations on public assemblies. By maintaining a visible presence and exercising restraint, the Rangers aid in de-escalating tensions and reinstating normalcy in affected areas.

As Pakistan’s capital city, Islamabad serves as a focal point for political engagements, diplomatic missions, and governmental functions. To ensure the security of sensitive installations and diplomatic compounds, the Pakistan Rangers have been deployed to carry out security operations, perimeter patrols, and surveillance activities. Through upholding a secure environment, the Rangers contribute to the efficient functioning of governmental operations and diplomatic relations in the capital.

Turning to recent events in AJK, the formation of the Awami Action Committee several months ago aimed to address public grievances in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Their key demands included subsidies on flour, electricity priced at production rates, and the cessation of privileges for the elite. To advocate for these demands, the Awami Action Committee announced a long march to Muzaffarabad. Acting responsibly, the AJK government effectively managed the situation.

To be continued

Last Ditch Battle

The dynamics of the political landscape in Pakistan are shifting rapidly. PTI has introduced new strategies and pieces, while the other party is making desperate moves to stay in the game, fearing the loss of its most effective and lethal piece, the judiciary that has previously demonstrated the ability to eliminate even the most powerful opponents. However, it still retains two powerful pieces: the parliament and the executive. Despite their inherent strength, these have been significantly weakened due to alleged credibility, legitimacy, and legality issues.

Earlier, the secured resourceful, all powerful and fortified king, the supra executive having three most powerful pieces; the parliament, the judiciary and the executive on its side, successfully cornered and imprisoned the PTI’s king and was sure of its success until the judiciary decided to part ways and reclaimed its independence.

The incarcerated king, like a punching bag of steel, refused to bend, break, intimidate, or harass. He knew very well that he had been captured and delinked from its pawns and power pieces, but not yet defeated. He made clever defensive moves and allowed the other party to attack him relentlessly, using him like a punching bag. As a sportsman of the highest caliber, he perhaps knew that his rival would soon punch itself out, expending so much energy in its attacks that it would be exhausted, potentially leading to its own downfall or giving the opponent a chance to recover and counterattack.

The PTI, which had lost all hope in the lower or superior judiciary, suddenly found itself on another pedestal, rein-

vigoring its hopes and inspiration for securing the release of its supreme leader and reactivating the PTI as a party, further strengthening its position on the political chessboard.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi’s interim bail was extended in the May 9 vandalism case, Asad Umar received an extension on his interim bail in connection with the same incident, and Fawad Chaudhry was released. Hamad Azher, a young intelligent and fiery leader came out of hiding on the instruction of former Chairman PTI to lead the political side of the party, Shibli Faraz, a close associate and trusted friend of Chairman PTI was reactivated. After going through the worst form of persecution; physical, psychological, emotional, financial and economic, most of the leadership and their supporters have become resilient and are no more afraid of use of kinetic means to harass or intimidate them.

PTI’s active engagement to craft a unified forum to confront the parliament and the executive on the results of the 2024 Election and to reclaim their lost mandate has added another significant dimension to the existing complexity of the political scenario.

With the government in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, the PTI has access to the province’s resources. The leadership, which has been persecuted, will find safe haven in KP province. They will have official resources to amplify their message and to execute political rallies, public meetings, and other agitational

maneuvers without the fear of arrest and persecution. Moreover, they can frustrate the federation’s attempts to muzzle the PTI, at least in KP Province.

The defiant, ardent and courageous moves by the PTI is gaining a lot of traction in the traditional and social media both domestic and international. Social media has become a powerful tool for PTI to amplify its narrative and challenge the narrative of its rival. PTI leadership have learned the art and craft to connect with the public, bypassing traditional media filters and presenting their unfettered narrative.

PTI has been using Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are also used from inside and outside the country despite its internet slow down and banning X to mobilize supporters, organize rallies, and create a sense of community among PTI followers, maintaining high levels of enthusiasm and participation. PTI leverages social media to counter the narratives presented by the army and other political opponents by quickly responding to allegations, sharing alternative viewpoints, and highlighting inconsistencies. Additionally, viral campaigns, including memes, videos, and hashtags, are used to spread the party’s message and dominate online discussions.

The odds are even more complicated on the supra-executive side. In Balochistan and KP, insurgent and anti-federation elements harbor grudges against the army. Many political parties, skeptical of the 2024 election results, are

now openly criticizing the supra-executive. The inter-institutional sentiment, particularly after the Bahawalnagar incident, has created tension between the police and the army. Additionally, the repatriation of illegal Afghans and the enforcement of strict border control have led to unusual border tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Social media is filled with criticism of the army, which, despite the inherent strengths of the supra-executive, has posed significant challenges to it.

As the game approaches its final stages, where a winner may emerge or there might be a draw, every move becomes crucial. A draw could benefit both parties but would result in handing over the parliament and the executive to PTI as part of an agreed deal. Those who were in the parliament and executive on the basis of flawed and rigged Form 47, now assume the status of the opposition will play a new round of chess game, featuring PTI and a supra executive on one side, and PML(N), PPP, and MQM on the other. Although this scenario has a slim chance of materializing, in the realms of chess and politics, anything can happen.

Another scenario is more scary where one party wins, and the other refuses to accept defeat. This would lead the country into another prolonged chess game, potentially adding many layers of complexity on political, financial and economic challenges faced by the nation, and yet another round of miseries inflicted on the people of the country.

Writer is Former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awsat)

Loss of a Visionary Leader Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi’s Unwavering Commitment to Peace - I

Dr. Muhammad Shahzad Ashfaq

The loss of a visionary leader is always a great tragedy, and the passing of Abraham Rasiye is no exception. As a passionate advocate peace and reconciliation in his community, Raisi’s unwavering commitment to finding a peaceful solution to conflicts has left a lasting impact on all those who knew him. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi was a man of principle and conviction, someone who truly believed in dialogue and understanding resolve even the entrenched disputes. Born and raised in a conflict-ridden region, he witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of violence and division on his community. Rasiye to dedicate his life to promoting peace and reconciliation.

Raisi approach of peacebuilding have characterized by his deep empathy and respect for all parties in a conflict. He understood that true reconciliation can only achieved through dialogue and understanding, and he worked tirelessly to bring people together to find common ground. His unyielding commitment peace was evident in aspects of his work, from his advocacy for non-violent conflict resolution to his efforts to bridge the divide between different ethnic and religious groups.

Raisi’s most remarkable qualities his ability to inspire to join him in quest for peace. His unwavering dedication and infectious enthusiasm touched the hearts of all those who knew him, and he was able to build bridges between people who had been divided for generations. Raisi’s leadership and guidance were instrumental in bringing about positive change in

his community, and his legacy will continue to inspire future generations to work towards a more peaceful and harmonious world. The loss of Ebrahim Raisi is truly a great loss for all those who knew him. His visionary leadership, unwavering commitment to peace, and tireless efforts to build bridges conflicting parties have left an indelible mark on his community. Ebrahim Raisi was not afraid to take on difficult challenges or confront difficult situations. He was always willing to listen to different perspectives and find common ground. His ability to bring people together, even in the most divisive of situations, was a testament to his commitment to peace and unity. Ebrahim Raisi tireless efforts to build bridges between conflicting parties have had a lasting impact on his community. His ability to facilitate dialogue, mediate disputes, and find common ground helped to foster understanding and cooperation among different groups. He was always willing to put in the time and effort to help others overcome their differences and work towards a brighter future.

Raisi’s journey as a mediator started many years ago when he witnessed the destructive effects of conflict on his community. Instead of standing by and watching, he took it upon himself to bring people together, to listen to their grievances, and to find common ground. Raisi understood that true healing and reconciliation could only come through dialogue and empathy, and he made it his mission facilitate that process. One of the key aspects of Raisi’s work as a mediator is his to remain impartial and objective in the face of strong emotions and conflicting interests. He listens to all sides of the story without judgment, allowing each party to express their concerns and grievances openly and honestly.

To be continued