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UN alarmed by ‘Inhuman’ detention of Gazans by Israeli authorities

Amid relentless bombardment of Gaza overnight into Tuesday, UN and partner organizations have expressed deep concern over the “inhuman” detention of suspected Palestinian fighters in the enclave by Israeli authorities, alleging treatment so poor that some had to have limbs amputated “due to prolonged shackling”. In a new report on the situation in Gaza for May 2024, the authors cited testimonies “from medics and whistle-blowers” that injured detainees have been held at a field hospital with “shackled hands and feet and blindfolded 24/7 to their beds”.

In addition, as of May 19, 128 of the 253 people captured from Southern Israel on 7 October still remain in Gaza, the report’s authors said, underscoring that the taking of hostages is a “grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and a war crime”. More than 35 of the hostages have been declared dead and those still alive likely face “the direst of conditions”. Returning to the Palestinian detainees, testimonies indicated that prisoners are “fed through a straw, with several cases of detainees having their limbs amputated due to prolonged shackling”, according to the update from the Global Protection Cluster, which brings together UN agencies and other international and non-governmental organizations. It echoes earlier concerns about alleged mistreatment of detainees from the UN human rights office, OHCHR and independent rights experts. The Israeli army has previously denied these claims. At least 27 detainees from Gaza likely died while in custody at an Israeli military base including at Sde Teiman in Israel’s Negev desert, it is believed, while “at least four” others from the enclave died in Israel Prison Service (IPS) facilities either because of alleged beatings or a lack of medical assistance. “Whether detained at IPS or army facilities, detainees are reported to face extremely harsh conditions of detention, including overcrowding and some detained in cage-like facilities, being constantly blindfolded and hand-cuffed, lack of access to toilet, exposure to the elements, provision of food and water in quantities barely sufficient to survive.” Women and children are among those held during “mass detentions” carried out by the Israeli military, the report maintained, adding that many families “have no information about their loved ones”, while Israel “fails or refuses to provide information on the whereabouts or fate of many of those detained...Boys 14+ are usually detained with adult men. Younger children are detained with women and elderly family members, usually for a shorter time.” The Israeli army recently claimed to have detained 2,300 Palestinians from Gaza during ground operations in Gaza, the report’s authors said, adding that the true number was likely much higher. At the end of April, some 865 detainees were held as “unlawful combatants”, a category unknown under international law. “Numerous” further disturbing testimonies indicate that detainees are subjected to “forced nudity, sexual harassment, threats of rape, as well as torture through severe beatings, dog attacks, strip searches, water-boarding, and denial of food, sleep, and bathroom access, among other cruel practices”. According to accounts from released detainees and medics with access to those being held, the aim of this treatment is to elicit forced confessions and screen for alleged members of Palestinian armed groups.

Cost Paid by Heroes of 28th May

On May 28th, Nawab Kaifi, a distinguished veteran in the realms of production, acting, journalism, and media ownership, shared a poignant song commemorating the historic atomic bomb tests of Chagai. The song vividly depicted scenes of horsemen and common folk, adorned with flags, converging towards the blast sites, evoking a powerful imagery of unity and national pride. As a fellow producer hailing from Balochistan, I couldn’t help but query the portrayal of horsemen, seemingly transporting the event back to antiquity, and the depiction of missile firings in a setting devoid of missile launch facilities.

In response to my inquiry, Mr. Kaifi promptly clarified that the song, titled “MOJZA,” was a recipient of the National Award. It was a collaborative effort supported by ISPR and championed by Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister at the time of the nuclear tests in 1998.

In the video, two pivotal figures in orchestrating this historic achievement were depicted: Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister at the time, and Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan. Both of these individuals played instrumental roles in realising this monumental feat, which fortified the defence capabilities of the nation. Remarkably, the very country which had endured the scars of three previous wars found itself transformed after May 29, 1998. With its newfound nuclear deterrent, Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity stood fortified, deterring any potential aggressors from daring to challenge its defences. Thus, the sacrifices and efforts of Nawaz Sharif, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, and countless others ushered in an era of unparalleled security and resilience for the nation, forever altering its geopolitical landscape.

However, their contributions were soon overshadowed by the ominous spectre of

retribution, serving as a cautionary tale for the 250 million citizens of Pakistan and the global community at large.

The tenure of first hero Mr. Nawaz Sharif’s as Prime Minister of Pakistan was abruptly interrupted on October 12, 1999, when General Pervez Musharraf orchestrated a military coup, relegating Sharif from the apex of power to the depths of political obscurity transforming him from head of the government to an alleged hijacker within the span of a single day. Mr. Nawaz Sharif was swiftly apprehended, stripped of his office, and incarcerated. Subsequent legal proceedings saw him convicted on charges of hijacking and terrorism in April 2000, resulting in a life sentence. The weight of this verdict, coupled with the ignominy of imprisonment, bore heavily upon Sharif, marking a stark reversal of fortune for the once-powerful leader. However, in December 2000 Sharif was granted clemency and permitted to go into exile thus teaching him a good lesson to portray as a hero.

The narrative of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, often hailed as the father of Pakistan’s atomic bomb, is a poignant tale of heroism overshadowed by adversity. His unwavering dedication and groundbreaking contributions to Pakistan’s nuclear program earned him reverence and admiration across the nation, as his efforts culminated in Pakistan becoming the first Muslim country to possess nuclear capabilities. However, amidst the accolades lay a darker undercurrent of humiliation and persecution.

Dr. Khan’s legacy was marred by coerced confessions and relentless surveillance, casting a shadow over his towering achievements. In a moment of poignant

reflection, he lamented returning from a life of comfort and acclaim in Holland to devote his intellect and energies to his homeland, only to be met with ingratitude and scorn. His words serve as a sobering reminder of how easily we can turn our heroes into zeroes, tarnishing their legacies with the weight of indifference and betrayal.

One person who was not in the video was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a statesman of remarkable vision and determination who played a pivotal role in laying the cornerstone of Pakistan’s nuclear research and development program.

His unwavering commitment to national security was underscored by a resolute vow to pursue atomic capabilities, even at the cost of enduring profound sacrifices, famously stating that Pakistan would “eat grass” if necessary to attain nuclear power. Bhutto’s aspirations were abruptly curtailed by a military intervention by General Zia ul Haq on 5th July 1977. On April 4, 1979, Bhutto met his tragic demise, as he was executed by hanging—a verdict that remains contested. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the third most significant figure in Pakistan’s odyssey to nuclear prowess was deprived of his life, rather than to be cherished and held in high esteem.

Pakistan’s prime minister in the late 1980s and early 1990s was Benazir Bhutto. She was the first Muslim female Prime Minister and one of few worldwide. She was Prime Minister twice: 1988–1990 and 1993–1996 and relentlessly supported the nuclear programme. She embraced Shahadat in a Rawalpindi political rally suicide attack on December 27, 2007.

Imran Khan is one of Pakistan’s most famous cricketers and regarded as one of

the finest all-rounders in the sport’s history who founded the Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in 1996, and after winning the general election in July 2018, became Pakistan’s 22nd Prime Minister and is now behind bars.

A nation that respects its heroes, both civilian and military, fosters a strong sense of unity, pride, and national identity. Honouring those who have made significant contributions through acts of bravery, innovation, or service reinforces the values and principles upon which a nation is built. This recognition encourages others to strive for excellence, promoting a culture of respect and admiration for those who positively impact the country’s progress.

Conversely, disrespecting heroes can lead to a loss of national pride and disillusionment and decline in motivation as future generations may be discouraged from pursuing paths of service and innovation.

To undo the harm caused by disrespecting heroes, a nation must publicly acknowledge past mistakes and offer sincere apologies, establishing systems to honour and commemorate their contributions.

Educational reforms should integrate the stories and achievements of national heroes into the curriculum, ensuring that future generations respect and learn from their legacies.

Community engagement, robust support for veterans and contributors, and promoting positive narratives through media and public platforms are essential steps. By taking these measures, a nation can repair psychological and societal damage, fostering renewed unity, pride, and motivation for collective progress and development.

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

Significance of Youm e Takbeer - II

Despite the inherent risks associated with nuclear armaments, Pakistan reiterated its commitment to responsible nuclear stewardship, advocating for arms control measures and dialogue to mitigate tensions and enhance regional security. At its core, Pakistan’s decision to acquire nuclear weapons was driven by its national security imperatives and the necessity to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The specter of conflict with India, rooted in historical animosities and unresolved disputes, reinforced Pakistan’s resolve to possess a credible deterrent to deter any aggression or coercion. By obtaining nuclear weapons, Pakistan aimed to secure its strategic interests and ensure its survival in a volatile and unpredictable security environment.

Contrary to wrong apprehensions regarding the safety and security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, the country has implemented rigorous safeguards, protocols, and command-and-control mechanisms to ensure the secure custody and responsible oversight of its nuclear weapons. Pakistani nuclear facilities adhere to stringent security measures, encompassing physical protection, personnel reliability programs, and comprehensive export controls to thwart unauthorized access, proliferation, or sabotage. Furthermore, Pakistan adheres to international non-proliferation norms and standards, participating in initiatives like the Nuclear Security Summit and following guidelines set by the International Atomic Energy

Agency (IAEA).

The professionalism and expertise of Pakistani nuclear scientists, engineers, and personnel are pivotal in guaranteeing the safe and secure operation of Pakistan’s nuclear facilities. Trained to the highest standards and adhering to strict protocols, these professionals uphold principles of safety, security, and non-proliferation in their work. Moreover, Pakistan fosters a culture of responsible nuclear stewardship, instilling a sense of duty, discipline, and accountability among those entrusted with the custody and management of nuclear assets.

Pakistan’s commitment to nuclear safety, security, and non-proliferation has been acknowledged and commended by the international community. Pakistan has demonstrated responsible conduct and cooperation in nuclear affairs. Furthermore, Pakistan has engaged in dialogue and confidence-building measures with neighboring countries, including India, to enhance transparency, alleviate tensions, and foster regional stability. Through its actions and engagements, Pakistan aims to reassure the international community regarding the safety and security of its nuclear arsenal and its dedication to peace and stability.

As a frontline participant in the global campaign against terrorism, Pakistan has made significant sacrifices and implemented comprehensive

measures to combat violent extremism and promote regional stability. Through military operations, law enforcement actions, and counterterrorism strategies, Pakistan has disrupted terrorist networks, dismantled safe havens, and contributed to the worldwide effort to combat terrorism. Additionally, Pakistan collaborates closely with regional and international partners to address transnational threats, bolster border security, and promote cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, recognizing the crucial role of collective action in addressing common challenges.

Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting humanitarian assistance and development initiatives, both domestically and internationally, with the aim of alleviating poverty, enhancing healthcare, and improving education. Through humanitarian aid, disaster relief endeavors, and development projects, Pakistan extends support to communities in need, irrespective of nationality or religion.

Youm-e-Takbeer holds immense significance for Pakistan. It serves as a poignant reminder to celebrate the accomplishment of achieving nuclear statehood. The occasion reaffirms Pakistan’s stance that its nuclear arsenal is solely for defensive purposes and not for showcasing aggression or superiority over any other nation. Pakistan, as a proponent of peace, always seeks to resolve conflicts through dialogue but reserves the right to defend every inch of its territory in the face of aggression. On this auspicious day, the nation pays homage to all scientists, engineers, and individuals who contributed to making Pakistan impregnable.

Youm-e-Takbeer: A Tribute to Pakistan’s Scientific Excellence & National Security

Dr. Muhammad Shahzad Ashfaq

Youm-e-Takbeer celebrated on May 28 every year, holds great significance in the history of Pakistan as it marks the day when Pakistan became the first Muslim nuclear power in the world. This day is a tribute to Pakistan’s scientific excellence and national security, as it displays the country’s capabilities in the field of nuclear technology. The journey towards this monumental achievement began in the early 1970s when Pakistan started its nuclear program with the goal of ensuring its national security and sovereignty. Despite facing numerous challenges and obstacles, Pakistan’s scientists and engineers worked tirelessly to develop the necessary infrastructure and expertise to build a nuclear arsenal. The culmination of these efforts came on May 28, 1998, when Pakistan conducted a series of nuclear tests in the Chagai district of Balochistan. These tests demonstrated Pakistan’s ability to produce nuclear weapons and served as a deterrent against potential threats to its security. The successful nuclear tests on Youm-e-Takbeer were a result of the hard work and dedication of Pakistani scientists and engineers, who worked tirelessly to develop the country’s nuclear capabilities.

Despite facing international pressure and sanctions, Pakistan refused to compromise on its national security and took a bold step to ensure its defense against external threats. The tests were a testament to Pakistan’s scientific excellence and technological prowess, displaying the country’s ability to innovate and achieve breakthroughs in the field of nuclear technology. It represents a turning point in Pakistan’s history, where the country asserted its status as a responsible nuclear power and demonstrated its commitment to peace and stability in the region. The day serves as a reminder of the importance of maintaining a strong and credible defense capability, while also emphasizing the need for diplomacy and dialogue to prevent conflict and promote cooperation among nations.

On this day, Pakistanis also remember the leadership of then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who took the bold decision to conduct the nuclear tests despite international pressure and sanctions. His vision and determination paved the

way for Pakistan to become a nuclear power and ensured the security and sovereignty of the country.

Sharif’s vision for a nuclear-armed Pakistan was rooted in the belief that it was necessary for national security and deterrence against potential threats. He understood the geopolitical realities of the region and saw nuclear weapons as a means to ensure Pakistan’s sovereignty and integrity in the face of external aggression. In the early 1990s, Sharif inherited a nuclear program that was already well underway, thanks to the efforts of his predecessor, Benazir Bhutto. However, it was under Sharif’s leadership that the program reached its zenith. He provided unwavering support and resources to the scientists and engineers working on the project, despite mounting international pressure and sanctions. Sharif’s determination to make Pakistan a nuclear power was evident in his handling of the 1998 nuclear tests.

In response to India’s nuclear tests, Sharif made the bold decision to conduct tests of Pakistan’s own nuclear weapons. This move, while controversial and condemned by the international community, solidified Pakistan’s status as a nuclear-armed state. Sharif’s leadership during this critical moment in Pakistan’s history demonstrated his unwavering commitment to national security and sovereignty. Despite facing immense pressure and criticism, he stood firm in his decision to make Pakistan a nuclear power, knowing that it was essential for the country’s survival and security.

Nawaz Sharif’s vision and determination were instrumental in making Pakistan a nuclear power. It is a tribute to the country’s commitment to defend its sovereignty and protect its people, and it serves as a reminder of the importance of maintaining a strong defense capability in a volatile world. As Pakistan continues to face challenges and threats to its security, Youm-e-Takbeer reminds us of the sacrifices made by the nation to ensure its survival and prosperity. It is a day to honor the courage and resilience of the Pakistani people, and to reaffirm our resolve to defend our homeland against any form of aggression. This day serves as a tribute to the leadership and vision of Nawaz Sharif and all those who contributed to making Pakistan a nuclear power.

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