

April 26, 2013

Dr. Manmohan Singh
The Prime Minister of India
New Delhi

Sir,

Hope it finds you in good health and cheer. Once again I am coming to you with the subject that we (Muslim organisations and individuals) have raised with you several times in the past: the arbitrary arrest, long imprisonment and torture of young Muslims in large numbers.

The immediate reason of writing to you once again is the gruesome story of an innocent young Muslim youth carried out by Urdu newspapers recently. As usual, the said youth was arrested, tortured and put in jail for a long period without rhyme or reason. As usual, no mud stuck to him and he was freed.

Only those who work in the Muslim community know the kind of impression it creates among the youth and the reaction it generates. It clearly sends the message that the state is unfair to Muslims and it treats them as enemy. Nobody has ever apologised for such cruelties against the youth, nobody has been penalised for illegal detention and torture of the innocent, no victim of such excesses has been compensated for physical and mental torture, loss of time, loss of livelihood and honour.

If we contrast it with the behaviour of Western police and intelligence operations, we find that unlike us they are not arbitrarily rounding up hundreds and torturing them to catch one criminal. Also, they compensate for such excesses. Is it too much to expect respect for basic human rights and the established laws of the land?

We are told that such extreme and, even illegal, measures are being taken to curb terrorism. In fact, this is having the opposite effect. So far, the community elders are heard with respect, and it is heartening to learn from Western sources that Indian Muslims have no representation among international terrorists. However, the unjustness and brutality of the state is so blatant that the elders are in danger of losing respect in the eyes of the brutalised youth, who are virtually being pushed into radicalisation.

Last year, leaders of Muslim organisations were labeled as callous and insensitive people by a young man who was imprisoned and tortured for 14 years without a shred of evidence. He was honourably acquitted by the court. The young man said the community elders had been acting as representatives of the state rather than of their own people.

Such strong alienation and near-radicalisation of Muslim youth is directly attributable to unjust mass arrests, torture and humiliation of Muslim youth. The stories of police brutality narrated by these victims are hair-raising. Time and again we have complained of such communally-motivated police brutality before authorities without much success. Most often police charges have turned out to be false.

That the charges of rampant police lawlessness and brutality are not without basis is clear from a Supreme Court observation on April 25 in which a bench headed by Justice G.S. Singhvi remarked, "Even an animal wouldn't do what the police officers are doing everyday in the country." The Court took strong exception to a police officer slapping a young girl for participating in a protest against a rape case.

It also took a strong notice of a police officer beating a 65-year old woman in Aligarh. "How can police officers beat an unarmed lady?" the Court asked. It said such excesses were "an insult to the country". The excesses against innocent Muslim youth are far too numerous and far too horrendous. Do they not constitute an insult to the country?

Keeping all this in view, we request you once again to restore some balance in police and intelligence work. By all means, they must catch the guilty and have them punished by the courts, but hundreds of people cannot be blindly arrested and tortured without a modicum of proof.

We have been complaining of a clear anti-Muslim bias in the police and intelligence services. One of the ways to cope with it would have been to induct Muslim officers in police and intelligence services in proportion to their population. Much has been said on these issues without any real progress.

With this we hope that the government will finally take cognizance of it and try to redress it.

Regards,
Yours sincerely,

Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam
General Secretary