

Scenario 146

KARACHI AFFAIRS IN YEAR 2012

BLOOD IS CHEAPER IN KARACHI:

During 2012, the number of terrorist attacks went controlled all over Pakistan; in Khyber PK it fell by 11%, in Balochistan by 26%, in FATA by 42% and in Punjab by 43%; *but Karachi and interior Sindh were the only regions where incidence of terrorist attacks increased.*

On 30th March 2012; criminal gangs shot and killed 14 people in a spree that started a day before and continued through the overnight. Waseem Ahmed of the MQM [*later became the elected Mayor of Karachi*] placed the blame on the PPP while adding that PPP's government's support to murderers, thieves, robbers, and kidnapers and the privileges given to them in police stations, actually spoiled the city atmosphere.

In short, Karachi was the mega-city where:

- Anti-state and trans-national *jihadist* groups conducted mass casualty terrorist attacks targeting politicians, state personnel and institutions, religious minorities, and foreigners.
-
- Ethnic, sectarian, and anti-state militants - generally two young men on a motorcycle engaged in daily targeted killings of their rivals and enemies. Some killers from these groups received training and refuge in India, Iran, and South Africa.
-
- Extortionists, sometimes calling from Afghanistan or South Africa, targeted common citizens and businessmen to raise funds for political parties, religious organizations, and terrorist groups.
-
- Real estate mafias allied with or directly connected to the city's top political parties usurp public land, which they used to sell or build housing developments on top of, to join in the real estate market that had been booming ever since.
-

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

- Terrorist networks kidnapped the wealthy and robbed banks to fund their violence across Pakistan.

Referring to the 'Dawn' of 5th June 2012; Zohra Yusuf, Chair-person of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan [HRCP] told the media that:

"Ethnic, sectarian and politically-linked violence in Karachi has killed at least 740 people during the first five months of this year; the figures include the assassination of 107 political activists, while the rest of the victims were people with no political affiliations.

Last year [2011] a total of 1,715 people were killed in violent flare-ups in the city, which is Pakistan's biggest with an estimated population of 17 million.

The attacks often lead to punishing financial losses for Pakistan's economy as swathes of Karachi go into lockdown, with residents fleeing the violence and shops and markets closing. People are being killed with impunity by various ethnic groups while the government, it seems, has little control to put an end to it."

Trapped in the middle were ordinary people who left their homes, never to return alive — victims of faceless gangs condemned by political parties yet linked to the same ethnic and political factions – no arrests – no stop – no law.

Karachi, a sprawling metropolis in Pakistan, is one of the world's 13 largest cities, but is the most dangerous, according to data compiled by Al Jazeera.

Referring to Asad Hashim's Report in Al-Jazeera of 6th September 2012:

"Crime statistics gathered from governments, police departments and the UN show that Karachi has the highest homicide rate of the world's 13 largest cities, coming in at 12.3 per 100,000 residents. Thus, Karachi is exceptional; amongst mega cities [with populations of more than 18 million], no other city's homicide rate comes within 25% of Karachi's.

In 2011, there were 202 murders in Mumbai - in Karachi, there were 1,723. Delhi had 543. In the first five months of 2012, there had already been 661 homicides in Karachi."

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

Haris Gazdar, Director of the *Collective Social Science Research*, told Al Jazeera that this was because Karachi presented a hybrid case: in the porous boundary between criminal groups and mainstream political parties; it displays the same levels of violence as seen in many Latin American cities, where organised crime has long ravaged major cities – recall Sao Palo of mid 2000s.

In *July and August 2011*, a period which saw a particular spike in political and violence based on land issues, there were 545 homicides in Karachi. That's more than there were in the entire year in New York City - 515.

Astonishing was that how homicides clustered around certain areas in the city's central and south zones – both key battlegrounds and strongholds for political parties and criminal gangs. The levels of violence in certain areas were staggering: the *Pirabad* police station, for example, registered 140 murder cases between 1st January 2011 and 31st August 2012 – more cases than were registered in the entire city of London UK during whole year of 2011. Many cases in Karachi went unregistered too.

Pirabad is located in Orangi Town, a key site of contestation between the *Muttahida Qaumi Movement* [MQM] and the *Awami National Party* [ANP], as well an area where there is a high degree of activity in the informal land sector. Other notably dangerous districts, such as *Orangi Town* [116 murders], *Baldia Town* [103] and *Kala Kot* [66] also correspond to sites of political contestation.

All the above data was gathered through the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee [CPLC], a watchdog organisation that works closely with Karachi's police and the provincial government.

On 11th September 2012; the famous Baldia Town event in which about 252 persons were burnt alive mischievously occurred – its full details are available in the next chapter

On 18th September 2012; a roadside bomb ripped through a passenger bus carrying Shia Muslim pilgrims in the troubled southwest of the country, killing three.

On the same day, two bombs went off three minutes apart in the crowded Hyderi Market during the evening rush hour. The first went off near a dust-bin while the second went off in a parking lot. The police held:

"We suspect the [second one] bomb was planted in a car or a motorbike parked in the area; confirmed that six people were killed, including a nine-year-old girl, and more than 18 were wounded."

There were blood stains among the debris of shopping bags and victims' shoes and sandals. Bomb disposal squad officials told the improvised explosive device that caused the blast was *"carrying at least eight kg of explosives"*.

Ethnic, sectarian and politically-linked violence had killed at least 1,100 people till then in the year 2012 in Karachi. Nobody claimed responsibility for the blast which came as thousands of people rallied across the country to vent their fury at an anti-Islam film made in the US that had sparked protests across the Muslim world.

On 21st September 2012; at least 19 people died as violent protests erupted on the streets of Pakistan's main cities in anger at an anti-Islam film made in the US; fourteen people were killed in Karachi and a further five died in Peshawar city while dozens were wounded.

There has been widespread unrest over the amateur film: *'Innocence of Muslims'*. Pakistani police fired more tear gas into the dark, trying forcibly to bring protests under control but there was a sea of people completely shrouded in tear gas.

Earlier, a volley of live rounds caused many of the thousands of demonstrators to turn on their heels, however, a hardcore of several hundred kept rushing out, chanting, then piling back in for more tear-gassing. It was certainly a gamble by the Pakistani government to give the whole country a day-off to protest. The idea was to try to support peaceful demonstrations.

- *[Protests were banned in France itself and in Tunisia but there were widespread demonstrations elsewhere.*
- *A peaceful protest took place outside the US embassy in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.*
- *Some 3,000 people marched in the southern Iraqi city of Basra.*
- *Thousands burned US and French flags in the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka.*
- *Crowds rallied in Baalbek in Lebanon in a protest organised by the Shia militant group, Hezbollah, burning US and Israeli flags.*
- *Thousands of Libyans joined a march in Benghazi against Islamist militia who were blamed for an attack in which the US ambassador and three other American officials were killed.]*

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

The worst of the violence took place in the country's biggest city, Karachi. Police fired live bullets in the air to disperse crowds after a large rally that had begun peacefully turned violent. Several cinemas and banks were set on fire and there were reports of looting.

When police tried to stop the protesters heading to the US Consulate, there were reports of gunfire from the crowd and a *policeman was killed*. Health officials told the bodies of dead protesters were taken to two hospitals for treatment etc.

The low-budget film that has prompted the unrest was made in the US which insulted the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]. Anti-US sentiment grew after a trailer for the film dubbed into Arabic was released on YouTube earlier that month. Government security adviser Rehman Malik told the BBC that the public holiday was the right decision and the protests could have gone ahead regardless, urging that:

"Imagine if I had not done the holiday, school would open, shops would open, the transport was on the road. Who could have handled it; who could have saved the bloodshed?"

Referring to the 'Dawn' daily of 7th January 2013:

Karachi saw its deadliest year in two decades in 2012, with around 2,000 people killed in violence linked to ethnic and political tensions, raising fears for elections due in May that year. The city then was accounting for 20% of the GDP, 57% of tax revenue and used to elects 33 lawmakers [MNAs + Senators] to the federal parliament.

The waves of mass-migration to the mega city Karachi had tightened resources and exacerbated a fight for identity and control that had only gone deadlier in the five years since the main ruling Pakistan People's Party [PPP] held reigns of the federal government in 2008.

According to the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee [CPLC]:

".....2,124 people were killed in Karachi in 2012, the worst year since records began nearly 20 years ago - 1,800 people died in targeted killings in the first nine months of the year.

Karachi has all the ingredients of an explosive cocktail — gang warfare, land grabbing, drugs, extremism, political rivalries, ethnic tensions, poverty and a mushrooming population owing to migra-

tion – but there is less than 30,000 policemen for around 18 million people.”

Since 2008, Lyari has seen clashes blamed on two rival groups. Land in Karachi is very precious and grabbing is the bone of contention, the mother of all conflicts. Outside Lyari, ethnic tensions are blamed for much of the violence. The MQM vents about alleged *Talibanisation*, pointing to suicide and bomb attacks linked to the Taliban-led insurgency. Kh Izharul Hasan, MQM's cabinet minister held:

“The major criminals are these suicide bombers, these Taliban extremists, whoever they are, are here and have access to local criminals. Now they are like a mafia, from mobile phone snatching on the street to bank robbery, everybody is connected.”

The Awami National Party [ANP] accused the MQM of power politics. Bashir Jan, Secretary General of ANP Sindh held that:

“MQM wants to occupy and control the whole Urdu speaking areas - of which Karachi is the capital. He himself survived three assassination attempts since 2007 onwards.”

True reasons for collapsing law and order in Karachi continued to linger, shrouded in city's thick smog. But the rumour mills continued to work overtime adding to the trepidations and despondency of its residents.

One theory suggested that bomb attacks against the Rangers were sequels to their raids on religious *madrassas* like *Ashraf-ul Madaris*. The Mullah Fazlullah faction claiming responsibility for the bomb attack and the efficiency displayed in the killings in *Gulshan* added fuel to such rumours.

Some journalists insisted that the ongoing violence was a result of numerous sectarian deaths from Quetta to Gilgit and that finally the militant Shia groups had become fed up and were going for retribution. Partly, that could also be cause of the mayhem on Karachi streets and then there were those who suggested that the evil acts were being committed by our shadowy agencies – but, no one was definite. Karachi had become Devil's workplace – gone haunted.

Even then Karachi remained vital to Pakistan's economy in 2012, too. Even in the worst of circumstances it contributed more than 40% of the nation's GDP, 73% of income tax and 64% of sales tax revenues. Critical imports and most of the exports, major manufacturing, banking, insurance and

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

stock markets had little option to move elsewhere. Yet the share of Karachi's youngsters in the armed forces, civil bureaucracy, and even national sports teams continued to decline.

The ethnic and sectarian diversity that was once considered to be Karachi's splendour had finally transformed into its curse. Millions of daily wage workers ended up losing their meagre incomes for every day - lost to violence or shutdowns. FBR suggested average business loss in excess of Rs:13 billion for each day; thus net revenue in millions due to continuing closures of trade and industry in Karachi.

As per media reports of *mid-November 2012*; whatever was the cause, more than 100 people lost their lives in Karachi during any one week. Yet the Interior Minister Rehman Malik, IGP Sindh and the CCPO were trying to make people believe that most murders were due to personal enmity.

During the years 2008-12, PPP had either been in coalition with its past political rivals or had maintained a good working relationship except *Jamaat e Islami* [JI]. Still, as per lists maintained at the Peoples Secretariat, *426 PPP activists were killed in Karachi during these past four years*. MQM had a long list of its own and so had the ANP, *Tehrik Jafria*, *Sunni Tehrik*, *Ahl-e-Sunnat wal-Jamaat*, MQM-H, *Sipah-e-Sahaba* and not to forget the Police and Rangers!

Transport operating bodies claimed that the banned religious groups getting assembled under the TTP [Taliban] banner were ruthlessly targeting workers of the ANP for the last few months, trying to take over most of its ward offices in Karachi's *Pushtun* neighbourhoods. Some even claimed that ANP was on its way out – exit from the Karachi business and politics.

Referring to the daily 'Dawn' dated *14th November 2012*:

"Lyari was on re-generation path; giant boards of Mr Zardari had started to show up again after the withdrawal of cases against several members of the Peoples Amn Committee [PACs]. Sunni Tehrik was a known ally of Amn Committees and MQM-H, while their equally deadly rivals Sipah-e-Sahaba and LeT were known to be close to the Taliban.

While some of the PPP coalition partners had heartlessly milked Karachi for the last 20 years, lately they lost all the flavours thus hopes. Karachi continued to suffer at the hands of extremists, land grabbers, builders, every conceivable mafia, a

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

lack of governance, expanding poverty and fading employments etc."

Still, the Chief Minister Sindh, with 49 ministers in his cabinet otherwise, could not find a suitable person for Home Minister's slot after the removal of Dr Zulfiqar Mirza and Manzoor Wassan - Tapidars and Shaikhs were there to run the show, the provincial affairs in their own peculiar way.

All night Saturday the 10th November 2012, *Khyaban e Hafiz* kept buzzing with Police hooters chasing VIPs going for Khurshid Shah's daughter's wedding, while Districts East, West and Malir wept for their dead bodies. Sunday's morning saw another funeral procession coming out of the Edhi Home, inviting more violence and 11 more deaths. Monday's death toll exceeded Sunday's number.

Might be the Taliban were expecting more extortion money from Karachi – but no one knew it definitely. Main questions lurked:

"How could a city that has no factory to manufacture arms or ammunitions never run out of guns and bullets? Why the city with the highest national literacy rate never runs out of target killers?"

How every police officer failed in checking broad daylight murders, snatchings, extortion, kidnappings, influx of Afghan and other illegal aliens?"

FOREIGN PRESS ON CITY'S CRIME:

On 13th December 2012; in the 'New York Times' one blogger summarised the law & order situation of Karachi in the words:

"Before driving to a beach on the outskirts of the city last weekend, I took off my wedding ring, swapped my smart-phone for an old Nokia handset, and took most of the cash out of my wallet; BUT made sure to keep enough money on me to satisfy a robber.

In a city where hold-ups are a part of life, such preparations have become de rigueur. But acceptance of street crime is another sign that law-and-order in Karachi has spiralled out of control."

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

Mobile phones are the items most commonly nabbed by armed robbers. Between January and August 2012, exactly 14,733 mobile phones were officially reported stolen across the city, but most police officials believe many thefts go unreported. Phone snatching in Karachi made up 43.7 per cent of all theft in Pakistan in 2010. An admitted fact:

".....you cannot be considered a true Karachiite if you haven't been held up at least once. If you have managed to avoid such an experience, then it's probably because you are the one doing the holding up."

The increasing rate of street crime and unstoppable targeted killing had put the citizens at the mercy of brutal criminals in the city while the murders of more than 1,000 people till then [ending September 2012] had also exposed the tall claims of the law-enforcement agencies [LEAs]. The statistics of street crime for Karachi, prepared by Citizens-Police Liaison Committee [CPLC], were just mind blowing. As per the report of CPLC - from 1st January to 31st August 2012:

- 3,608 four-wheelers were theft or snatched by street criminals in the streets and roads of the metropolis; 934 vehicles were snatched while 2,674 were theft. 515 vehicles were stolen or snatched only in May 2012.
- 14,753 motorcycles were stolen or snatched - 1844 per month while 2,103 motorcycles were robbed only in July 2012.
- 14,733 cell phones in the street crimes were reported snatched.

Pakistan spends billions of rupees in the name of the national security, but people of the country are mainly left at the mercy of criminals and terrorists. The city lost thousand of people on account of political and sectarian grounds, while majority of the killed people were doctors, engineers, teachers, businessmen, lawyers etc. Everyone knew that targeted murders were perpetrated on the political, religious and ethnic grounds but no one raised voice against that national threat. Who was running that show? Still the answer is not available.

Some affluent Karachiites were sympathetic because they could realize that hold-ups were the symptom of much larger problems; unemployment rates gone higher here than in other parts of the country. And Karachi, with a population of more than 18 million people then, was Pakistan's largest city, but also one of its most poorly policed.

In a city where politically motivated killings were rampant — according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, more than 1,300 people were

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

targeted in the first eight months of that year compared with 1,715 in all of 2011 — an armed robbery appeared the least terrifying incarnation of Karachi's lawlessness.

Referring to the BBC News dated 18th December 2012; five female Pakistani polio vaccination workers were fatally shot in a string of co-ordinated attacks - four within 20 minutes across Karachi.

UN-backed programme to eradicate polio - which was endemic in Pakistan - was then suspended in Karachi. No group accepted responsibility for those shootings, but the Taliban had issued threats against the polio drive.

These were pre-planned and co-ordinated attacks in various localities which took place within a span of 20 minutes; a male health worker had also been shot dead in Karachi a few days earlier, but officials maintained his death was not related to the polio vaccination drive.

The latest three-day nationwide anti-polio drives - during which estimated 5.2 million polio drops were to be administered – was immediately suspended in the city.

[During the year 2012, 97 polio workers were killed in Nigeria; 47 in Pakistan; 26 in Afghanistan and 5 in Chad – as per statistics released by the WHO]

There had been opposition to such immunisation drives in parts of Pakistan, particularly after a fake CIA hepatitis vaccination campaign helped to locate Osama Bin Laden in May 2011 in Abbot Abad city of Pakistan.

Militants had also kidnapped and killed foreign NGO workers in the past in an attempt to halt the immunisation drives, which they said were part of efforts to spy on them.

[Many of the roughly 80,000 field workers across Pakistan, however needy they were, asked themselves whether Rs:1500 (£10) fee they used to receive for a three-day campaign was worth the risk of their lives.]

Along with Afghanistan and Nigeria, Pakistan remained one of the only three countries where polio was still endemic; almost 200 children were paralysed in Pakistan in 2011 - the worst figures in 15 years. Declaring polio a national emergency, the Pakistani government was targeting 33 million

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

children for vaccination with some 88,000 health workers delivering vaccination drops.

On 20th December 2012; in the light of the Supreme Court directives on the city's law and order situation, the Sindh home department notified a new weapons policy, banning licences for prohibited - bore weapons and restricting the number of licences per individual to four.

The home department and the deputy commissioners, under their respective quotas, were able to issue licences for only non-prohibited bore weapons. The category included semi-automatic shotguns and handguns of any calibre but not fully automatic weapons, mostly assault rifles.

The new policy also increased the age-limit to get a gun to at least 25. All prohibited bore licences were banned until further orders. Only one weapon was allowed on a licence while the licence fee was fixed at Rs:4500 for individuals and Rs:6500 for companies or institutions.

The licence holders were advised to buy weapons within 60 days of issuance and register the licence and weapon with the area police station otherwise the licence would stand cancelled. Display of weapon was completely banned.

All new gun licences were to be computerised for which an agreement was signed with National Database and Registration Authority [NADRA].

More than one million licences issued in the past were to be properly scrutinised and cancelled if mandatory requirements were not met. The process was to be completed within three months in collaboration with NADRA, but, some how or other; the job has yet to be finished in the prescribed way.

Private security companies were asked to devise reliable policies to hire trained security guards and were to be punished if violated rules and regulations. The home department could only issue licences to diplomats on recommendation of the foreign ministry.

Everyone, including civil society members and political parties, wanted Karachi to be free of illegal guns and the new arms policy was expected to help – but the target killings still continued till ending year 2016 at least; a mockery of another Pakistani system.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

The program was phased out like that the Sindh government had to first control the process of issuing arms licences and in the second phase, they could verify the manual licences issued in the past as many people have got much more than four licences.

It remained a fact that only the prime minister had the authority to give permission for the prohibited bore weapons and then the federal interior ministry could issue the licences for weapons like Kalashnikovs; the ministers and elected representatives got their licences made through the prime minister via Zardari's presidency.

Referring to Agence France Presse [AFP] dated 7th January 2013; Pakistan's financial hub Karachi saw its deadliest year in two decades; in 2012, with around 2,000 people killed in violence linked to ethnic and political tensions, raising fears for elections due this year.

A criminologist at Karachi University feared that: *'...the different groups will try to show their power in the next elections and there is only one way to show power here — it is violence.'*

Since 2008, Lyari had seen clashes blamed on two rival groups; Zafar Baloch, number two in defunct *Amn* Committee said:

"Land in Karachi is very precious and grabbing is the bone of contention, the mother of all conflicts."

In April-May that year of 2012, a stern police operation tried but failed to dislodge his men from Lyari.

"Sometimes they call us drug mafia, sometimes they call us land mafia, sometimes gangsters, they give different allegations because we are their main obstacle to the project to control Lyari"

Outside Lyari, ethnic tensions were blamed for much of the violence. The MQM vented about alleged *Talibanisation*, pointing to suicide and bomb attacks linked to the Taliban-led insurgency. Kh Izharul Hasan, a provincial cabinet minister from MQM, complained:

"The major criminals are these suicide bombers, these Taliban extremists, whoever they are, are here and have access to local criminals. Now they are like a mafia, from mobile phone snatching on the street to bank robbery, everybody is connected."

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

The Awami National Party [ANP], a political party representing mostly Pash-tun community, accused the MQM of power politics. Bashir Jan, ANP Sec-retary General held:

"MQM wants to occupy and control the whole city; he has survived three assassination attempts since 2007."

In short, the serious problem in Karachi was due to the said three political parties who were patronizing their criminals – and no one was seen com-mitted for the poor populace and economic loss to the country on the whole.

KARACHI'S LAW & ORDER - HELL...

While Karachi was in flames, its parliamentarians were trifling over the drawbacks of de-weaponisation of the city. The violence was drawing its salvation from ethnic, sectarian and Taliban-inspired fault lines, coupled with the designs of extortionists and the land mafia. It is childish to talk of a foreign hand when we had so many bullets in our own pouches.

Sectarian violence was not new to Karachi, however, a distinct relocation and up-scaling of such elements and their operatives in the city were no-ticeable. The Supreme Court had urged it in his *suo moto* of 2011 and political leadership had agreed on that de-weaponisation, which was easi-er said than done. It required a commitment which was not there and had not gone beyond the declaration of intent.

Karachi was not known as arms manufacturing hub but all kind of weap-ons used to permeate the city from outside. The sea line was controlled by coastguards and the upcountry long road route had been open though intercepting points were there; traced back to the tribal areas like Darra Adam Khel.

Some of the widely sought after automatic brands like AK47 and 7MM could be replicated anywhere in Pakistan including Karachi with precision and perfection. Thus raids, hold-ups and recoveries were not able to help tackle the problem unless the main sources of supply were vigilantly mon-itored with effective control.

On 20th November 2012; the National Assembly of Pakistan had imme-diately processed and passed a resolution brought forward by the MQM; it

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

was on *deweaponising the whole country* – most members consented it.

The resolution followed another one passed in Senate the previous day, which had limited the call for *deweaponising of Karachi only*; it was moved by MQM's archrivals, the Awami National Party [ANP]. Outraged opponents of the resolution blamed Yasmeen Rehman, who was chairing the session in absence of the speaker and the deputy speaker.

Moved by Farooq Sattar, the resolution called upon the government to *"recover illegal arms without any discrimination, and to take appropriate measures to deweaponise the country."*

Things heated up a little more when Sattar pointed fingers at Khyber PK, saying that there were several arms factories in the province and that the KPK Assembly should control their transportation to other cities, particularly Karachi.

Farooq Sattar added that while there was always talk of political parties' militant wings, no one spoke of the presence of thousands of Taliban in Karachi. The MQM leader then declared that the law and order situation in the city had been far better during the Gen Musharraf era.

ANP leader Bushra Gohar said a discussion on Karachi was being taken as interference, but the actual interference was being done by *"a foreigner from London"*. However, the reality was that a mere resolution on de-weaponisation or floor discussions alone were not able to improve the law and order situation in the mega city unless concurrent will of all the stakeholder parties was there in place.

The fact remained that the Supreme Court had identified armed wings of political parties in Karachi; for de-weaponisation in the country, the government had to ask those wings to volunteer and surrender their arms. The state and security institutions had failed to protect the lives of citizens and disarming people in such circumstances was leaving them at the mercy of miscreants and terrorists.

Meanwhile, MQM chief Altaf Hussain kept up his pre-emptive stance against an operation in Karachi for the second day in a row; there should not be an operation against the MQM on the basis of *"false and made-up allegations"*. A handout quoted Hussain as saying:

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

"...that the 'same stories' are being repeated about the MQM that had been a pretext for the 1992 operation against the party in Karachi. Once again, the status quo and its supporting feudal and landowners are joining hands for an operation in Karachi that would finish off the MQM."

Referring Tariq M's essay in 'Express Tribune' of 4th December 2012:

"As per a conservative estimate, over 50pc of weapons in Pakistan are not registered in any given segment of time; the country stands amongst the top six countries in the world in terms of private ownership of firearms."

On 25th December 2012; violence spread across Karachi; an attack in the Gulshan e Iqbal left six people, including four police officers, dead. Observers reported sporadic shooting and other violence in Landhi, Bin Qasim, FB Area, Gulshan e Iqbal, Saddar, Shah Faisal Colony, and Nagan Chowrangi.

Another veteran writer Ejaz Haider in his essay titled '*Karachi – Welcome to hell...*' appeared in media on 8th January 2013 once again emphasized that the city needed cleansing operation; from pests residing in up-scale areas as much as from thugs holed up in Orangi and Lyari especially. He mentioned that:

'There are the scions of Baloch and Sindhi sardars and waderas who move around in SUVs with guards brandishing weapons. There are children of the urban rich who, having failed to instill urban values in the sardars and waderas, have adopted the latter's rural-medieval mindset.

There are crooked politicians, their guards, political storm troopers; criminal gangs, ranging from thieves and robbers to land grabbers to extortionists and murderers to hired guns; cops on the take; a government split along ethnic lines; anyone who can rent a gun and settle a score.

Finally, add to this list the Taliban terrorists and sectarian killers and so on.'

At the centre of this was the majority of *Karachiites*, resigned to their fate, living from day to day, a terrified, terrible existence.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

One could recall a Commission on Karachi set up in the 90s under one Gen Shafiqur Rehman. This was the time the Marwat brothers were running around uncontrollably and disruptively. The then chief minister of Sindh, Jam Sadiq Ali, had not provided security to the Commission; so they were holed up at Sheraton and people deposed before them in the hotel. Still, the report is worth a read.

In Karachi extortion [*bhatta*] is common practice; people of all ethnicities and political affiliations are involved in it. A senior journalist who constructed a house in *Gulistan e Jauhar* received a call from the Baloch *Amn* Committee and the caller, after congratulating him on the new house, demanded that he pay up Rs:100,000 to ensure safe living in his home.

The journalist went to the Sindh Governor, the Sindh CM, the IG Police, the CPLC, PFUJ, KUJ, the Presidency, you name it. Result: zip, zilch and zero. He locked his home and shifted to Islamabad. The man had a home in Karachi but was living in a rented house in Islamabad - Democracy hurray.

Senior police officers genuinely believed that they could clean up the city if only "*we were given a free hand*" – but that never happened in the last three decades at least.

'Karachi see many killings daily; mostly are either politically motivated, or the result of extortion and land grabbing, or are owed to terrorism. These menaces have come to define the city, unfortunately.'

Then another part of Karachi like Clifton and Defence – where the 'respectable' scum come in, treating citizens like serfs, driving around with guards, drunk, partying, picking up girls and very often raping and dumping them. "*Why were such cases under-reported,*" because the people were afraid. These families were influential and killing a human being for them was like swatting a fly. Even if a case was reported, the rich and influential criminals never got punished.

There was no government in Karachi; it had political factions only, even within the ruling coalition. The home department remained dysfunctional. Dr Zulfiqar Mirza, who huffed and puffed about security and governance, himself, patronized criminals in Lyari while issuing licenses for 400,000 weapons – and he told this fact through various media sermons. The crux:

"In Karachi, some people buy guns and acquire guards as deterrence; the trend will continue. Either you side with some one in

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

weapon playing game or become target of those playing it – choice is yours.

What about the government's writ– forget it; they are also a part of some playing group. The said system may last for another decade or two – let us live with it in Karachi.”

The sun is to set down – have a nice sweet and sleep, if possible.