

Are Suicide Bombers coming from Madrassahs (Islamic Schools)? **Fasihuddin (PSP)**

With every suicide bombing in Pakistan, fingers are pointed towards the possibility of a relationship between the bomber and an Islamic school, called *madrassah* (plural *madaris*). Usually a young boy of 13-18 is suspected to have done the deadly blast who, in the educated guess and considered opinion of the investigation staff, is said to have been some links with the tribal groups as the sketch being prepared by the officer in light of the statements of eye-witnesses is indicative of his ethnicity and background. This is the most common practice of our investigation staff in Pakistan to fix the responsibility on some unidentified suicide bomber, who is reported to be a religiously motivated tribal or Afghani, with a tender age and in most probability being radicalized in some Islamic school of an unidentified place, and furthermore, some unknown Islamic school master (s). This is generally believed and released to the media even before any forensic sciences applications, laboratory tests or tracing police criminal record or national identity card data base. This practice saves the police from many hurdles and fatigue of cumbersome investigation, as police of the cities have no authority and jurisdiction in the Pakistan's tribal territories. Moreover, the propaganda against Islamic schools (*madrassahs*) is trumpeted so vehemently to the tune of those who want a ready scapegoat in the long war on terror. The relationship between the suicide bombers and the Islamic schools is not found on any impartial empirical research. This is the biggest blunder we have made so far and many use this common misconception to grind their own axe for being looked as a staunch ally and committed buddy in the long war on terror. Islamic schools have never been a source of suicide bombers in the annals of Islamic history, since the famous Islamic school of Nizamia in Iraq, a thousands year ago, down to the Deoband in India, and their hundreds offshoots in Pakistan. After reading the life history of those living would-be suicide bombers, who were arrested before detonation took place, it becomes evident that almost all of them were drop-outs in the ordinary public schools, the so-called western education and not *madrassahs*. Islamic schools have played a lot of positive role in the society by providing food and shelter and some kind of moral and religious education to many, who might have become terrorists or drug-pushers in case of having no ethical or moral education and food and care in these schools, but the recent

myths about their role and share in producing suicide bombers is yet to be judged with an unjaundiced eye and by some value-free researches. This will help us in locating the exact causes of suicide bombing in Pakistan, in case they are suicide bombing, as in most cases no one knows why and how the judgment is made so quick by the police as within a few minutes of the blast a bomber is identified with certain and suggestive characteristics. If suicide bombers were to be produced by the Islamic schools as claimed by Reuters on Feb 11, 2011 (and not to reiterate that this is the usual media calculation after every blast), after the recent attack by a boy in a school uniform and while killing 31 Army recruits in a military training centre in Mardan, then the number of the suicide bombers would not be that much small in the overall terrorist incidents. The radicals might be using some unidentified tribal hide-outs for training camps, as *mujahideen* (now militants, earlier holy warriors) did during the Afghan-Soviet war, but his is not correct to generalize the perception of suicide-bombers coming from Islamic schools. There is a need to re-asses the curriculum of the Islamic schools, their training, enrollment, examination system, registration and financial accountability through proper legal procedures. Some reforms-willing schools should be made role-models and trend-setters in case we are really interested to help them break their cocoons. However, this “instant-coffee” reaction to every suicide bombing is highly misleading, and has not served the purpose of anyone. This misconception and misguided reporting, both by police and media, though making their job easy and sensational, must be rectified, or otherwise, should be proved by verifiable and undeniable findings. In case of any connection between any Islamic school and its radical teachings to go suicide bombers, strict action should be taken against the owner, teacher, motivator and financer of that school. The record and case files of suicide bombers must be publicized for this purpose. As a last word, it must be kept in mind that most of the people in Pakistan respect the Islamic schools for their social and political services during our long history of struggle for independence and Islamic Revivalism, though many want them to be progressive and modernized in the current day world affairs. Many want reforms in these schools honestly and many many resist.

(This is an Abstract of a presentation by Fasihuddin (PSP), President PSC, for an international conference).