

Editorial

Humanity's test with the refugee crisis

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In the last pages of the story of humanity, we are now sailing forward toward a valley where the water gathers speed as it approaches the waterfall. Every day, we and millions of people wake up to a world full of injustice, exploitation and darkness. And every night, millions of others who are lucky enough to find a bed to sleep on have to go to sleep with the pain of losing their homelands, exploitation, famine or diseases. Over ten million children around the world are estimated to die of preventable causes every year. A majority of such deaths occur in underdeveloped countries and half of them take place in Africa, the continent that hosts 19 of the 20 countries with the world's highest child mortality rates.

Global injustice inflicts deep wounds in the bosom of humanity. A girl born in Japan may reasonably hope to live until 85, get sufficient nourishment and required vaccination and receive a good education. That girl can afford to spend an average of 550 dollars on her health every year. If that same girl had been born in Sierra Leone, then she would have a life expectancy of only 36 years. Besides, she would not have developed immunity to diseases, would be suffering from malnourishment, and if she could survive past childhood, she would be married off as a teenager and give birth to six, eight or even ten children in a very unhealthy environment. Childbirth in her living conditions would pose a serious threat to her life. Several of her children would probably die at infancy. And she could only spend an annual sum of three dollars on her health.

In addition to all these agonizing problems faced by people living in their homelands, for instance, a total of 42 million people globally had been forced to relocate by the end of 2008. Of these 42 million people, 15.2 million were refugees, 827 thousand were asylum seekers and the remaining 26 million consisted of people relocated within their countries' borders. Today, there are about 230 million immigrants around the world. It is high time that the

world should be dominated by an understanding that refugees have similar needs to other people and equal rights to meet those needs.

In today's so-called "underdeveloped" countries, our old world has never found peace and rest since the beginning of imperialism. Unfortunately, statements such as "global conscience" and "global justice" have been reduced to empty talk, with lip-service commitments left unhonored. It was not only that underdeveloped countries were left to their own fate in the North-South dilemma, but also colonialism was always and is still there, even indirectly. The key instruments in this system of postmodern exploitation provoked wars and civil wars, transfer of natural resources and riches virtually given away, and finally, local governments mired in corruption.

Today, nasty schemes are made over the uranium in Niger, diamonds in Sierra Leone, oil reserves in Sudan and Iraq, political hegemony in Syria and Afghanistan, regional conflicts of interests in Somalia, ethnic discrimination in Rwanda, and sectarian conflicts in Yemen. If these schemes are replaced by an understanding that focuses on justice, peace, human rights and real democracy, then it wouldn't be a distant dream to imagine a world without refugees. If everyone globally comprehends that the principle of ontological existence precedes political existence, the international community would then have a chance to pay its debt to both underdeveloped countries and to the aggrieved and innocent refugees. When the Northern elite called the "Development partners" can sleep peacefully albeit knowing that due to their wealth, twelve percent of world population have to go to bed hungry every night and their total spending on missiles, nuclear weapons and defense systems would be enough to leave no human on Earth without food and medicine if spent on them, then no reasonable person can argue that neither global conscience nor global peace exists. We need to do something to change this state of

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affairs for the “Wretched of the Earth”. Priority should be on the common values for humanity, rather than our own political and economic objectives. We need to honor our historical debt to the aggrieved and debilitated confined behind the visa and customs walls in the Southern ghetto and left to their fate in the midst of wars and exploitation as millions of them have been forced to become illegal immigrants, asylum seekers or refugees. These countries should be offered a fair and sustainable development model and we need to eliminate the artificial barriers to their development. As humanity, we need to decide altogether to change this violent world order which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Here and everywhere, as parliaments, governments, private sectors, intellectuals, umbrella organizations, and NGOs, we should all revive our commitment and join forces for a world of justice and peace without any refugees and exploitation. Without any buts and yet, we should be able to say: “The world is greater than five!”

And to do all that, we must first have the virtues of justice, compassion, goodness and benevolence. For as we increase our good works and charity for others, we will be augmenting, enriching, deepening and giving more meaning to our lives. It must be an opportunity to evaluate one's past, present and future when one sees that hope shines in a woeful heart or a pair of eyes in tears asking for a sanctuary from the heavens, that some chapped lips are reciting a prayer and desolate souls have found the “one” on a mountain top, in a forlorn place, in the full glare of the desert sun, in a refugee camp, in the midst of a war where death runs rampant or in an occupied homeland. These eyes witnessed such heart-

wrenching scenes in the refugee camps in Kashmir, Pakistan, in the refugee shelters inside Somalia, and in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the Palestine. To bear witness means bearing responsibility. So is there a need to find any other reason for all who bear responsibility, for those with conscience in their bosoms and compassion in their hearts? And in this belief lies the secret to setting one's heart on such a great ideal, packing a lot of meaning into a very short life and being able to say “I am here for you!” without hesitation when one is needed.

It is the most natural right of everyone in the world and chiefly of the current refugees to live in a world full of justice and prosperity where compassion and kindness transcend borders and happy people roam the Earth freely and in peace. Is a world possible where hunger, poverty, desperation, wars and the resulting diseases and injuries are unknown to all? Why not? When the Best of Creation graced the world with His presence, could anyone have imagined that one day all corners of the Earth would be lit up with His light and that one and a half billion people in the world would have faith in Him and His Lord? But He (peace be upon him) said “My Lord is Allah” and set out alone, announcing to his ummah that the only way to attain a goal is to exert effort for that goal. As members of the ummah demanded to carry on planting the new tree in our hands even if the Day of Judgement erupts at that moment, let us set out for a world without refugees where peace and justice prevails. Even if we fail to attain our goal, hopefully we can spend our lives trying and finally attain thankful prayers of the aggrieved and our Lord's grace.