

AFGHANISTAN: A Tale of “Three Tragedies”

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“ ... she becomes the endless scream in the breaking news,
which was no longer breaking news, when
the aircraft returned to bomb a house with two windows and a door.”
(The Girl/The Scream, Mahmoud Darwish, 1941-2008.)

March was another month of tragic, needless lives lost, the searing grief of mothers and fathers for lost sons and daughters.

Shockingly stark, however, has been the impression, that for the powers-that-be, for a swathe of public in the West, some deaths are indisputedly regarded as, more tragic, more noteworthy, than others.

On 6th March, six British soldiers were killed in Afghanistan. Corporal Jake Hartley (20) and Privates Anthony Frampton (20) Christopher Kershaw (19) Daniel Wade (20) and Daniel Wilford (20) and Sergeant Nigel Coupe (33) died when their armored vehicle was blown up. The resulting fire reportedly burned all night.

More youthful annihilations in an invasion and occupation, illegal, ill-conceived and long lost. Human sacrifices at the alter of political ego, dying because the powerful would still lose, throw away, the lives of others, than “lose face” – one hundred and twenty five months since the “war” started.

In the US, five of the six would have been too young to even legally order a drink in a bar, but are old enough to die for monumental imperial folly, regional foothold – and a pipeline.

Before the month ended two more British servicemen were shot, and yet another, blown to eternity..

In Parliament Prime Minister Cameron paid vacuous tribute. They died, he said: “Keeping our country safe.” What nonsense. There are no Afghan hordes massing across the English Channel, planning invasion with near antique rifles – some so ancient they have Queen Victoria’s insignia on, relics from another historic British folly.

Prince Harry, cavorting round the Caribbean, filling in time before returning to Afghanistan in an Apache Attack Helicopter – with fire power of 632 rounds a minute, plus up to sixteen Hellfire missiles – to wipe out more villagers, and their homes, hung his head and declared

himself: “Devastated.” Flags in their home and base towns in the UK flew at half mast.

Five days later, on March 11, there was a massacre of seventeen Afghan villagers, by an American soldier, or, say numerous eye witnesses, soldiers. Nine of the victims were children, the youngest two years old.

The names have been gathered (i) but to date, their ages not matched with them. Mohamed Wazir lost five daughters: Masooma, Farida, Palwasha, Nabia, and Estmatullah, and his son, Faizullah.

The other known names are: Mohamed Dawood, Khudaydad, Nazar Mohamed, Payendo, Robeena, Shatarina, Zahra, Nazia, Essa Mohamed and Akhtar Mohammed. The name of the seventeenth victim is, so far, unknown.

The wounded have names too: Haji Mohamed Naim, Mohamed Sediq, Parween, Rafiulla, Zardana, Zulheja. Since they were taken to a US military medical facility, little is known of their condition.

John Henry Browne, is attorney for Staff Sergeant Robert Bales, the only person, so far, accused of the atrocities – which, allegedly, involved attempting to set fire to the bodies, having covered them with materials and doused them with gasoline. Browne claims that US forces have obstructed him and colleagues from reaching and questioning the survivors.(ii)

Ironically, the killings and attempted body burnings were a near carbon copy of the US murders in Mahmudiya, Iraq, six years before, almost to the day. (12th March 2006.)

President Obama called Afghanistan’s Hamid Karzai to express his condolences and to assure him that the: “tragic incident does not represent the exceptional character of our military and the respect that the United States has for the people of Afghanistan.”

Coming a month after “respectful” representatives of the US military had chucked over a hundred Holy Quran’s in to a burn pit, a large group Marine snipers had been photographed posing with a flamboyant Nazi flag (iii), and less than two months after they had been filmed urinating on dead Afghans, the Nobel President’s assurances, surely sounded somewhat wanting on the sincerity front.

That impression may have been confirmed, when just two days after the killings and pictures of the little broken bodies and their relatives, laid in battered pick-up trucks for their last journey, to their burial – the haunted faces of the male relatives saying more than any words – Obama and David Cameron, were pictured, carefree, smirking, sharing jokes and munching hotdogs in Ohio.

Cameron, who had arrived in Washington that day, was whisked off in Air Force One, to the annual US college basketball tournament: “March Madness” in Dayton to watch Kentucky’s Hilltoppers challenge Mississippi’s Delta Devils. Ohio is a swing state that is a vital plank of his strategy to win a second term in November, observe commentators.

User-friendly front page pictures of jolly at a game, surely beat those of small US victims, over which Obama had declared himself: “heartbroken”, in an increasingly unpopular quagmire, which a March CNN/ORC poll showed just 25% of Americans supporting.

David Cameron flew back to the UK, just in time to temporarily attempt diversion from an avalanche of self-inflicted domestic problems, by temporarily leaping to support fellow Libya destroyer, France's Nicholas Sarkozy. (Even by the woeful record of British Prime Ministers, Cameron and his Croesus-rich Cabinet cronies are so out of touch with the real world, they would make Marie "let them eat cake" Antoinette, look like a representative of the far left.)

On the 19th of March, another tragedy struck more children, a father, and their families.

At a Jewish school, the Ozar Hatorah school, in Toulouse, France, a gunman, Mohammed Merah, shot dead Jonathan Sandler, a Rabbi and teacher at the school, his two sons, Gabriel and Arie, aged three and six, and Miriam Monsonego, the seven year-old daughter of the school Principal, Yaacov Monsenego. An un-named seventeen year-old boy, was wounded.

President Sarkozy said: "Barbarity, savagery and cruelty cannot win, hate cannot win ...One can imagine that the bloodthirsty madness was linked to racism."

Ironically, the gunman, of Algerian origin, with a Muslim background, three days earlier, had, it seems, killed three soldiers, in nearby Montaubon. Two were Muslim. He has been repeatedly quoted as saying he was driven by the plight of the Palestinian people and of what he perceived as the West's war against Islam. George W. Bush's declared: "Crusade" returns to haunt.

David Cameron told Sarkozy: "People across Britain share the shock and grief that is being felt in France, and my thoughts are with the victims, their friends and their families.... You can count on my every support in confronting these senseless acts of brutality and cowardice."

A minute's silence was held across France for the victims. A book of condolence was opened at the French Embassy in Washington, and when those who had dual French-Israeli nationality were flown back to Israel for burial, accompanied by their relatives, they were joined by French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe.

Mohammed Merah's story is becoming as hard to unravel of that of Staff Sergeant Bales in the Afghanistan carnage. However Merah is predictably being labeled an Islamic terrorist, whilst Bales has been whisked out of Afghanistan. His lawyer cites memory loss and post traumatic stress disorder.

Meanwhile, Sarkozy too faces his electorate in April and May, and with France's finances and Libya threatening to take their toll, no sympathy stone is, seemingly, left unturned.

"What must be understood", he said: "is that the trauma of Montaubon and Toulouse is profound for our country, a little ... a little, like the trauma that followed in the United States and in New York after the September 11, 2001 attacks", he told "Europe 1" radio. Loss and grief as chutzpah which out-does chutzpah.

It is surely coincidence that nineteen people have been arrested in France, in connection with the murders. Exactly the same number as the 9/11 hijackers.

When London's underground system and a bus was struck by explosives on 7th July 2005, former New York Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani happened to be in town and did the rounds of media outlets, telling listeners that this was "London's 9/11." These shameful political non-senses trivialize losses of enormity, and all who are left to pick up the pieces of, and

struggle with the fractured, often broken, emotional aftermath.

Willfully ignored, is cause and effect. Soldiers are dispatched to countries of which they know nothing, for oil and other interests, having been trained to see those in lands they occupy, uninvited, as lesser beings. Always thus, they attach derogatory names to other nationalities, sneer at lives, culture, beliefs and dress. Above all they are trained to kill.

Those who react to this injustice are simply “terrorists”, a “a tragic incident”, or “collateral damage.”

Three tragedies, leaving holes in many hearts, but two, clearly, so much greater.

When will Western politicians and their allies address their own: “barbarity, savagery and cruelty ... the bloodthirsty madness” their: “senseless acts of brutality and cowardice”, their murderous meddling. *Their* crimes against humanity?

And far away, in those little villages in Afghanistan, traumatized surviving children are repeatedly asking their parents: “Are the Americans coming back?” (And yes, they do say: “Americans.”)

Notes

- i. <http://blogs.aljazeera.com/asia/2012/03/19/no-one-asked-their-names>
- ii. <http://rt.com/news/afghan-us-lawyer-bales-907/>
- iii. <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2012/0210/Nazi-flag-incident-puts-culture-of-Marine-snipers-in-spotlight>

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