

## **All Pharaohs Drown - Ultimately**

As the world watches the social unrest (not so much political – at least not yet) from Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen to Libya to Bahrain unfold, our faith in human endurance and strength is restored. Given the eternally long subjugation of the masses in these countries, feeling optimistic and happy had seemed almost surreal. Not anymore. Many even thought the momentum to be something of a short-lived euphoria. Not any more.

Freedom is nothing but the ability to recognize, demand and exercise one's fundamental rights, as a human being. The iron-fisted dictatorial regimes in these two countries - touting themselves to be 'Islamic' - have mocked and trampled every definition of 'freedom' that Islam gives to every individual within the confines of a truly Islamic state.

While this uprising – rightly called 'Intifada' – is a welcome sign, it would inevitably be laced with destruction of infrastructures and death of hundreds of civilians. Predictably, the peaceful events of the past weeks in Cairo, Benghazi and Manama were marred by violence – mostly by the state-run police to curtail the protests. The horrific phenomenon of self-immolation, which was typically a protesting trademark in South Asia, is a new way of public outcry against the totalitarian junta in these countries.

Sweden's foreign minister Mr. Carl Bildt has aptly described the situation as a "demographic tsunami" of North Africa. Sooner or later, the unified outcry for change in Egypt would catalyze and resonate in other so-called Islamic (hardly; these are at best the lands where the majority of inhabitants are of Islamic faith) territories in that region. They would also undoubtedly bring rest of Africa into their fold. Sadly enough, the state of affairs in every other African country is not very much different – arguably even worse – than those in Tunisia or Egypt.

The long lasting authoritative regimes of Zine al-Abidine in Tunisia (23 years), Hosni Mubarak in Egypt (30 years) and the notorious Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe (33 years; 10 as the prime minister and 23 as the president), have ushered nothing but abject poverty, rising food prices, high unemployment, corruption in all governmental offices and, political maneuverings among scores of other ills. Worst of all, in their own hubris, they have robbed their young generation the right to dream big and taste success and prosperity.

Almost identical scenarios of unrest exist from Nigeria to Chad, Sudan and Somalia. Ironically, with some variation, these countries call themselves either 'republic', 'democratic republic' or 'Islamic republic'. In reality, none of these are either republic or democratic or Islamic, in the way they conduct their affairs towards their own people.

Pharaoh is not 'a' person: it is a phenomenon, synonymous with the act of subjugation, oppression and humiliation of one human being by another. Yes, Pharaohs have lived since ancient times. They still abound in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nimrod was a Pharaoh to the nation of Abraham, as was the tyrant ruler of Egypt to the Children of Israel. And since times unknown, the tools of power and intimidation have been used to deprive masses of their dignity and control their destiny. Their psychotic alter ego makes them believe that they have become god. In their hubris, they pretend to be god-like. Accountability is deemed the business of their subjects alone. But in the end, every Pharaoh is destined to drown in the sea of ignominy.

The uprising of millions against the atrocities and excesses by few tell us that miracles do happen. When the will of the people becomes unified, it personifies and acts like a prophet. It then does not need the staff of Moses to part the Nile and drown the Pharaohs of our times.

The global village ought to stand with the brothers and sisters seeking liberation in these troubled lands. Every human being is precious and deserves to be free. We owe our support, solidarity and prayers to those who yearn to be free; free at last!