

A staggering statistics....or the hallmark of a nation in deep slumber?

According to a new poll, the number of Iraqis killed since the war began 4-1/2 years ago, is more than a million - 1.2 million to be more precise - double of what was previously thought in July 2006 (www.thelancet.com). We all know how well those numbers were received, never mind even if they were reported in a reputed medical journal of international repute and the authors included people from Harvard.

Johnny Heald is the managing director of the respected British polling agency ORB which conducted the poll. One surprising finding from the study was that most of the estimated 1.2 million deaths (48%; almost every one death out of two) were the result of a gun shot, not car bomb. Mr. Heald noted that while nobody is yet challenging the statistics, most of the people are choosing to ignore them, because they don't like them. These numbers are hard to comprehend, but when asked what he would compare them with, he didn't hesitate, and said: Rwanda, where close to about 800,000 people are estimated to have been killed during that genocide. This is bigger than that.

Some people also find it hard to believe and ask where the bodies are. But as it turns out, if you talk to Iraqis, most of them don't like to tell that their family members have been killed; most of these people were murdered by the militias of rival groups who make it their business to call up the families that they murdered their sons or daughters or relatives and they need not dare come out and claim the body lest they themselves would meet the same fate. Read more (and look at the 'actual' numbers and how the data were collected) at: <http://www.lewrockwell.com/rockwell/none-dare-call-genocide.html>.

In the American context, these are hard numbers to answer the question of what to do in Iraq. We should leave to "save our troops" or "stop imperialism," but as my son said today, you never hear about "leave, because it is the only right thing to do."

We Muslims must crunch other numbers, though. Only last night, half way during the Taraveeh prayers, one brother made a sincere pitch (*'Tis the Season*, you know!) for our destitute Iraqi brothers and sisters who are now forced to live like refugees in Syria and Jordan. He exhorted the audience to give generously because those distant brethren of ours are longing to receive our charity during this blessed month of Ramadan! I bet we have all heard this classical emotional argument before. We will hear it again because it somehow absolves us of a greater responsibility: the need to look at the symptoms of our ailments and find a lasting cure.

What a defeatist mentality we Muslims have developed? How low we have fallen in the moral abyss to think as if those suffering Iraqis have no dignity or honor left within them and are just waiting to be thrown a morsel or two at during the month of Ramadan? Were their miseries somehow 'divinely' designed so that we in our own comfort zone needed to be jolted, exhorted and uplifted in spirit, only during Ramadan and not otherwise? Why it is that our innate goodness always needs to be invigorated by some reactionary impulses? At least in one respect our record is perfect: irrespective of the circumstances, we always think that financial aid is THE solution to all the evils plaguing the Muslims on this planet. Wow! Given proper training I'm sure, even apes would think otherwise.

Think about it. Mosques have become the perfect sanctuaries for us, because that's where we are lulled to forget that we have been rendered weak, vulnerable and insensitive. Our gatherings are only for food, about food and over food. Show me one community where Muslims meet regularly beyond the four-walled fortress of a mosque to brain-storm and strategize the long-term solution to the sufferings of fellow Muslims-within or beyond. Show me an activity which even remotely resembles a 'think tank'.

I guess, the trembling soul of this brother was never stirred when he watched a few weeks ago on evening news young innocent Iraqi girls being paraded and traded in smoke-filled restaurants in Damascus and Amman! It appears that the tourism has increased several folds to these and adjoining cities. And the clients of such pure beauty and innocent flesh come from as far as Kuwait city and Riyadh (www.msnbc.com)! This Ramadan, we should be worried about these statistics, because believe me, no amount of charity - not even in this Blessed month - can avenge a crime of this magnitude.

But then, look at the brighter side of it. With so much love in the Arabian air these days (and nights), who says there is bad blood between Sunnis and Shia's? Someone ought to let C-in-chief know about it.