

# **THE WAY OUT**

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## ***If I were Osama Bin Laden!***

Since the attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon the World once again is standing on the edge of a precipice. It is of utmost importance that USA as the acclaimed sole superpower acts with patience and restraint if they really desire to root out terrorism and as they say maintain their way of life i.e. freedom and democracy and most of all the rule of law

The apprehension is that the U.S is heading towards acting as the Judge, Jury and also the Executor, which is not allowable in any system of law or by any civilised society. Infact this is exactly what the terrorists do. It is therefore important for USA not only to practice the dictates of justice but to show that justice has been done. The demands of justice would be served only when USA is willing to submit its case to an impartial, international court of eminent world jurists and abide by their verdict

There is absolutely no doubt that the 11 Sept attack was a dastardly act which has caused untold suffering to innocent civilians, majority of which were Americans but included a substantial number of other nationals. Such an act needs condemnation regardless of the possible justification that the perpetrators may carry in their minds. Quran the holy book of Muslims expressly forbids any such action that leads to the injury let alone death of innocent peoples. Infact Quran goes to the other extreme that even in a situation of a declared war the killing of innocent non-combatants, children women, and old men are expressly forbidden. Our hearts go out to the victims and their families for the acute suffering imposed upon them by some misguided Muslims

The American leadership has called this an act of war without adequately explaining it is a war against whom because normally war is declared between two parties. It has been said that it is a war against "Terrorism" but no clear definition of just what elements constitute Terrorism has been articulated. This again has been left to the American leadership, which is against the basic principals of justice recognised by all civilised societies. One can only hope that Americans will see that this is against the principals bequeathed by their founding fathers and under normal circumstances most Americans would never accept such an erosion of their values

The American leadership has declared Osama bin Laden as a prime suspect although they have yet to share a single piece of evidence linking him with this particular act. The Americans may well have by now, or shortly may accumulate evidence to this effect but the point remains that before a judgement is pronounced should the suspect not be given a chance to defend himself. Does he not have a right to be heard? And should the judgement not be pronounced after due hearings by an impartial court. Besides Osama the Taliban have also been practically pronounced guilty and chances are that in going after Osama and the Taliban the Americans will end up causing immense suffering on the innocent non-combatants and ordinary people of Afghanistan which may well be order of magnitudes greater than what has been the fate of the victims of the attack on the WTC etc. Would this serve the cause of

justice or that of American values? Something, which Mr Bush has repeatedly emphasized that they would not want to compromise.

Let us look at the other side i.e. that of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. They can visualise if not actually see the gathering American storm ready to burst upon them. While the Afghans rightly claim that they have never been overcome in the past, the example of the Gulf war amply demonstrates that while the Americans too may suffer a large number of casualties the price to be paid by the Afghans will be horrific and the irony is that it will have to be borne by those who by no stretch of the imagination have played any role direct or indirect in the WTC tragedy

Osama has repeatedly stated that he played no part in the WTC attack though he supports the same. He surely would be aware of the calamity which is about to fall on his hosts who in traditional Pathan /Afghan fashion have vowed to stand by him. If I were Osama the honourable course for me would be to do everything in my power to avert the calamity from falling on my hosts and innumerable innocent Afghans by voluntarily giving myself up to some kind of an International body such as the International court at The Hague on the understanding that I get a fair trial by an international bench of eminent jurists representing the neutral part of the World. Osama can present his defence there and the Americans will have to bring out and display all the evidence that they may have against him. The Americans will in that case have no legal case to move against the Taliban who will be spared all the tribulation they are likely to suffer on his account

If it so happens that the Americans do succeed in producing the evidence and obtain a conviction then Osama should not be unwilling to accept the verdict however severe that may be. After all 19 of his followers have laid down their lives and in case Osama is found to have given them their marching orders then he should accept the responsibility manfully and consider himself a martyr to his cause

If the Americans refuse to let my case be placed before an impartial court where I will be getting a full opportunity to present my views then they will stand exposed before the whole world and will have to lose the high moral ground that they are claiming now. If they still go after the Taliban as some people suspect then again the US will stand exposed and their hypocrisy will become evident for all to see and the hidden agendas, if any, of all sides will stand exposed. In any case the situation will not be any worse than what it is today

The American people have a lot to be proud of and they are very conscious of being the guardians of democracy and freedom and the rule of law. They have been confronted with a very severe test of their sincerity of belief in these values. One can only hope and pray that saner counsels will prevail and America can show that they can muster the patience and resolve needed to abide by due process of law. In the words of Colin Powell US Secretary of State, they will first marshal the evidence, which is enough to convince the world. How much better would it be if this could be done before an impartial court of law

Is it not time that people of the world, including the fair minded people of America who have been the victims of this horror, wake up and demand that due process of law be applied in this case before the world gets polarized further and plunged in another long drawn world war type of situation which could be disastrous for humanity. We all want to see the end of Terrorism but as the Greek Prime Minister so rightly pointed out that will call for a protracted effort which from the start will need an analysis of the causes which have given rise to the

desperation underlying such heinous acts. Unless the root causes of the rise of Terrorism are understood and attended to the fear will always remain that cutting off one or more branches or limbs of this phenomenon may end up in sprouting other even more vicious successors

The world stands at a crossroad and we must not take the wrong turn. Americans are agonizing over their choices but they are badly wounded and in their hurt they need not only our best wishes but also our sincerest advice. They are sitting in the driving seat and deserve to be supported. It is certainly not in the long-term interests of America or the world at large that they even be perceived to act as the Judge, Jury and Executor. We, the peoples of the world should speak up so that the wrong turn is not taken.