

COMMENT

Obama's Cairo Speech

Unquestionably Mr Obama's Cairo speech on June 4, 2009 was a breathtaking exhibition of oratorical eloquence. He wanted the Palestinians to abandon violence citing the example of the black Americans who according to him "suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation" and yet did not resort to violence to win "full and equal rights". He also counselled them that it was not a sign of courage or power "to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or blow up old women on a bus" because, through such acts, moral authority is not claimed but surrendered.

Such an advice would have found acceptance among the Muslims had Mr Obama also talked about the state terrorism of Israel, particularly the recent massacre of nearly 1,500 people in Gaza using weapons procured from the United States. In comparison, according to 'The Israel Project (TIP)', an international non-profit organisation, which provides information about the Middle East, since Nov 24, 2001 Hamas mortar attacks killed 25 people within Israel. Yet Mr Obama chose not to say a word or two about the disproportionate use of violence by Israel. Maybe he did not want to antagonise the dreaded Zionist lobby in his country. But it is also possible he was not aware of these statistics. Nevertheless, he should have at least recognised the "surrender of moral authority" by his own country when it decimated Afghanistan and Iraq by shooting missiles at sleeping children, old women and innocent men who had done nothing to harm anybody and, later on dismissed their deaths as "collateral damage." The concerned people are certainly entitled to question these glaring contradictions in Mr Obama's speech.

No doubt Mr Obama was bold enough to equate the sufferings of the Palestinians under occupation with the Holocaust. But the Palestinians were not responsible for the persecution of the Jews. On the contrary, in March 1492 when Ferdinand and Isabella issued the 'Edict of Expulsion' against the Jews of Spain, the Muslim nations welcomed them. According to the French-Jewish scholar Isidore Loeb there were about 235,000 Jews in Spain in 1492 out of which 50,000 were forcibly converted to Christianity and the rest were expelled. They migrated to various parts of the world including Europe and America with 20,000 dying en route. Loeb writes that a total of 122,000 Jews were given refuge by the Muslims of Algiers, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Turkey. And even now the Palestinians have accepted the UN Partition Resolution of 1947 which gave away more than half their country to the Jews although the UN had no right to do so. And in all fairness it must be acknowledged that the "Jewish homeland" the US so eagerly recognises has been carved out of the land belonging to a people who were totally innocent of the Holocaust. □□