

Arab Spring Why, How and To where?

Speech of Miss Tawakkol Karman in Delhi on 5/4/2012

Dear brothers and sisters

Peace be Upon You

Let me at the very outset express my pride and extreme delight to be in New Delhi, the capital of Indian State, the largest democracy in the world and one of the oldest and richest countries in diversity and pluralism.

I am proud that I am in the country of Mahatma Gandhi who inspired the peaceful struggle and who is the inventor of the program of nonviolent struggle for change and reform. I convey to the soul of Mahatma Gandhi the salutations of the youths of Arab Spring who got inspired by his spirit and struggle and now they are carrying out their peaceful revolution which has taken the whole world by storm.

I am proud that I am in the country of Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

I am proud that we are celebrating the anniversary of the one of the great leaders of our human history, father of the great lady fighter Babu Jagjivan ram Ji.

Allow me to say that we are not only getting the inspiration from India the struggle of its non-violent founder Mahatma Gandhi and his peace loving soul, we are also getting inspired by its diversity and plurality and its cooperative, integrative, participative co-existence as well.

Dear sisters and brothers

The duty of loyalty dictates us to complete what was started by the great leader of humanity Mahatma Gandhi.

I call upon the Indian nation with all its segments, public and private institutions and its elites in the intellectual, political and media fields for consistent contribution and efforts to eradicate all forms of discrimination suffered by lower caste people. I also call upon India to return to the principles of Mahatma Gandhi by supporting the nonviolent and peaceful struggles fought by the Arab Spring countries particularly the ones fighting for bringing down the dictator. In these struggles tens of thousands of peace loving youth yearning for freedom and dignity have participated. I call upon one and all to support the international efforts to put pressure on the regime of Bashshar al Asad to cede to the call of the Arab League for dialogue and respond to the just demands of his people for change.

Dear friends

It can be argued that Arab Spring revolutions, the present and the future ones, have come and shall come in response to the urgent need of the Arab youth for the state of equal citizenship in which he will find his freedom, dignity and equal rights without any discrimination.

It is clear that the countries of Arab Spring have one common denominator; that the dignity of the citizen is absent, his freedom is lost and his rights are trampled upon by the rulers and dictators who converted the country during the long decades of their tyrannical rule into a mere farm or private business of the president and his family. Unfortunately he and his family acted with the state property wastefully, unwisely and unjustly unlike what any one of us would behave in respect of his personal possessions!!

The common factor in the regimes brought down by Arab Spring revolutions and the regimes on their way to the downfall is the fact that the president remained president for decades and his family remained in control of all the decision making powers and authority despite their calling themselves 'republic countries' and despite their constitution stating that sovereignty belongs to the people and that the people are real owner of the power but we were born and we lived and it appeared that we would die but Bashshar and his family, Ali Saleh and his family, Mubarak and his family, Ben Ali and Qaddafi shall eternally remain in power until we started saying that they would never die!!!

I can also confidently say that our peaceful revolutions which we have started with a legendary courage and moral commitment in all the countries of Arab Spring have come as a result of our frustration with the state of nepotism, bribery, unjust rule and total misuse and exploitation of the power for one individual and his family.

The revolutions have come in response to the pressing internal needs and not as a result of the external dictations. They have also not come as a result of the international and regional conspiracies and wills as claimed by the remnants of the regime and the networks of their nepotism and their international proponents who are afraid of the Arab Spring which can be replicated in any part of the world where youths are subjected to exclusion, oppression and deprivation.

The Arab Youths carried out their peaceful revolution at a time frustration was reigning supreme with all the traditional parties and powers. They believed that change would never take place and that the people did not possess courage and will to demand for change and make sacrifice for it, and that they did not have dream in the first place. They also did not have aspirations for better future wherein their freedoms are protected and human dignity is respected and safeguarded.

There was firm conviction in the hearts of all people that the ruler was strong by virtue of his ability to suppress any demands for the change of power, peaceful or violent, and that the ruler possessed security and military apparatus fully trained and armed to face such challenges and the public demands for which the ruler took precautions and made sufficient preparations for decades. The ruler utilized all the resources at his command to prevent people from securing their rights and meeting their demands for dignified life and equal citizenship.

Countries having conviction that reform can be brought about from outside and which have agenda of imposing democracy and human rights on despotic regimes and countries also believed that imposing reform from outside is non executable idea and it was highly expensive and a failed idea. There was no scope of repeating the same again in the way it happened with the Saddam Hussein's regime. In this respect it was believed that Saddam's regime was the last of the regimes brought down by missiles coming from outside the borders and not by their people and their struggles and sacrifices.

It was clear that those regimes, in varying degrees, enjoyed external patronage and cooperation and that external forces did not want a replacement for them.. Either because they were apprehensive about this unknown and un-experimented substitute, or because they were incapable of bringing about change and imposing democracy by force, or because of their belief that the regimes were strong enough in the face of a weak or nonexistent opposition.

Amidst all this Arab Spring revolutions broke out exhibiting courage, determination, offering sacrifices with one clear goal that the people wanted to bring down the regime.. The only means to achieve it is peaceful struggle offering generous sacrifices, even scarifying their lives and receiving bullets in the chests of youths bare of any weapons and arms but filled with love, peace and beautiful dreams.

Who else expected that youths would face bullets and would march ahead without turning or moving or stopping as if they were proceeding ahead to receive roses and candies!! Who would have believed that this could happen in a foreseeable and near future!!

Due to the prevailing frustrating reality there was a conviction among people that peaceful struggle was useless and it was only a means of securing rights from benevolent and kind rulers, and not from the family regimes prepared to face the peaceful gatherings with guns, bullets, missiles and torture and forceful detention of people through security and military apparatus having varying names. These regimes had one common goal of preventing any change and reform and ensuring that the dictator president and his family remained in power and continued to usurp wealth and power of people in countries where democracy existed only in name!!

But all of a sudden and within weeks of the outbreak of the Jasmine revolution in Tunisia the self confidence of the Arab youth and their belief in the Arab youth's ability to bring about change started growing especially in countries which experienced peaceful Arab Spring.

If we want free and dignified life the destiny will definitely respond to us and we shall topple the dictator and break all barriers. We only have to want that, we are capable to achieve that without weapons or finance or without any logistic support or any kind of external help or support. We only have to chant that people want to bring down the regime and we roam on the streets. We will not stop until the dictator departs and he and his family falls without any delay or dilly-dally. We will not stop until he departs.

The world has witnessed thousands of youth being targeted by the machines of suppression, bullets and rockets of the regimes but they were defeating them by their dynamic will and triumphing over them with their ability to sacrifice.

Dear friends! You can say confidently that the revolutions of the Arab Spring in all the countries of the Arab Spring had one thing in common; that the youth were sacrificing their life for freedom fully knowing that they were going to be killed. When we participate in marches we know for sure that the hooligans, the compradors, the informers and militias of the regime are waiting for us on the streets, on roof tops and at every nook and corner. We had a belief that death was waiting for us anytime and anywhere. But we had a stronger belief that we would defeat the bullet and we shall win. And we have done that.

Didn't you see scenes of peaceful, fighting and patient youth engaged in the legend of peaceful struggle and offering lessons in peaceful sacrifice in the battle of freedom and dignity which demanded that we sacrifice for it our most precious thing; our life and soul...

When I say the Arab youth I mean the Arab youth who brought out the change and who offered sacrifice and who made the difference...If you see the list of martyrs and the wounded in all our Arab Spring revolutions you will find that all of them or majority of them were below 25 years of age and they had not crossed the third decade of their life. They were in the age of flowers.

But they gathered wisdom of the ages and the boldness of all times and places. Here I am not suggesting a conflict of generations or a rupture in them, rather I am reiterating a fact which I have seen and experienced it myself, and the ethics of revolutionaries and principles of justice and fairness require me to speak out that the thing which distinguishes the Arab Spring revolutions from other revolutions for freedom in the region decades ago is the fact that youths know the stages of their revolution and they know what they want... they know that their revolutions will not

end by bringing down the dictator rather it will start after his fall and the fall of family members and relatives from the authority and control of the security and military apparatus and the removal of the network of nepotism. This requires a transition period and a transition government of youth's choice which will lead the country to the civilian state for which they carried out the revolution and made supreme sacrifices. To ensure achieving that they have to sustain the youth action and continue the readiness of the youth for getting down to the street whenever there is deviation or slow down or collusion of the institutions of the transition period. The guarantee is not the iconic leader, or the leading party, rather the youth armed with confidence and dream and with the ability to make sacrifices.

It can also be said that all the revolutions of the Arab Spring have a common aspect and a common future; that all of them have gone through these stages. The first stage is to bring down the dictator and his family members, and his nepotism networks, followed by a transition period and establishment of a civilian state by through elections and finally participation of the society and permanent takeover of power by the civil society, securing for the citizens complete freedoms and civil rights. The procedures and details may vary from region to region and country to country according to the circumstances of each case but in essence all these revolutions go through these stages and end in similar results and outcomes. I can say that the Arab spring revolutions will never lead to the worst, rather they will lead to what is most beautiful and better so much so that they cannot be even correctly predicted.

The participation of people in the revolutions launched by the youth galvanizing the wider sections of the society and making sacrifices for its sake led to the downfall of the dictator with all its might in a record time. Such a spirit based on participation and cooperation in highly unfavorable circumstances will provide solutions to all the problems bequeathed by the regime and help overcome all obstacles and difficulties that may arise here and there.

There will be no terrorist organizations taking over the country in the wake of the downfall of the dictator. Such fears are baseless and incorrect. Terrorism and despotism (dictatorship) are two faces of the same coin. Terrorist and the dictator have common strategic interests and common characters. Every dictator is a terrorist and every terrorist is a dictator. Both feed each other and both use each other to meet his objectives and beat his opponent. Terrorist draws his legitimacy from the existence of the dictator. In the same way dictator draws the justification of his remaining in power from the existence of the terrorist. In this way each feeds the other in a vicious and hellish cycle which can only be broken by a peaceful spring revolution and its debris and remnants are disposed of.

Peaceful revolution dries out terrorism as a violent idea capable of bringing about change. Often, terrorist organizations have promoted the idea that bullets and

explosives only can change the regimes reigning for decades and not rigged elections and groups embracing the illusionary democracy.

The peaceful gatherings who brought down the dictator in a short time in all the countries of the Arab Spring have also removed one more thing; the culture contemptuous of peaceful struggle which belittles the nonviolent programs because of their belief in violence and in the principle of bullet for bullet as the only way capable of bringing change.

Such fears are frequently heard about; that the Islamists shall replace the rulers in the wake of the Arab Spring revolutions. Such fears being circulated and promoted lead to the conclusion that Arab Spring revolutions did not possess the moral shield of revolution and that it would not bring about desired change rather it would lead to the worst!!

I appeal to all the people of good intention not to promote such fears as they would only serve to prolong the reign of the dictator and take away support of the youth who have been in the fore front of the peaceful revolutions. I appeal to them to share my conviction that all ideological currents, right, left, Islamist, secular have the right to reach to the power and exercise it after the elections are held following the departure of the dictator. They have the right to rule and it is our duty to accept the results and accept the verdict of the democratic game.

I appeal to them to also share my conviction that islamists' rise to power is the only means available to the people for experimenting and testing them until they develop into parties with specific programs as required and demanded by the people. Only then people can judge them on their performance and success in running the affairs of the country in a way leading to the dignified life for people and not on the basis of religious standpoint and the Divine Right. We must support or not support them on the strength of their success in governance and on the basis of sessions of preaching and religious sermons!

If the Islamic parties are experimented for one or more terms in governance after the departure of the dictator, this may make them normal political parties just like other political parties. People will have the opportunity to evaluate and judge them and select them in the light of their success in fulfilling the electoral promises. This will go a long way in drying out the sources of extremism, terrorism, violence and exploitation of religion.

Islamic countries rich in democratic pluralism and diversity such as Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia and Lebanon have less presence of terrorism and explosives on their soil, where as the opportunities of the terrorist groups increase if one ruler or one family or one party reigns supreme over the power and wealth.