Destroying Schools: How About the Taliban’s View Please?

Written by Bint Abu Umar

“We are Muslims. Had there not been an Islamic system of education and curriculum, then it would have been all right to import a system of education belonging to others. But fortunately, Islam provides its own system of education, politics, economics and justice…If Islam is a complete code of life, then what is the need to import education from the United Kingdom?” [1] - Haji Muslim Khan (spokesman for Talibain in the Swat valley)

In the Name of Allah, we invoke peace and blessings upon His Messenger.

The past few weeks have witnessed an increasing number of slanderous remarks against the Taliban concerning their bombing of schools in the Swat Valley, foremost originating from the mouths of Muslims.

This article aims to underscore the importance of holding back our tongues against our Muslim brothers and sisters when we do not know their angle of the story. The prophet informed us that “A person utters a word thoughtlessly and, as a result of this, he will fall down into the fire of Hell deeper than the distance between the east and the west.” [2] [Al Bukhari and Muslim] This article also examines the reasons and justifications the Taliban have provided and whether what they have done is an action based upon wisdom or barbarity. The analysis in this article is based solely on information that is publicly available. Views of the Taliban that have not been reflected in public sources will consequently not be reflected in this article.

One has to question why it is so difficult to find an honest analysis of the Taliban’s actions from the point of view of the Taliban themselves. To add insult to injury, the ease with which ordinary Muslims ‘issue’ fatwas, ruling the Taliban as ‘barbaric animals’ and ‘those whom we should wage jihad against’ is abhorrent. Subhan Allah! Not only are they those who have no knowledge concerning the reality on the ground, they do not have knowledge of the deen. The Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyyah (تاميميّة) said in his Al Fatawaa Al Kubraa [4/185], “In matters of jihad one should

Let’s take a look at what the Taliban have said. In an interview with Syed Saleem Shazad of Asia Times, Haji Muslim Khan (spokesman for Maulana Fazlullah and one of the senior commanders in the Swat Valley) was asked whether the
movement is “against both men’s and women’s education” [3] to which he replied, “this is sad, that we are slaves in all sections of our society… Nobody is ready to sit with the Taliban and ask what they want from all this. The education system and the curriculum are both remnants of the British.”

Two important points are highlighted in this quote. Firstly, the average individual does not want to understand the Taliban’s point of view even though as the perpetrators of this act, they should be consulted first. Rather, we rush to form opinions that are favorable to our desires and intellect. Secondly, the curriculum’s being taught in the schools were based on a non-Islamic system. Why, when Allah has blessed us with a complete way of life, do

“It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.” [4]

This particular speech was made regarding the imposition of English as the main language of education to be used in India. It was mandated for the purpose that it would produce “a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect,” and who would further the aims of their colonial masters. Pakistani cities are abundant with the type of people Macaulay had in mind. They may wear Pakistani clothes, eat Pakistani food, look Pakistani but when it comes to their way of thinking, their beliefs and their values, they are essentially “English in taste.” I do not mean here those Pakistanis who have studied in the West and subsequently returned. I mean, the home-bred Pakistanis who have spent their whole lives studying in English-medium schools, and local universities. ‘Islam’ has become something that is limited to saying ‘inshaAllah’ and ‘mashaAllah’ and salah has become a set of movements of going up and down. If the class of people that the existing school system in Pakistan produces are weak Muslims whose aim is to live a comfortable life, and not work towards establishing the laws of Allah on the earth then it surely is not the generation of the Sahaba who we should strive to emulate. Surely something must be wrong with the current education system!

Shouldn’t the desire of every Muslim be to worship Allah -as His Majesty deems fit- and to live under His laws? If so, then the Shari’ah of Allah which is currently non-existent on the earth, naturally needs to be established in all aspects of our lives. To establish His laws, do we not then need an education system which teaches our children from the very
beginning about their duties in the dunya and the importance of raising the banner of la ilaha illal lah? So, how is it possible to establish an Islamic state without the proper means of education to further this aim?

The schools in Swat consist of a similar variety of those found in the rest of Pakistan. Some of these schools are government-owned, some are missionary schools (e.g. The Missionary Girls High School Sangota), and some are semi-government owned (e.g. Excelsior College Swat). Some of these schools had co-education in them and some taught Christianity.

As far as the two above schools are concerned (Missionary school and Excelsior College) they were both sponsored by the British government and approximately one thousand students from all over the province were studying in each of them. [5] Due to the popularity of these types of schools, a large number of students were studying in establishments which were based upon Christian values and where Christianity was taught or they were schools which were co-educational-an educational system in which it is haram for us to educate our children due to the inherent dangers and evils that are involved. [6] So what is the big fuss about getting rid of systems which are corrupting our youth? Our vision should be to slowly plant the seeds for an Islamic Khilafa. In order for this to occur, we need the ingredients that will go into achieving this goal. We have to change every aspect of our current way of living from the root such that it is completely directed towards worshiping Allah and establishing His laws on the earth. Our minds have to be ready to accept what an Islamic state requires of us.

To assert that the Taliban are against education of girls or against education in general is fallacious and unreasonable. The modern western school system has come to epitomize the meaning of what is considered a valid education today. Thus every other system needs to be infused “with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature.” [7] The Taliban cannot be against Islamic education of any student because if they are teaching Islam properly, it will only serve to benefit the Islamic cause which they have sacrificed their lives for. In fact the Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan has lucidly stated, “We are not against education, but we insist that our new generation should be imparted with religious and then scientific and technology education… The Taliban need doctors, engineers and scientists to strengthen our cause.” [8]

Even if the girls’ schools were singled out to be destroyed [9] it would still make sense. Why? Women are the key to the establishment of khilafa. If our women are not educated in the deen but rather in western education (alone), they will impart false information to their children, or they may raise their children to hate jihad, to pursue an education for the sake of an education, to get a high paying job and not have any interest with spreading the deen of Allah. If we lose our mothers, we lose the tariqa (Islamic) of the children, which means we have children who either do not care or are ignorant about Islam, which means we do not have a strong generation of youth who are the fuel of this ummah and this jihad, which means we potentially do not have an Islamic khilafa.

The issue at hand has to do with teaching a way of life (i.e. British versus Islamic curriculum) not the imparting of skills. Those who claim that the destroying of schools means children will not be able to acquire skills are mistaken.
Acquiring a skill is not something only offered at a secular institution. Let’s give the Taliban some breathing space. We will see what they will do after the operation is over inshaAllah.

The prophet ﷺ said ‘Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim.’ [10] According to

Why is it that the government claims they are fighting for Allahٰ yet they bombed not only the premises,

If it is asked, why the Taliban had to bomb the schools in Swat, then the reply is that one has to know the situation on the ground. Haji Muslim Khan said “Nobody can prove that we bombed any school building during phase one of the military operations in the Swat Valley. [Sarcastically] Why did the “well-educated” and “very qualified” Pakistan army set up military bunkers in the schools? This is my question.” [14] In ideal circumstances, the issue of changing the curriculum could have been done through dialogue. However when you have your enemy actively fighting you for your religion, destroying your homes, day and night then do you not retaliate? He further goes on to say, “These are the “well educated” and “very qualified” people of our security forces who bombed our villages and destroyed them. We have, therefore, the right to destroy those schools which brought up this generation, sold out to foreigners and sold their own people to foreigners.”

Consequently, if for example the army was not stationed in these schools, would it still have been legitimate for them to destroy them? Let’s think about it logically. If the schools were left in tact with the same curriculum’s being applied, and producing the same weak generation of Muslims who hate to fight for the sake of Allah, who do not want Islam to be the judge of their affairs, then we would have to face the dire consequence a few years down the line of more and more Muslims who are solely dunya-oriented. The alternative is that you temporarily destroy the schools so that one, the curriculum’s are not being taught and therefore children are not being fed the same rhetoric as before and two, nobody dares to even oppose the Taliban and start teaching again. They have also promised that “we can rebuild those
buildings within a month [once the military operations are over].” [15] In most cases, the Taliban have delivered on their promises.

To those who claim that ‘violence’ is only going to breed more uneducated citizenry and peace will never prevail as long as this is the case, I say, peace in a society is achieved when humans worship Allah as He is supposed to be worshiped. It is when we follow His commands and stay away from what he has prohibited or is displeased with.

Peace in a society cannot simply be achieved through “education.” Some assert, “as long as they can read and write, they can get jobs, feed their families, thus not steal or resort to violent behavior.” Education needs to have a purpose. If education is for the sake of the dunya, then you will never have “peace” in the society, because living will not be for the sake of Allah. Conversely, if education is directed for the main purpose of teaching children Islam- how to live it, sleep it, drink it, carry out every aspect of it, solely for the purpose of Allah, then this is how peace will be achieved.

Eight years later, Mullah Omar leads an insurgency that has gained steady ground in much of Afghanistan against much better equipped American and NATO forces. Far from a historical footnote, he represents a vexing security challenge for the Obama administration, one that has consumed the president’s advisers, divided Democrats and left many Americans frustrated.

“This is an amazing story,” said Bruce Riedel, a former Central Intelligence Agency officer who coordinated the Obama administration’s initial review of Afghanistan policy in the spring. “He’s a semiliterate individual who has met with no more than a handful of non-Muslims in his entire life. And he’s staged one of the most remarkable military comebacks in modern history.” – New York Times

Footnotes:


9. They were not because many boys schools were bombed too.

10. A Hasan hadith narrated by Ibn Majah [1/81]

11. Islam Question and Answer. Response to “‘Seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China” is a false hadeeth” <http://www.islamqa.com/en/ref/13637/>.


