

## An open response to the open letter of Professor Yunus

*Mozammel H Khan*

Dear Prof. Yunus,

This is an open response to your open letter to the citizens of your beloved country, the country which you have brought to centre-fold of pride in the international arena through your winning the much-coveted Nobel Prize for peace. Your winning the Nobel Prize for peace has put additional burdens on you to live up to the expectations of the people not only within the geographical boundaries of Bangladesh but to the people of the current global village at large. The multi-dimensional aspect of peace has propelled the Nobel committee to extend its periphery to recognize the contributions that may not be directly entangled to what Alfred Nobel's will had envisioned in 1895. US scientist Dr. Normal Borloug, Iranian human rights activists Dr. Shirin Ebadi and Kenyan environmentalist Dr. Wangari Muta Maathai and you have been awarded the peace prize in the similar extended dimension of peace. However, this extended dimension in no way has undermined the burden of your obligation to 'advance democracy and human rights', the direct component of peace, as has been inscribed in the citation for you by the Nobel Committee.

Regrettably enough, your performance as a voice of conscience in your own homeland for the last several years in particular was far from reassuring. Over the last several years the battered human right situations of our dear homeland was of grave concerns for many conscious souls around the globe. Oppression of minorities and opposition workers, custodial torture and death, the brutal techniques of custodial torture of politicians and intellectuals alike and probably, the most despicable of all crimes committed by the government that has been termed by human rights organizations as 'terrorism by the State' where people were being killed on daily basis in the name of so-called 'crossfire', absolutely disregarding the rule of law. Ironically, you have been totally mum on these reprehensible acts of a government that derived its authority from a constitutional process.

While you have endorsed the civil society movement to elect honest and suitable candidates, you have been totally silent when one of our brightest bureaucrat-turned politicians had been killed by assassin's grenade. It was puzzling to note the indifference of one of our most gifted sons, even before you became a Nobel laureate, vis-à-vis such a heinous crime and tragedy.

If the 'denial of bank credit to the poor people is a violation of human rights' then 'denial of the right to know and teach the true history of the nation to our school children' is at least a violation of human rights of equal magnitude, if not more. During the dark era of the last BNP led government when our history was systematically distorted, not only as an illustrious citizen but as an active maker of that history as well, you did not express any words of criticisms for this devilish act.

In one of your addresses to uproot corruption, you proposed the idea to form ‘Sufferers Association’, you expect whose members to come to ACC with evidence. However, when poor Nuruzzaman was arrested and tortured for his ‘crime’ for bringing a simple allegation of bribery demand by the son of a the then minister, a citizen, let alone an illustrious one, I did not read any words of sympathy or protest from you to rescues Nuruzzanan from the torturous arms of the State Machinery. It was no other than Irene Khan, the chief of the Amnesty International, who had to issue statement of condemnation in favour of the poor sufferer.

Terming the present situation new one, you have said this is ‘the high time’ to start politics from a new angle. However, I am afraid; you had no part, whatsoever, in the creation of that ‘high time’. Over the last two years or so, when the opposition political parties were putting forward their demands for reforms to create a level playing field to hold a free and fair election, you had no words of sympathy for them. Quite to the contrary, only the other day when Prof. Iajuddin Ahmed was carrying out one mischievous act after another to help his benefactors materialize their blue prints, and while the whole nation was critical of his actions and inactions, you evaluated his performance through an A plus, which rather encouraged him to carry forward with his partisan activities. In full tune with the BNP led alliance, you were in favour of holding the election on January 22 in order to ‘save the constitution’. In fact, it was the determination of the AL led political alliance to derail the farcical electoral process, the support of the international community in favour of a credible election, the ceaseless effort by a section of civil society and the timely action of our armed forces in full harmony with the wishes of our people that saved the day. The widely acclaimed and prudent actions of the Fakhruddin government in carrying forward with the multi-prone reforms only proved the full-scale merits of the demands raised by the AL led alliance. Fairness demands that you at least extend your thanks and gratitude to these stakeholders, including thousands of political activities who took to the streets, braving the police brutality of Iajuddin government and specially those who laid down their lives for creating this ‘high time’ for you to float a new political party.

I could not agree with you more when you say, “it is now clear to all that it is not possible to reach the adorably goal maintaining the existing political culture; it is only possible by bringing a comprehensive change to the culture. Through my work and experience, I feel with all my heart that the people with their innate sense of endeavour and creativity can achieve the impossible if political goodwill, competent leadership and good governance can be established”. However, I am taking strong exception to your intention when you are putting yourself in the helm to lead that endeavour by forming a new political party for two reasons. Firstly, through your sheer indifference to the cause of human rights and rule of law, specifically over the last five years of darkest rule, you failed to portray yourself as a moral bacon, as was devoutly done by Prof. Muzaffor Ahmed and others, for our citizens to emulate and take strength from. While I respect your democratic right to form a political party but at same token, in the arena of human rights, I am sorry to question about the lapse that exist between what you practiced vis-à-vis our expectation. Moreover, I am not too sure about the potential success of your endeavour as well. Even

Bertrand Russell failed in his multiple bids to secure a seat in the House of Commons in the cradle of democracy.

We have two types of politicians: one with firm conviction, while the other with sheer opportunism. In the leadership level the later vastly outnumbers the former while on the grass root level, a complete reverse scenario exists. In response to your call to help with the formation of a political party, in addition to many who, in the past, failed to secure a berth in either of the existing political camps, I can visualize the later group flocking into your camp in large numbers as they may not be willing to ride anymore the sinking ship. Another group of our citizens who always stay on the sidelines during the hours of need of the nation but are absolutely attuned to your unfortunate comments of bracketing all the politicians in the same bracket of corrupt and devoid of any political conviction will be clapping your arrival, as if with Aladdin's lamp in your hand, to the domain where controversy is a name of the game. Personal honesty has never been a shield from criticisms for a politician. If you get to reach the corridor of power, it will be the same group who will, most likely, take no time in placing you in the same bracket where they have put the leaders of the main political parties, without any differentiation, albeit they are not a political force to reckon with. In fact, this is the second reason why I am vehemently opposed to your entry into political fray, since it would be extremely painful to see any dent, through an iota of controversy around you, on our pride which you have raised multi-folds on October 13, 2006 in the community of nations. Our nation expects to see you as its conscience whereby you will be working as its defacto ombudsman in promoting human rights and rule of law. You have no right in your good sense, Professor Yunus, to demolish the glory that you yourself have engraved on the face of the nation.

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