



STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON SYMPOSIUM
ON 'SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF TERRORISM' ON SEPTEMBER 09, 2008

Victims of Terrorism

The multiple ways in which terrorism challenges the core principles of humanity and the mandates of the United Nations are all the more evident as we convene today for this very important symposium on "Supporting Victims of Terrorism". We thank the Secretary General for this initiative.

In recent years India has been subject to horrific terrorist attacks. The recent attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul and the serial blasts in Bangalore and Ahmedabad are gruesome reminders of the violence that we continue to face. These acts of terrorism are clearly designed to spread terror among common people, harm the economy and trigger communal clashes. It is a measure of good sense and resilience of ordinary people that these attempts fail. Investigations have been relatively quick, important arrests have been made which would give us an insight into terrorist networks and their external ramifications. This senseless killing of innocent civilians in my country and elsewhere reinforces the continuing importance of strong international resolve and a coordinated global approach to confront the threat posed by terrorism.

I salute the victims of terrorism present here. The panelist from Spain made the important point that terrorists should be delegitimized. Here the old Christian distinction between the martyr and the suicide is helpful and relevant to our time: the blood of the martyr was the seed of the church while the suicide could not be buried in a cemetery but had to be buried at the crossroad with a stake driven through his heart. A martyr dies that others may live. A suicide bomber dies so that others may die. One cannot even accurately describe him as a fundamentalist since he does not know the fundamentals of any faith. One cannot even accurately call him a fanatic since he does not have the dignity of any religious conviction. He is just a low criminal and necrophiliac mountebank. His victims are the real martyrs asserting the right to life, the living courage of society and the right to resist terrorists.

The international conventions on terrorism focus on promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism. However, for the first time the United Nations Global Counter terrorism also recognizes the need to express solidarity with innocent victims of this scourge and specifically addresses victims of terrorism under two of its pillars: the section on measures to ensure human

rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism, and in the section that addresses conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism strengthening secular nationalist forces rather than weakening them would reduce the political space open to fundamentalists. In any case, this was necessary to accord adequate recognition and support to victims of terrorism.

The support to victims of terrorism has to take into account the immediate medical needs after a terrorist attack (as so eloquently described by the panelist from Kenya) and thereafter the long term rehabilitation and support requirements. The Government of India endeavours to take all these needs into account. It has introduced a compensation scheme to assist victims of terrorist violence. Under this scheme, financial assistance is admissible to the family member(s) in the event of death or permanent incapacitation of the victim, who was the bread-winner/householder of the family, by terrorist violence. Families of the victims are eligible to get assistance under this scheme even if they have received any other assistance, by way of payment of ex-gratia or any other type of relief from the Government or any other source.

In addition, those permanently incapacitated, and the members of the family of the victims killed/permanently incapacitated by the terrorist violence are given a health card by the District Health Society, functioning under the National Rural Health Mission. This card entitles them to free medical treatment in respect of injuries due to violence and all other major illnesses.

The Central Government has also earmarked a special quota for dependents of civilian victims in medical education and entitled beneficiaries are given admission on fulfillment of minimum eligibility requirements for the course. Apart from the above, the State Governments have also been compensating victims in accordance with their policies.

As regards victims belonging to security forces, every state has laid out its own compensatory policy for security forces killed under its jurisdiction. The central paramilitary forces, besides compensation, are also entitled to liberalized pension awards.

The above-mentioned Government of India schemes are complemented by numerous other victim assistance programs that are managed by state governments and civil society.

Terrorism is an attack on the values that define the international community and seriously impairs the enjoyment of human rights including the right to life. The provision of assistance to victims and solidarity with them helps facilitate normalization of their lives whilst uniting public opinion against the terrorists. India remains fully committed to do its utmost to look after victims of terrorism and protect their dignity.

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