

Editorial

The Case of Crime Rise in City of Peshawar

Crime is an all time existing phenomenon. Societies have never been able to completely get rid of crime. According to Durkheim, crime is essential for bringing progress in the society. For it is through crimes and deviancy that society draws and redraws its normative boundaries. The rate of crime, nonetheless, can go up or down depending upon the society's response to crimes and criminals.

In this context, daily *The Frontier Post* on December 02, 2014 reported that the crimes are on a steep rise in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It stated a startling rise of 900% in extortion cases. The Chief of Peshawar city police also endorsed a significant increase in extortion crimes. (December 14, 2014, *The News*). No day goes off when a senior police official does not show up on media or quoted in newspapers telling about the various reforms and institutional changes initiated in the police. It too is a fact that the present Police Chiefs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Punjab and Balochistan provinces have brought significant reforms in their respective police forces. The police have now a rapid response force, an elite force, counter-terrorism squad, special branch, police emergency units, and customer friendly police stations. There have been quantitative and qualitative reforms in the police in the last two years in these provinces. Increase in equipments, vehicles, weapons, and the reforms, both structural and functional, in trainings and courses etc have been much talked about in the police circles. Despite these changes and reforms, argues *The Frontier Post* story, the rate of crime in Peshawar city is sky-rocketing.

This seems a puzzling situation to the criminologists and criminal justice decision makers. Previously, it was argued that the reforms in police will certainly reduce crime and ensure normalcy in the streets. It is one of the major assumptions of crime-control model of policing as well. However, that assumption did not hold in the city of Peshawar. What has gone wrong?

To solve this riddle, let us have a look at the current political and strategic position of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This province is at the frontline in war against terrorism. Now and then, the police have to respond to the incidents of terrorism, the origin of which is often the tribal areas, which are beyond the legal ambit of the police. By the first 11 months of this year, the province was hit by 185 terrorist incidents (SATP, 2014). Only in the first two months of this year, the province was hit by 42 terrorists' incidents killing 103 civilians, and 42 security forces officials (SATP, 2014). The worst of terrorists incidents, probably in the history of the world, occurred on 16th December 2014 when a group of terrorists assaulted the Army Public School and College, Peshawar, killing almost 160 persons including 141 children ranging between 8 and 18 years of age (Dawn, 17th December, 2014). The

The Provincial Police Chief (IGP) KPk was on the scene of incident. He announced on the electronic media that terrorists should fight with the police, not children. He loudly spoke against the militants and openly challenged them, which was an encouraging sign and a great consolation for the otherwise demoralized police. Leadership spoke on the occasion. In the presence of such an intense situation, the police are more focused on incidents of terrorism and matters of security than routine policing. It leaves the police less focused towards ordinary street crimes, resulting a 900% increase in extortion. Another aspect of the high rate of certain crimes like terrorism, is that police have no powers to investigate case of money-laundering and financing terrorism across the borders. This limits their scope of investigation. The police on the contrary may argue that increased reporting of crime is the reason for this hike as now people have an open, free and easy access to registration of case.

Despite serious attacks on police guards and mobiles, the presence of the police can be felt by the citizens of Peshawar and other cities of the province. It was a non-existent scene to see a traffic police warden after 07.00 pm in any city in KPk. Now, the traffic police wardens are regularly seen on roads. Police visibility itself is a sign of police commitment and constant supervision by the Police Chief.

The story of the city of Peshawar speaks a lot about increase of crime. The crime-control model of the policing does not work alone. For an effective response to crime, the society needs to mobilize the entire criminal justice system, including the judiciary, prosecution and punishment. Despite the fact that one of the most significant roles is played by the prosecution, it is the weakest link in the chain of CJS. The rate of conviction is extremely low. In terrorism cases, it is not more than 6% (Prosecution, 2014). They lack courage, professionalism, commitment and an assertive response. One of the reasons, probably, is their lower status in the criminal justice hierarchy in our country. Whatever the reasons might be, it is suggested that, in addition to police, reforms should be also introduced in the prosecution segment so as to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. The police too have to publish major changes in their departments and behaviour, so the reforms are documented, debated and tested on the touchstone of empirical research by scholars and practitioners.

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