



NTUI Statement on Terrorism in Mumbai: A Challenge for Democracy

Mumbai has witnessed many attacks of terrorism and has taken them all in its stride. But the militant attack on Mumbai on 26 November 2008 which continued for more than 60 hours shook Mumbai, India and the world.

NTUI condemns terrorism in all its manifestations.

It is understandable that people are furious and outraged, and they have the right to be so when such attacks terrorise and kill innocent citizens who are not accountable for the acts of the state. People are expressing anger and horror over the incident in many different ways. However, to the credit of Indian people, these actions are imbued with a sense of instinctive understanding of the nature of the incident, and people have not been drawn into sectarianism, national chauvinism or war mongering. The NTUI welcomes this spirit of the people, and their moving from passivity to active engagement with the problems of terrorism. This opens up a space for democratic debate, which all progressive forces should engage in with maturity, to deepen our understanding of the problems of terrorism.

The Mumbai attack had clear political targets – the symbols of wealth and power in the city. The rich and foreign nationals in Mumbai were for the first time exposed to physical threat, which earlier primarily affected the poor and the ordinary people. In this context, the ruling elite is using public opinion and arguments to shift the discourse towards the right - towards undemocratic national chauvinism and redefining internal security, governance structures and external policies. It is also using the situation as a pretext for forcing integration of Indian policies on internal security into U.S. sponsored global war against terrorism.

Working People of India and Pakistan must Unite for Peace in South Asia

The Government of India, though vacillating, has taken a cautious approach. It is mainly using diplomatic mechanisms to address the challenge, and has so far desisted from taking any specific militaristic actions. It is primarily relying on international mechanisms to build pressure on Pakistan. The international effort is also focused on diplomacy. The NTUI believes that these are positive approaches to deal with this complex situation. Any mature response to the situation has to respect the sovereignty of the State of Pakistan and allow it to deal with non-state actors with international assistance and support.

The Hindu chauvinist forces led by the BJP-RSS combine have pursued a sectarian, narrow nationalist perspective. This has given legitimacy to breaking at the community level syncretic traditions and social cohesion, politically excluding all discussions for meaningful engagement of minority rights in democratic politics. The BJP-RSS combine when in government have further used their power to unleash a pogrom of organised violence, sponsoring extreme, and now even terrorist outfits. These actions have transformed the local level communal differences into a national ideology and integrated it to the U.S.-Zionist campaign against Muslim people.

The BJP has been using every incident of terrorism for demonising a section of the Indian people who are nearly 140 million, and are largely poor and marginalised. It is using the Mumbai attack for asserting its ideological hegemony against secularism and democracy, and developing a political constituency for:

- Extraordinary laws and expansion of police force with hard striking capability disproportionate to societal need for democratic policing.
- Advancement of a doctrine of preventive intervention of a limited and lightning war.

Reject U.S. Influence in the sub-continent

The partition of Indian sub-continent had never really settled down to mutual co-existence, let alone to cooperation and peaceful relationship. The unresolved Kashmir dispute has remained a festering wound in preventing any peace initiatives. The U.S. intervention in the subcontinent, particularly its support for military regimes and use of extremist groups against Russians in Afghanistan provided the ground and cover for integrating such non-state armed groups into the military doctrine of Pakistan's establishment. The domination of feudal remnants, and of the Army, have weakened the democratic struggle against these extremist groups in Pakistan.

Any serious and rational analysis of the incident makes it evident that the whole militant actions were designed to first reverse the ongoing peace process between India and Pakistan and escalate it into a military confrontation; and second show that the consequence of strategic military alliance with the U.S. and Israel will open India as a site of terror attack.

The Mumbai attack has to be viewed in the context of international politics, wherein U.S. imperialism has been both using religious extremism for its military policy, and propagating a doctrine of making people of Islamic faith a global enemy, in order to oppress and control Muslim nations and their oil wealth. This has led to formation of non-state actors fighting a global war of terrorism against U.S. imperialism and its allies. This has resulted in major collateral damages and immense killing of innocent people who are not accountable for the acts of their States.

For the trade union movement and peace loving citizens it is necessary to assess the risk of associating with U.S. imperialism, and the danger of this association inviting terror attacks. Both terrorism and the response of the state have always led to undermining of democracy. Historical experience has shown that the cycle of terrorism and state terrorism never eliminates terrorism. In fact, it is the people's movement that can cut this nexus through a struggle for democratisation, equality and equity for all.

No war between India and Pakistan

In the Indian context the reduction of tensions between India and Pakistan means reduction of defence budgets in both countries. This will have major and meaningful impact on the well being of each country's citizens.

The doctrine of preventive intervention as a military strategy, even with the might of U.S. imperialism's military strength, has failed to eliminate terrorism. In fact, it activates the emergence of resistance of nations and people, reducing if not effacing the demarcation between political and ideological forces. The struggle can best be met through democratic political contention, the most fertile ground for contending against terrorism.

Terrorism Weakens the Unity of the People of the sub-continent and the Struggle against Imperialism

We therefore call upon the people of India, Pakistan and South Asia to deepen the process of democracy, contend ideologically and politically with all forms of regressive and chauvinistic viewpoints and ideologies, and build a secular framework for peaceful co-existence.

It is imperative on us to understand that terrorism can be best met by:

- Understanding and eliminating the causes that create and provide motivation for the terrorists, which is primarily caused when society and state demonises, deprives and oppresses a large section of people;
- Limiting the politics of terrorism by creating a democratic ground where even extreme ideologies are compelled to defend their views, policies, and action in open public space;
- Isolating extremism within society by defeating their views through an ideological and political battle within a democratic framework of nation building process.

The present situation demands more complex and sensitive approach to deal with terrorism, which finds its justification in primordial loyalties and ideologies, like religion which has a wider social resonance. In fact, in the last decade, both in India and abroad, the theologians, institutions and ordinary people in the Islamic world have provided theological opposition, and campaigned against terrorism more than people of any other religion. It is time we boldly take a stand in support of the principled opposition of these Islamic groups to terrorism.

We will contribute most to the fight against terror by creating a tolerant, secular and democratic society in Pakistan and defending it in India.

Ashim Roy
General Secretary

13 December 2008

UNITY • DEMOCRACY • MILITANCY

New Trade Union Initiative

B-137 Dayanand Colony, First Floor • Lajpat Nagar IV • New Delhi 110024
Telephone: 011 – 26214538 • Fax: 011 – 26486931 • E-mail: ntui@vsnl.net