

Press Release

THE TROPHIES OF PEACE ARE BRIGHTER THAN THAT OF WAR

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Together with the everyone in India and Pakistan, I appeal to the Prime Ministers of both countries to show, at this critical juncture, the courage and statesmanship to choose the path of peace. It takes no greatness to allow oneself to be carried forward inexorably to disaster. Greatness lies in breaking the logic of destruction, out of a mature and humane sense of responsibility for the people who are the victims of all wars and conflicts.

The key to peace in every situation of conflict is in the hands and heart of the people. So long as they are inclined to reward, in any form, merchants of war and aggression, they will encourage demagogues to resort to war. As is said, when a leader fails at home, he begins to be active on the borders. It is up to the people in both countries to reject this perverse logic, if they are to enjoy lasting peace.

In the past major wars have resulted from flimsy causes and provocations. When hostile parties surrender themselves to the logic of violence, and the vanity that goes with it, they drag their peoples into collective misery and devastation. We must be wiser for what we have seen in history.

Violence can only legitimize and provoke more violence. It takes far greater spiritual heroism and stature in statesmanship to de-fang violence with the anti-dote of ahimsa, love, truth and compassion. It is easier for the stronger party in a conflict to take the initiate in moving towards peace. I, therefore, appeal to Prime Minister Modi to reach out to Imran Khan, who is a political novice in comparison. The good and bad thing about Imran is that he is a sportsman. Let's take him on his strength and enable him to be sportsman like in dealing with this grim situation. This, and not competitive sabre-rattling, is conducive to the interests of all concerned.

I am quite certain that the citizens of India will factor into their electoral choices later this year how maturely or recklessly this crisis is handled. General elections 2019 has become, through this turn of events, a

watershed moment for the people of India to state unequivocally what sort of country they wish to live in, and how their country should be seen globally.

I express my solidarity with our pilot now in Pak custody. I appeal to the Pak authorities to treat him not only according to the provisions of the Geneva Convention but also remembering that we, on both sides of the LoC, are sisters and brothers, not enemies. Let's claim and assert for ourselves the right and the freedom to love one another and to live in peace and prosperity. Imran Khan should made a symbolically significant investment towards the restoration of normalcy by returning the injured pilot to India expeditiously. As the senior and stronger player in this regrettable ritual of human sacrifice, India should create conditions conducive for such a gesture on Imran's part.

Looking ahead, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan -all victims of terror- should evolve a joint action plan to sanitize this region of terror. Three decades of terror has not yielded any result; nor is it likely to yield any, till the end of history. Making war seems more profitable than making peace because of the perversity infused into the stereotypes of realpolitik. Our part of the good earth has seen enough of atrocity. The bravery to hurt and to hate must now give way to the greater heroism of living together in peace and amity, so that the real-life issues and aspirations of our peoples can be addressed without chronic disruptions.