

A Quiet Repose

Syed S. Andaleeb

Aylan Kurdi, another sweet and innocent child, lay in eternal slumber on a Turkish beach, claimed by the horrendous cruelty, imbecilic greed, and unfathomable excesses of a world gone astray, a world nurtured by those who control it for profit and frolic. Indeed Aylan unmasks once again the world's moronic rulers, hungering for power and control, scarring our sensitivities, grating our fond memories, and generating the flotsam and debris of the unsullied washing up on the beaches and elsewhere.

Surely, the masses of the strife-ridden world making a dash across unfriendly waters to unknown (and often hostile) lands do not seek the outcome that Aylan's family had to bear. All they seek is the security of a safe harbour. The question is what circumstances force people to make such perilous choices? The horrific memories of 1971 and the ravages we suffered keep rushing in; the images of uprooted men, women, and children making a desperate bid across the borders, many dying on the way, while the world's rulers strategised and dithered and connived to find answers. Not much has changed since then.

How many more children will be lost in this new migratory wave to imagined safety? How many more will die an untimely death in Palestine, Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Mexico, and now in Hungary? How many will die in the larger canvas of the African, Asian and South American continents? Rant and rave as we may, the rulers of the world have managed to stifle outrage. Nothing seems to change the trajectory of despair and suffering while a small coterie shamelessly grasp for everything they can lay their hands on.

Aylan's story will deeply stir the emotions of a multitude; some will even silently wipe away a teardrop. But in very short order, the sonorous waves of global glitz, and the attendant greed and lust and unfettered delusions, will have erased his memories. Life will again be "as is" - glittery and mirage-like- for those who shape the destinies of others, until another blip appears on the sands of time...and another and another. Blips they are not; they abound all around us – out of sight, out of mind.

This innocent little boy and others like him who have been lost to time, stand tall as symbols of grace in their slumber. They bear no malice. And they leave behind a simple message to the warlords of the world: "All you could give me was fear and uncertainty and distrust. I have had enough. I am now at peace – far from your ugliness, your contempt for life, your inhumanity." That message, delivered time and again, seems to ring hollow to the world's rulers.

The writer is Vice Chancellor, BRAC University, Bangladesh.