

INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD IS NOT AS FRIENDLY AND SECURE AS YOU MAY HAVE BELIEVED

Karachi, Pakistan

Some years ago, I visited the slum in Karachi, Pakistan's most populated city. It is not a place for the fainthearted. More recently, I became aware of the work of the Edhi Foundation in that country (Sources: Internet; Human rights reports, 2009).

Since 1951, the Edhi Foundation, a nonprofit humanitarian organization, has rescued about 30 newborn infants each month from garbage dumps and open sewers in Karachi and elsewhere in the country, and recovered the dead bodies of four times as many. Since 1970, 68,000 dead infants were found and buried. Of the infants abandoned or killed, 98 percent were females. About 20,000 of those found survived; most were placed in family homes.



Photo 0.1. Urban slum in Karachi. 40% of its population live in slums. To the right are the front doors of two households, in front open infected sewage, and waste water. No electricity, water supply far away. The garbage dump is just behind. Credit: Internet.

Killing your own children is immoral in all cultures. Each year, some 5 million children under the age of five, most of them girls, die either at birth or soon after by willful neglect, deprivation of food and health care (Chapter 10). Knowing the slums of Karachi, and looking into the circumstances, we might attempt to describe a mother who did it (Hamid et al. 2009). She could be about thirty. She would have little or no schooling and be functionally illiterate. At 14, she had entered a marriage arranged by her parents. She already had seven children, two of whom had died. She has sent all children to school at the age of five. She lives in a slum with few amenities, far away from clean water, and latrines, and has no sewers or electricity. She is malnourished, anemic and often sick, but health services are poor, understaffed, and with few medicines. The husband has only temporary jobs, is sometimes away for weeks working on roads outside the city. There is very little food in the house. There are no contraceptives available. She only hears of a better life when there are election times, and the politicians' speeches are sent out on loudspeakers. *But rhetoric does not feed her children.* This mother has a moral dilemma. She does not have food for one more child. If she keeps the new daughter, she would need to sell one of the older children, either a son aged 12 for slave labour (see p.67), or a daughter aged 10 to be a maid, both will be exploited and run risks for abuse, even prostitution. There will be no more schooling for them; the life will be ruined for whomever of the older children that goes away. She is attached to these children.

Most people in the developed countries believe that enough development aid (Chapter 10) has been donated to avoid this type of moral dilemma. The main UN Agency for family planning, the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), has a mission to "to ensure that every pregnancy is

wanted, every birth is safe". From 1987–2000 Dr. Nafis Sadik from Pakistan was its Executive Director. A major role of UNFPA is to provide contraceptives, but a coalition of unwilling forces (fundamentalist religions, economists wanting to add consumers, and rulers of poor countries wanting more soldiers) has starved the organization for funds, so it receives only 1 per-cent of all official development assistance. The Agency has been incapable of doing more than a fraction of its tasks; only 2.2 percent of Pakistan's women living in slums have access to contraceptives. Consequently, Pakistan's population grew from 34 million in 1951 to 180 million in 2009 and Karachi's from 1 million to 15. The dead children on its garbage dumps result from circumstances over which their mothers had little power. The children's deaths reflect the short-sightedness and lack of concern in the rich countries, who failed to contribute what was needed to avoid the most serious, foreseeable catastrophe in our times: the population explosion. Each year 80 million women in the world experience an unintended pregnancy. Who is immoral? Moral dilemmas and their neurobiology are discussed in Chapter 16.

Edlington, United Kingdom

United Kingdom has seen some murders by very young children that have received a lot of media attention. Among them is Mary Bell, a 10-year-old serial killer who in 1968 strangled two 3-year-old boys. In 1993, 3-year old James Bulger was tortured and murdered by Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, both 10-years-old. All London newspapers on 23 January, 2010 carried yet another front-page story about child psychopaths: the Court case of two boys from Edlington aged 9 and 11 who had made a vicious attack on two similar age boys, and almost killed them.

The victims were lured into a secluded ravine, where they were throttled with cable, punched and kicked in the head, and battered with branches, bricks, and rocks. They were forced to eat nettles, crawl across a stream, stripped, and made to commit humiliating sex acts on each other. Plastic sheeting was put at over them and set alight. They were then cut with barbed wire, and one had a lit cigarette pushed into an open wound. The torture lasted for about 90 minutes. After their tormentors left the scene, the most severely injured older boy told the younger victim: "You go and I'll just die here." Part of the attack was filmed by one of the attackers on his mobile phone.

When arrested, the attackers showed no remorse; they attacked because "We were bored, there was nothing to do". They had grown up in a home with a violent, alcoholic, and drug-using father and a drug addict mother, and they were daily drinking alcoholic cider, smoking cannabis, and from the age of nine watching extreme horror and pornographic films. At the time of the attack, they had been in a foster home just for one month, with an elderly couple, who lived near their abusive, now divorced father.

BBC released a leaked report from the local Council that showed that "nine different agencies had been involved but none took action to stop the boys"... "31 chances to intervene had been missed as social workers and the police dealt with the family...some were temporary, not fully competent staff". The report concluded "the assault was preventable... the perpetrators had shown an escalating pattern of violence against other children and adults". The agencies showed an insufficiently authoritative, consistent, and assertive strategy in working with families, who were un-cooperative and antisocial in attitude and behaviour". In that Council area, seven other children rated at risk had died during the last 6 years.

The attackers were sentenced to "indeterminate custody" in a secure unit; in reality they may be released in about four year's time. Then, they and their families will be given a new name and total anonymity. It is ironic to see that at present, politicians may decide to put the name, photo and address of all known child abusers on the internet; thus while the worst abusers will remain anonymous, the lesser ones will be fully exposed This subject is discussed in detail on p. 31-33. The annual costs of their custody are estimated at £ 420,000 per year per person. Despite the huge investments made in the development of education and rehabilitation in such units, media reports claim that 78 percent of children released from custody in such secure units, reoffend within 12 months. Official data about individual treatment results are not made public.

These violent boys exhibited symptoms of the "extreme form of early-onset type of conduct disorder with cruel, unemotional traits", a condition described in Chapter 12. Conduct disorder is estimated to have a prevalence in the general child population of some 3-5 percent; 6-8 percent among adolescent males; males outnumbering females by 4:1

(Frick et al., 2006). Viding et al. (2005, 2006, 2009) studied this disorder in a large group of British school children aged 7, and suggested based on twin studies, that two thirds of the difference between those with extreme cruel unemotional traits and 'ordinary' children is explained genetically. These children are severely violent, show long-term patterns of antisocial behaviour, no remorse: this is the juvenile form of psychopathy. Was the boys' violence caused by genetic factors, or by their home environment or by the combination? Could this evil act have been prevented? I will return to this subject in Chapters 12 and 16.

Ad Dīwāniyah, Iraq

In 1974, I made a visit on behalf of the World Health Organization to Iraq to evaluate what could be done about a major food poisoning epidemic, caused by alcymercury-treated wheat-seed. It allegedly involved about one million farmers and their families. They had made bread of the seeds, instead of saving them for planting the following year. To find out about the size of the resulting mortality, I went to a local hospital to see the pathologist, who also was police doctor. As I was waiting for him, I saw three women, all dressed in black leaving his office. I was curious, and asked why they had come. He told me that they were a mother and her two daughters; the girls had been raped during the previous night by the father, when he was drunk. Such sexual abuse was common. The doctor had to report such crimes to the police, but could not; firstly because the girls refused to be examined by a male doctor, and secondly because under an Islamic rule, a woman had to present four male, Muslim witnesses in order to prove a case of rape. Abortions were forbidden; but any children issuing from incest usually perished soon. Ever since, I have collected observations on child abuse. (About the poisoning the doctor said that Vice-President Saddam Hussein had forbidden all release of information, and declared it a State Secret; thus he could not provide any information, except that the deaths were many).

Gokwe, Zimbabwe

In a small village in Zimbabwe, I went to see a family at their home. I was shown a boy about 8 years old, with badly healed fractures on both arms and legs. I made a careful evaluation, and concluded that the fractures had been caused by direct physical abuse. It was the father, who had done it, when he was drunk. The mother had never taken the boy to the health centre for treatment; she appeared to be ashamed of the cause of the boy's fractures. Considering the lack of high-quality reconstructive orthopaedic surgery, no "repair" was possible. I suggested a home training programme to improve the boy's mobility. To prevent the pandemic of physical abuse is important (Chapters 2, 8 and 12).

Vienna, Austria

In 1981, a major United Nations Conference was held Vienna for the International Year of Disabled Persons. It had several thousand participants from all over the world. I was asked by the Conference Organising Committee as their consultant to write an official document about disability prevention. It was distributed to all participants on arrival. I gave a short speech after the opening session with a summary, in which I mentioned that the major cause of disability was malnutrition, especially for children. Famines were common all over the world; of special concern was one major in P.R. China, affecting millions. This information was built on impeccable evidence. After my speech, the Chinese delegate asked to speak urgently, and requested the Conference Chair to immediately delete my report and extinguish my speech from the records. What I had said about China was a lie, she said, there had been no famines. I understood that the truth was unpleasant, and that she was instructed to hide it. When the facts emerged several years later, they confirmed that 45 million people were killed in China by Government-induced famine 1958-1962 (Dikotter, 2010); this was part of a major democide (murder of citizens by governments, unrelated to wars) that in China during the 20th century claimed 92 million victims, many of them children. More follows in Chapters 17 and 18.

Guatemala City, Guatemala

I went to Guatemala several times over a two-year period. In its capital, I saw every day a group of street boys outside my hotel and had chats with several of them. They polished shoes, were selling little trinkets, ran errands, carried packages, and helped me to find my way. None of them were involved in drug selling. Some children had run away from home, because they were beaten; others were from the countryside, and had been left on the

street alone by a parent who then just disappeared. When I returned for my last visit, I found out that the boy who always came to chat with me every morning was 'gone'; another boy told me that the police had shot him dead during the night and dumped his body on a lorry. "They usually leave them with the garbage", he said. The number of street boys in Guatemala City was some 3,000 in 2005, of whom 334 were killed during that year (more data on p. 65-67).

Linköping, Sweden

A police raid in Sweden found a large number of child pornography films. From these, 30 children were identified, who had been exploited in the film production. These children were interviewed by staff from the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Linköping University Hospital. The average duration of the abusive acts was spread over 22 months. Five children were drugged at the time of victimization, two were too young to understand what happened, but 23 were old enough and fully capable of describing the crime in detail. None of them spontaneously told anybody. The parents were ignorant and unsuspecting, Svedin and Back (2003). Globally, there are now some 10,000 commercial internet sites presently selling child pornography (ECPAT, 2008).