

Indian Express July 3, 1997

When Somalians looked up to India

Sir,

The revelation of the cold-blooded atrocities against children and women by Canadian, Belgian and Italian soldiers in your editorial 'Savagery in Somalia') June 26 is shocking. With the track record of the US troops in Vietnam even more violative of human rights, the hypocrisy behind the concern being shown by the Western World over such violations in the Third World countries stands fully exposed.

The conduct of the soldiers of these 'advanced' countries may be contrasted with the excellent conduct of the Indian soldiers, wearing the blue berets and operating under similar circumstances. They did not go berserk against innocent locals like the troops of other countries, including Pakistan.

It is not that the Indians are soft on the insurgents. When the UN decided to pull out of Somalia, the contingents of all the countries, other than India, succumbed to the threat of the insurgents and surrendered their arms and equipment to them in return for a safe passage out of Somalia. But the Indian contingent, rather than surrender its weapons and equipment, decided to fight its way out of Somalia, and was thus able to bring back every item of the equipment that it had carried with it. It also had the rare honour of earning the gratitude of the Somalian people, who wrote an emotional letter to the Prime Minister of India, praising the human approach of the Indian troops, and, in their innocence, imploring him not to withdraw the Indian contingent from Somalia.

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