

March 19, 2025

Fans of the show *The Equalizer* received welcome news this month that CBS is backing a sixth season for the current franchise. The *Equalizer* series was originally introduced in 1985 and ran for four seasons. It was followed by a trilogy of movies of the same title. The *Equalizer* is a vigilante who settles the score for his clients. The *Equalizer* does not always kill the perpetrator, but the guilty never get away with their crimes. The forty-year reign of this franchise suggests the human race is hardwired to see vengeance served. The headlines this week confirm this verdict.

The news website *Egyptian Streets* first published, "Understanding Revenge Killing in Egypt" on March 12th. The article examined blood-feuds as, ". . . a deeply ingrained phenomenon in Egypt." The people of Upper Egypt have a saying, "Vendetta is better than shame" to justify their culture of revenge killings. Often the family of the deceased will bury their loved one without a funeral. The funeral is not conducted until the death is avenged. These tit-for-tat attacks can go on for generations.

The *Guardian* on March 15 featured, "They Killed Him in Cold Blood": The Cycle of Revenge in North-West Syria." This story featured an examination of an individual's murder as part of the early March massacres of over one thousand Alawites in Syria. The Alawites were killed as revenge for the crimes of Syria's former ruler who was an Alawite. The "avengers" in this particular attack came from nearby villages. It took a little over three hours for these outsiders to round up and kill 24 people in the village.

The March 17th edition of *The Times of India* proclaimed, "2 Rowdies Hacked to Death in Revenge Attack in Tamil Nadu's Kotturpuram." The deaths of these two individuals was carried out by a gang of eight men with machetes. According to police, "The attack was led by notorious anti-social element [gang leader] . . . in retaliation for the 2022 murder of his girlfriend." The violence was captured on security cameras and authorities hope to arrest the perpetrators.

Revenge is ingrained in the Old Covenant. The concept of reciprocal justice, an "eye for an eye," is found in Exodus 21:23-27. Payback was so much a part of the culture that the Israelites were commanded to establish six sanctuary cities for people who had accidentally killed someone (Numbers 35:9-34, Deuteronomy 4:41-43). If the killing was found to be truly accidental, the victim's 'avenger-of-blood' was not allowed to exact vengeance in these communities.

The New Testament breaks the cycle of revenge killings. Jesus reminded his followers of the previous covenant that called for "an eye for an eye" (Matt 5:38). He then commanded His disciples, "But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also . . . You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:39-44). Jesus' teaching put the sanctuaries cities out of business.

If only Jesus could be heard in the streets of Syria, Egypt and India. And if America really took this command to heart, there would be no audience for Season Six of *The Equalizer*.