

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



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## The Flagrant Violation of Humanitarian Law

The humanitarian law has been violated widely around the globe. Non-combatants are left at the mercy of terrorism and militancy in recent years and the emergence of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) posed more serious threat to the rights and dignity of civilians, mainly in Syria and Iraq. The ISIL group killed civilians, including women and children, in cold blood on the grounds of their caste, color and creed. Life has turned really cheap and the tragic stories of violence and bloodshed continue unabated.

No wonder, terrorist networks have been changed into a global threat. Militant fighters seek to practice upon their own fundamental ideology. In other words, warring factions neither know nor care about international law which led to the gross violation of human rights. The graph of civilian casualties heightens in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc. as a result of unmitigated insurgency.

One of the worst chemical bombings in Syria turned a northern rebel-held area into a toxic kill zone on Tuesday. Hospitals across Syria's rebel-held Idlib province are overwhelmed with casualties from a suspected chemical attack. Dozens of people, including children, died - some writhing, choking, gasping or foaming at the mouth - after breathing in poison that possibly contained a nerve agent or other banned chemicals. This attack seems to be the largest and most toxic chemical attack in Syria since August 2013, when more than 1,000 people were killed in the Damascus suburbs by the banned toxin sarin.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the monitoring organization, on Wednesday put the death toll at 99 people, including 37 children. The government of Mr. Assad, who renounced chemical weapons nearly four years ago after a large chemical attack that American intelligence agencies concluded was carried out by his forces, denied that his military had been responsible, as he has done every time chemical munitions have been used in Syria.

A spokesman for Russian Defense Ministry, Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, said Syrian warplanes had struck an insurgent storehouse containing toxic substances to be used in chemical weapons.

The attack in the early hours of Tuesday morning in Khan Sheikhoun drew widespread international condemnation, with the UN saying it would investigate the bombing raid as a possible war crime. Incredulous over the chemical assault, humanitarian groups demanded action from the United Nations Security Council, where partisan divides over who is to blame for the Syrian war have paralyzed its members almost since the conflict began in 2011. "The images and reports coming from Idlib today leave me shocked, saddened and outraged. These types of weapons are banned by international law because they represent an intolerable barbarism," Peter Salama, executive director of the UN agency's Health Emergencies Program, is cited as saying.

It is not only Syria in which civilians sustain large casualties but also Iraq. According to reports, dozens of people have been killed in a series of attacks in the northern Iraqi city of Tikrit. The overnight attacks on Wednesday came after several suspected ISIL fighters infiltrated Tikrit, around 170km north of the capital, Baghdad. The attackers, who reportedly wore police uniforms and used a police vehicle to enter the city, targeted a security checkpoint and the house of a police colonel, who was killed with four members of his family. There was no immediate claim of responsibility but ISIL fighters have carried out similar attacks in Tikrit in the past, in an apparent diversionary tactic as Iraqi forces push ahead with a US-backed offensive to dislodge the group from the remaining districts under its control in Mosul, further north. The ISIL group seized Tikrit during a lightning offensive that overran large areas north and west of Baghdad in the summer of 2014, but Iraqi forces recaptured it the following year.

The heavy casualties sustained by civilians in war-torn countries are highly outrageous. Despite scores of international instruments regarding human rights and dignity, the rights of people are violated in the worst possible way. The rule of war is turned a blind eye. Syria's war is likely to be the deadliest ones in the history of mankind which forced countless numbers of Syrians to take refuge to foreign countries.

The attack also seemed likely to dampen peace talks that have been overseen by the United Nations in Geneva and by Russia and Turkey in Astana, Kazakhstan. If the talks come to a standstill, the civilian casualties will mushroom to a great extent and Syrians will pay high sacrifices. After all, the firm foothold of the ISIL group will cause the war to linger and the group is believed to create barriers before peace talks since not being involved in the negotiation. Those who are involved in the war crime should be prosecuted. The international community will have to investigate such flagrant violations of humanitarian law and bring the criminals into justice. To protect human rights, dismantling terrorist networks, mainly the ISIL, is a crying need. Secondly, the talks between warring sides should be brokered as soon as possible. A Persian proverb says that when a fire starts it will burn both the damp and the dry. It means that war and violence will kill both soldiers and civilians indiscriminately. So, ceasing fire is a must for protecting human rights.



## Strategic View to Economic Policy-making and Mines

By Tawsily Gharjistani

In the realm of economy, mid-term and long-term growth and self-sufficiency need different outlook, definition and strategic policy-making. There is enough potential vis-à-vis economic development, however, superficial and short-term view and lack of specific strategy in the past caused economy, mainly the sources of national budget, to be dependent on foreign aids. Human and natural resources, which are considered as the mainstay of economic growth are as following:

1- Young and dynamic population:

Based on the current statistics, more than 63 % out of the 31 million population is formed by people under the age of 25 and above 15 million active work force are in the country.

2-Favorite water and soil:

The current statistics show that about 12 % of the total area is formed by arable land (about seven million and eight hundred thousand square kilometer). Currently, 18 % out of the mentioned measures is cultivated in traditional and non-mechanized way. On the other hand, more than 75 billion cubic meter water emerges in Afghanistan, about 20 billion cubic meter is underground water and the rest is the stream and sea water. Out of this total, around 45 billion cubic meter water flows from Afghanistan to the neighboring countries through Amo, Kabul, Kuner, Helmand and Heriroad Rivers.

3-Transportation and transitional ways:

With regard to the geo-politic and economy-politic geography - as Afghanistan is located at the trading crossroad with large population which connects Central Asia, Southern Asia, Northern Asia and far and middle East - transit and the movement of goods and passengers through Afghanistan's route is one of the factors for economic development. Connecting the regional areas and Asia continent to Europe through railroads, sea and air will be a top priority for Afghanistan and will provide economic prosperity better than ever before.

4-Types of mines:

Afghanistan's rich mines and sources are considered one of the salient potential for economic development. Based on statistics and assumption, the estimated value of Afghanistan's mines is more than three trillion dollar with 1400 types of minerals and mineral stones and viewed as significant economic sources.

Based on the aforementioned facts and significance regarding the economic boom and movement towards financial self-sufficiency, the Second Vice President, Muhammad Sarwar Danish, talking in the ceremony of introduction of the acting head and candidate for the ministry of Mines and Petroleum, stated about the necessity of "economic and strategic policy-making" and definition of "economic growth and self-sufficiency as most significant responsibility and priority" of the National Unity Government (NUG).

He said that economic growth and self-sufficiency will lead to the gradual independence upon the financial aids, which pave the grounds for foreign interference in the country and result in disunity and internal dispute. He outlined two definite mechanism for economic self-sufficiency:

1-"First, our state and nation especially our cadres and all those who have the position of leadership and administration need to go beyond the sectional and limited line of tribal and ethnic thoughts and policies and ponder over strengthening a single national identity and a big national and comprehensive thought with the aim of ensuring the big national interests so that we can utilize all our power and energy in immense national policy-making - apart from daily routines, internal self-mutilation and ethnic, linguistic and group conflicts."

2-"Secondly, reaching economic growth and human resources is a vi-

tal need. The experience of successful and developed countries of the world shows that first they trained expert, professional and technical cadres for reaching development.

Today, we should, first, invest on education and higher education mainly in the field of mines, engineering, medical, technology, economy, etc. so that we can have professional and successful policy-makers, managers and executive."

"Fundamental attention and strategic view to the country's mines" were deemed a principle by the vice president and believed that it is one of the main elements of the self-sufficiency and economic independence. Besides pointing out the problems and challenges about the extraction and protection of the country's mines, he deemed the duty and responsibility of the related officials, including the ministry of mines, highly significant and said, "It is highly disgraceful that today the armed opposition groups use the ammunition and equipment of our security forces for providing their war funding and for continuing war against the state and killing of innocent people and also equip themselves through plundering the public assets and natural resources, including mines.

Therefore, this is the first responsibility of the ministry of mine to shorten, with the help of other institutions, the hands of betrayers and Mafia and put our mines and other natural resources under their own and state's control and protection. If we are not able to exploit and utilize our mines, at least we will have to protect this national wealth from being plundered and looted by Mafia and the enemies and keep them safe for our next generations."

Besides outlining the challenges of the Ministry of Mines and pointing them out to the new leadership of this ministry, the Vice President noted a number of practical issues surrounding the decrease of challenges about mines which are summarized as:

(A) Finalizing reforms and adjusting the mineral law and hydro carbon mainly the mine law and oil and gas law the relevant regulations as a government's priority.

(B)Implementing a comprehensive programs about administrative reforms and revising the formation and duty of ministry of mines, combating administrative corruption and law aversion as the next priority of the National Unity Government.

(C)The use of economic and technical capacity of the private sector in investments, mining, counseling and consultation, planning, controlling and supervising over the country's mines beside the general duty of the government.

(D)Securing the mining sector as a fundamental principle. Besides stating the importance of providing security about the country's economic part, the Vice President deemed it critical about the mining as well and put it as, "No doubt, the issue of security is one of our public challenges which is more complicated in the field of economy. Because our enemies never want us to gain success in key and national projects such as mines, oil and gas, energy, big water dams, strategic transportation line macro investments and so on. In addition, the armed opposition groups seek to fund their war machine through ransom and looting. Therefore, the issue of mine security should not be viewed only from the angle of security but the national, political and economic aspects are far significant and that is why securing mines is one of the national responsibility of all Afghan people. All people in all provinces should help the state in this regard and protect the country's natural resources which are the part of people's assets. Our national and defense forces also should view this as a national and vital issue view it strategically."

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## Finishing Off Malaria

By Shamas-ur-Rehman Toor

Malaria has long been one of the major killer diseases of our age. World Health Organization data show that as much as half of the world's population is at risk. But roughly 90% of malaria cases and 92% of malaria deaths take place in just one region: Sub-Saharan Africa.

Europe and North America live completely free of malaria. But children in Sub-Saharan Africa often suffer through multiple bouts of the disease before they reach the age of five. And children below the age of five account for 70% of malaria-related deaths. Pregnant women who contract the disease can suffer serious health complications.

The good news is that the fight against malaria has lately gained momentum, with infections falling steadily in most places and malaria-related deaths down by 29% since 2010. Progress can be attributed partly to innovations, including new rapid diagnostic tests that work in just minutes, more accessible and affordable anti-malarial drugs, and rising use of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets (LLINs). Greater community engagement has also helped, with popular musicians, media organizations, and religious leaders advocating for stronger action against malaria.

Senegal is one of the countries leading the decline in cases. Nearly 86% of the population now uses LLINs, and most people have access to rapid diagnostic tests, as well as artemisinin-based combination therapy, which is provided for free by the government and donors. Community health workers, under the direction of an effective national program led by the country's health minister, Awa Marie Coll-Seck, have played a pivotal role in enabling progress. The results are impressive. In 2001, nearly 36% of outpatient visits in Senegal were malaria-related. According to the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP), that figure stood at just 3.3% last year. Over the same period, malaria-related deaths fell from nearly 30% to just above 2%. The US-based Centers for Disease Control reports that, from 2008 to 2010, the number of children under the age of five infected with malaria dropped by 50%.

Senegal is hoping to achieve pre-elimination (defined by the NMCP as fewer than five cases per 1,000 people annually) by 2020, with the WHO certifying malaria as fully eliminated from the country by 2030. But getting there will not be easy. Senegal will need more resources, a stronger government commitment, increased support from development partners, and greater community involvement. Against this background, the Lives and Livelihoods Fund (LLF) - a grant facility launched by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation - has joined Senegal's fight against malaria. The LLF combines \$500 million from donors

- including Saudi Arabia's King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, the Qatar Fund for Development, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, and the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD) - with \$2 billion of IsDB financing for health, agriculture, and rural infrastructure projects. Administered by the IsDB, the LLF is the biggest initiative of its kind based in the Middle East, aiming to increase the resources available for development across the 30 least-developed and lower-middle-income countries in the Muslim world.

One of the LLF's first projects will be a \$32 million malaria pre-elimination project in Senegal. The LLF's governance mechanism, the Impact Committee (of which I am an alternate member, representing ISFD), approved the year-one pipeline last September. The Senegalese government officially agreed to the project - a scaled-up version of the already-successful NMCP - in February. As a result, 25 districts in five regions of Senegal will be helped in achieving malaria pre-elimination, directly or indirectly benefiting nearly four million people (about 25% of Senegal's total population).

I recently traveled to Senegal to assess the project's progress. The other Impact Committee members and I met with Coll-Seck and other national leaders, who affirmed the project's importance. The most moving part of the trip was our visit to the Deggo health post, in the suburbs of Dakar, where health workers and community volunteers explained to us their ongoing efforts to fight the disease. We left that meeting confident that the project possesses both the right skills and the needed commitment to succeed. Investments in combating malaria, like those by the LLF, are among the most cost-effective health interventions, yielding broad socioeconomic benefits.

A healthy child is more likely to attend school, resulting in improved learning outcomes, just as a healthy adult can earn a steady income, resulting in reduced poverty and hunger. Healthy workers are more productive, boosting economic output. Malaria-free communities can divert their health budgets to fight other scourges, such as non-communicable or neglected tropical diseases. Progress in the fight against malaria will mean progress toward several Sustainable Development Goals (the United Nations targets to which world leaders agreed in 2015), from eliminating poverty to ending preventable deaths in children under age five. If we are to win the fight, more financing from funds like the LLF, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, is the way to do it. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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