

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



April 12, 2015

The Nuisance of Corruption

There are many issues related to growing corruption in Afghanistan and unfortunately these seem to be getting out of control. It has proved to be a quagmire, getting out of which seems very difficult for the country.

Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah also showed his concerns regarding corruption on Saturday, April 11 2015. In a meeting with John F. Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), he mentioned that the government was striving to devise a strategy to address corruption related issues. He said, "The unity government is committed to fight corruption and ensure transparency in the government. We want SIGAR to cooperate in our fight against corruption."

SIGAR is US government's leading authority on Afghanistan regarding reconstruction. It was created by Congress to provide independent and objective oversight of the funds related to Afghanistan Reconstruction. SIGAR, basically conducts audits, investigations and inspections in order to promote effectiveness of reconstruction programs and detect and prevent waste, fraud and abuse of taxpayer dollars.

US Public Law 110-181 requires SIGAR to submit a quarterly report to US Congress. This report contains SIGAR's audits and investigative activities. The report also includes an overview of reconstruction activities in Afghanistan and a detailed statement of all obligations, expenditures and revenues associated with reconstruction. SIGAR's last quarterly report was published on January 30, 2015. Sopko presented the report to CEO and briefed him about SIGAR recent activities in Afghanistan. He promised to work closely with Afghan officials for eradication of corruption and ensure better governance in the country. He sought the Afghan government view point on SIGAR report and it was ready to extend support for elimination of existing corruption in police and judicial departments.

It should be noted that billions of Dollars poured in the country for both military support and development projects. But if we analyze the socio-political and socio-economic scenario in the country the development does not seem as great as it should have been. Most of these aids were devoured by corruption instead of being spent for the intended purposes. Either the money that was to be spent through government or the NGO sector, both the ways corruption had the largest share.

In fact, corruption makes systems and institutions suffer and even collapse. Therefore, corruption should be handled appropriately if a society intends to develop and strengthen the foundations of a just system. Unfortunately our country Afghanistan has been a victim of this nuisance for a long period of time. And it is because of the same reason that Afghanistan has been limping while striving to stand on its feet regarding political and economic development. It is also unfortunate to note that the justice system that could have played a major role in nipping this evil in the bud did not offer as much as necessary and the situation has now gotten out of control. Another characteristic of corruption is that it makes an institution or individual incapable. Depending much on corruption, the institution or the individual gives up the hard work and realizes the easy ways of achieving the objectives.

Today, corruption has penetrated deep into our social behavior. It is now a part of routine life to be corrupt. From a very minor to the most major matter, we find corruption ruling the roost.

One of the major problems in tackling with corruption in our country is that the controlling mechanism itself is involved in it. The government that should be on the forefront to curb this menace, itself has been a major contributor in this regard. There have been many major occasions of corruption when current administration has been blamed for being directly involved in the matter. From the issue of election to the Kabul Bank episode, the government has not been able to extract itself out clean. On most of the occasions the government has blamed the Western supporters to be generating corruption in the country.

Western allies, on the other hand, have kept on insisting that Afghan authorities must carry out serious measures to curb the overgrowing corruption; however, the outcome is yet to be produced in this regard. The Western allies have spent billions of dollars in supporting the Afghan government; they have every right to make sure that the money which is intended to support the Afghan people must be used through a transparent manner. However, they have not been very much careful in this regard. And already much of the money has been misused by corruption. Nevertheless, in the process, the supporters of Afghanistan have lost their trust from the Afghan authorities and are mostly disappointed from what has been achieved after more than a decade of expenditure and hard work. One of the reasons that there is reluctance on the part of the international community to pursue the war in Afghanistan is, no doubt, corruption.

Corruption in Afghanistan is now a complex phenomenon that requires extensive efforts from both national and international authorities to be comprehended and resolved. Definitely, the anti-corruption institutions, equipped with authority and facilities can be major contributors in curbing it and Afghan government needs to establish them and nourish them appropriately. However, it is also important to note that the honest efforts on individual level can be helpful to eradicate corruption to a great extent. The realization, on individual level, that a person commits the biggest injustice and violates the right of fellow-being while being involved in corruption is the crying need of time.



Growing Insecurity Pleads Prior Attention

By Asmatyari

Man suffers, not only when the part of the world in which he is residing is hit by natural calamities like earthquakes, famines, floods, diseases, etc., but occasionally also at the hands of men driven mad by political, economic or social power. In both types of situations response from the rest of humanity is spontaneous. In the former case, it takes the form of efforts to bring relief to the stricken. But whenever man has been made to suffer at the hands of other men, the conscience of humanity has been outraged, and the cry has gone round for some sort of guarantees to afford protection to him against the tyranny of his fellow human beings, so that he can be assured of at least his rights to life, liberty and security.

Man undeniably is begotten to subsist and serve the interest of humanity; perhaps the underlining reason behind being entitled as a supreme creature. The selfless efforts of some individuals crystallized by the end of the day getting us closer to the warehouse substantiated with every necessity that could effectively be used bridging the physical distance between far stretched human beings. The countless endeavors of those individuals bore fruit and turned the world into global village where the agonies, miseries, pains of individuals could be unaffectedly felt by fellow individuals and likely would be done away with. Notwithstanding, the individuals driven by evil motives, fear of losing what they owned, lust of having numerous monetary gains put them in the black race of domination, subjugation leading to formation of a human society we witness at the moment, characterized by rule of mob, violence, aggression, innumerable bloodshed and ruthless killings of fellowmen. Unluckily our society at present is governed by some of identical dilemmas.

Formerly, a group of insurgent launched an attack on attorney's office in Mazar-i-Sharif, Khost and Ghazni provinces that claimed lives of dozens of people and wounding around seventy others. According to the local security officials the attack was launched by four insurgents who were all killed following clashes which lasted for almost seven hours. According to medical staff in the city, the dead and injured include police, prosecutors, court staff, women and children.

President Mohammad Ashraf Gahni has strongly condemned the terrorist attack saying enemies are not able to stand in front of security forces so they attack public gathering areas and kill civilians. The NATO-led Resolute Support (RS) mission too, strongly condemned attack on attorney general's office, whilst expressing its condolences to the families of those killed and wounded in today's attack.

Earlier, at least 16 civilians were killed in two separate incidents in Qarabagh district of Ghazni province as result of road side blast and Jalalabad city of Nangarhar province as a result of suicide blast of Afghanistan. The report released earlier confirms the great sum of lives claimed by year's long war on terror in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. The report titled Body Count: Casualty Figures after 10 Years of the 'War on Terror' was released by the Nobel Prize-winning International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, along with Physicians for Social Responsibility and Physicians for Global Survival. The study concluded that around 1.3 million people were killed,

both directly and indirectly, in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan as a result of US-led wars in the region in more than a decade.

The data gathered consisted were from individual studies and data published by United Nations organizations, government agencies and non-governmental organizations. It added that one million people were killed in Iraq, 220,000 in Afghanistan as a result of the war and 80,000 people in Pakistan. According to the report the figure "is approximately 10 times greater than that of which the public, experts and decision makers are aware of and propagated by the media and major NGOs. Following the 9/11 attacks this is the highest figure which is concerning for all of human rights organizations.

Many conflicts within a country is sparked by a failure to protect human rights, and the trauma that results from severe human rights violations often leads to new human rights violations. As conflict intensifies, hatred accumulates and makes restoration of peace more difficult. In order to stop this cycle of violence, states must institute policies aimed at human rights protection.

The values of freedom, respect for human rights and the principle of holding periodic and genuine elections by universal suffrage are essential elements of democracy. In turn, democracy provides the natural environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights. These values are embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further developed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which enshrine a host of political rights and civil liberties underpinning meaningful democracies.

Irrespective to the aforementioned declaration of human rights, Afghanistan shows a dismal picture of law and order accompanied with the rampant human right violation. Insecurity, crimes against humanity, increasing violence against women and children, lack of access to education, torture and killing of the innocent people either by Taliban, NATO forces or Afghan forces are just some of the human rights violations happening in our country.

When we sit to carve a way forth and talk of human fundamental rights to pursue happiness and liberty, we shouldn't forget the right to live a dignified life devoid of fear of assassination, suppression and mass murder, stands primary to all other rights. The true sense of happiness and liberty can only be realized provided one leads a life free of being terrorized and harassed. Consequently, putting an end to one's life is deemed one of the gravest human rights violations, which is a matter of routine in every war-torn country like Afghanistan.

These human rights violations are the matter of great concern for international community extending donation in various fields' human endeavors. The government must take prior measures in protecting and promoting human rights. It should be noted the rational laws devoid discriminating and individual on grounds of gender, sect, cast and ethnicity must be formulated and be put into operation alike. We have to make it dead certain; without having the law unequivocally applied the claims of human rights violation renders rhetoric.

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Human Rights at Low Ebb in Afghanistan

By Hujjatullah Zia

To view historically, the modern sense of human rights can be traced to Renaissance Europe and the Protestant Reformation, alongside the disappearance of the feudal authoritarianism and religious conservatism that dominated the middle Ages. One theory is that human rights were developed during the early Modern period. 17th-century English philosopher John Locke discussed natural rights in his work, identifying them as being "life, liberty, and estate", and argued that such fundamental rights could not be surrendered in the social contract.

History shows that mankind has fought to protect his rights and dignity. A myriad of people sacrificed their life to break the chains of slavery and to gain freedom. Rivers of blood streamed to maintain liberty and dignity. Violating man's natural and inalienable rights, has constantly outraged man's conscience and led to catastrophic wars. People preferred death to subjugation and humiliation. Ultimately, Human Rights' law was established to curb the life-threatening challenges and mortal battles and claimed to bring universal peace.

It is stated in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as, "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people, Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law...."

The historical violence and bloodshed, which wrecked deadly havoc on human societies, originated from violation of human rights, aggression and tyranny. In other words, when men found their rights and dignity at risk, they had "recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression". They felt compelled to raise their voice against the despotic regimes and cruel rulers at the cost of their life. They had to revitalize the spirit of humanity and moral norms in human societies through donating blood - it is far more honorable than having one's blood shed in vain under dictatorial regimes. UDHR states in article 1 as, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Human rights seem to be trampled upon to a large extent across our country. Afghans lose their lives in terrorist acts, women sustain honor killing, physical and mental tortures, vitriol, humiliation, etc. and chil-

dren are engaged in backbreaking chores in their early childhood being deprived of their rights to education.

Addressing a special gathering on Wednesday April 08, 2015 in Kabul entitled "future of human rights in Afghanistan" the Chief Executive Officer of the National Unity Government (NUG) Abdullah Abdullah said that he was not satisfied with the performance of the government over the past few months, adding that justice was also not being implemented in the judicial system. He believes that without respecting human rights and maintaining justice in its true spirit, it will be impossible to move the country toward longstanding peace and stability - an issue which was stressed constantly by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

The AIHRC chairperson Sima Samar said, "The National Unity Government must undertake inclusive and effective programs and initiatives to strengthen human rights, because the achievements gained are at risk." She cited the death of Farkhunda - a 27-year-old woman who was lynched by angry mob near the Shah-e Doh Shamshira shrine and mosque in Kabul - and the abduction of 31 Afghan travelers as violation of human rights.

Meanwhile, the UN special representative in Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysam, said on Wednesday that the National Unity Government must not undermine human rights during the peace negotiation process and that it must consider women's rights in the talks.

Haysam said, "We believe our support of Afghan human rights institutions, notably the AIHRC, is as important as any other human rights advocacy work UNAMA undertakes. The future of human rights protection rests ultimately with Afghans not with the international community."

The Afghanistan High Peace Council (HPC) has also given its assurance that it will not compromise on women's rights while conducting talks with the Taliban. "Women will be part of the process, they will be engaged in talks from the beginning and the women's role will not just be symbolic," HPC secretary Masoom Stanikizai said.

Afghanistan has committed to observe the UDHR, as it is said in the preamble of Afghanistan Constitution, "We the people of Afghanistan Observing the United Nations Charter as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...." Moreover, men and women are entitled to equal rights in the Constitution as it declares in article 22, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law."

Hope we enjoy a civil society, void of oppression and violation of rights, in near future and jettison discriminations on the basis of race, color, sex and belief.

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