

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



April 13, 2015

The Onset of Taliban Spring Offensive

Afghanistan has witnessed a spate of insurgent attacks in recent weeks as the Taliban are bracing for a fierce spring offensive. According to local officials in northeastern Badakhshan province, more than 20 Afghan soldiers and 27 Taliban fighters have been killed in Jurm district of the province during an intense fight between army units and the Taliban. Also, 12 army soldiers have gone missing during the battle. Elsewhere across the country, dozens of civilians and security have been killed in recent weeks in bombings and clashes as result of a sharp rise in Taliban's insurgency activities. The rise in Taliban attacks marks the beginning of the deadly fighting season which begins in spring each year.

It is expected that the Taliban launch a massive campaign of violence against Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), government installations, Afghan officials as well as civilians. This year's Taliban offensive is some sort of battling a last-ditch war for the group as the Taliban seem to be preparing for peace talks with the government of Afghanistan. By launching a widespread campaign, the militants aim to show that they have the upper hand in the fighting and still able to inflict heavy casualties. A bloody fight on the ground will give the Taliban leverage in any kind of future peace talks with the government of Afghanistan while a decline in Taliban insurgency is meant weakening the group in negotiations for reaching a peace deal.

All evidence, including the recent release of Mullah Omar's biography by the Taliban, is suggesting that the Taliban leadership is preparing for negotiations with the government of Afghanistan. Pakistan is now putting unprecedented pressures on the group to come to table of negotiations with the new Afghan government. Also, the recent publication of Mullah Omar biographic essay has been interpreted as consolidating power and influence by the Taliban leadership under Mullah Omar before any kind of peace talks. It is highly likely the Taliban would pursue a dual course of negotiations for any possible peace deal along with continuing a bloody fight against the ANSF.

The continuity of the Taliban 14 year insurgency has become further complicated as the Islamic State, or Daesh, is emerging as new player in the field. The Taliban who have already opposed the Islamic State will be fighting not only the Afghan government forces but also struggling to limit influence of the emerging Islamic State. This may bring the dominant Taliban to face militarily the Islamic State who does not have much influence in Afghanistan. This will create a chaotic situation in the Afghan government's fight against the militant groups as well as the jihadi activities of the two groups.

With the onset of the seasonal fighting, the Afghan civilians and the Afghan army and policy are going to shoulder the brunt of the war tolls. According to the UN mission in Afghanistan, nearly 3,700 civilians were killed and about 7,000 were wounded last year as fighting intensified ahead of the conclusion of the NATO combat mission in Afghanistan. The United Nations says that the Taliban and other affiliated groups are responsible for more than 70 percent of civilian tolls. With the Taliban determined to intensify the war as part of their spring offensive, this year will also be a bloody year for the Afghan civilians.

The onset of the Taliban spring offensive poses a very dire challenge to the ANSF as it is shouldering the burden of the war alone as the US-led coalition forces draw down. This year's fighting season will be a test of sustainability for the ANSF to keep the Taliban at bay and maintain security across the country as the NATO is going to conclude its 14-year Afghanistan mission. The army is already suffering a high rate of casualties and desertion. However, Afghan security agencies performed incredibly well in securing the last year's presidential election. If supported and equipped sufficiently, it will be able to forcefully fight the Taliban in the upcoming offensive of this year fighting season.

On the other hand, NATO resolute Support Spokesman said on Sunday April 12, 2015 that The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) now have the responsibility of providing security for 100 per cent of the country's population, which is a significant force capability improvement since 2012 when security members protected only half of the population.

The Afghan unity government needs to have dedicated plans for containing the ongoing Taliban offensive and possible increase of war efforts by the group. The recent announcement of delay in withdrawal of the remaining US troops from Afghanistan was a timely development that would help the Afghan army better fight the Taliban. The Afghan security agencies need robust support from the NATO Resolute Support mission as it is in dire need of better equipment and weaponry in the fight against the Taliban. The government of Afghanistan should provide all possible political support needed for a robust operation against the militant groups.



Release of 31 Abductees; A Test Case for Afghan Forces

By Asmatyari

A man uniformed black holding a sharp edge dagger and fire-arm positions behind a captive man who is interrogated in Dari language, is beheaded later", shown in the video formerly released by Daesh Afghanistan chapter. The deceased confirmed he was a serving soldier of Afghan National Army. The video released shows the terrorist cognizant to Dari language, warns if their demands are not met the rest of the abductees would meet their fate. This clearly depicts escalating graph of insecurity in the country. Some armed men stop passenger vehicles, identify certain people and take them to some unknown place without interruption of any sort.

Earlier, around 31 Hazara passengers were kidnapped after identity check by unknown masked men on Kabul-Kandahar highway. The incident took place in Shah Joy district of southern Zabol province where the armed men drove away 31 passengers to Khak. Since then there has not been any report about the fate and whereabouts of the poor abducted passengers.

Since the abduction, the Afghans in general and family members of victims in particular have been staging protests and rallies around the world, demanding the safe release of those abductees. On the other hand influential persons from all walk of lives; member of civil society and family members have already camped outside presidential palace to exercise their democratic right demanding safe rescue of their countrymen. Formerly, the Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah visited the protest camp of civil society members and families of 31 abducted passengers in Zarnigar Park of Kabul with, pledging the sit-in protesters to put all efforts for the release of hostages.

Since the abduction of these 31 Hazara men, the local community elders along with religious leaders from Jaghury and Rasnah areas have been making concerted efforts for the secure release of the captives through peaceful negotiation that rendered fruitless. Chairman of the Zabol Provincial Council, Attaullah, said that a number of tribal elders from his province had spoken with the parties responsible for the abduction of 31 travelers along the Kabul-Kandahar highway in February, and that the elders have presented the proposed terms of release to the central government in Kabul. According to Attaullah, the kidnapers have demanded the release of 12 prisoners currently detained by the Afghan government in exchange for the 31 hostages. The demand put forth by militants seems unacceptable to government. The Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah called this prisoners swap a wrong and flawed tradition.

Apparently, we owe security apparatus and concerned authorities to look after the entire affairs of the state, whilst facilitating the undertakings of ordinary masses. Nonetheless, the deepening indifference of ruling elite towards the concerns of anguished; murdered and kidnapped citizens worth applause who even dared not to condemn this coward incident by sharing the grievances of affected families. As days

passes the fear and apprehension of Hazara deepens who are left awaiting their beloved ones. Elsewhere, in the world every individual counts and are valued; in contrary to our state where dozens don't matter.

It is the responsibility of a government within a state to ensure peace and security of its citizens. However, the governments that suffer from administrative incapacities fail to guarantee security. And in such states the weaker strata of the society tend to suffer the most. Women, ethnic and religious minorities and the common people as a whole undergo anguish as a result. Afghanistan is also one of the countries where the government has not been able to provide enough security to its people and the common people face different sorts of problems every day.

Hazara constituting a large population of Afghanistan have observed peace and allegiance to the said laws of the land. Despite rendering great sacrifices to the motherland, facing countless bloodshed, never took arms to avenge their killers, instead resorted to peace and tranquility. The Abduction of Hazara passengers indicates the miseries yet unaddressed amidst government prevalent silence and indifference.

Hazaras are often the target of sectarian violence at the hands of extremists in Afghanistan. Hazaras were persecuted during the 1990s when the Taliban ruled most of Afghanistan, and so does it now. During the wars, thousands of Hazaras were killed in Bamyan, Mazar Sharif and Kabul by Taliban.

Moreover, they were discriminated worst due to their ethnicity. In similar fashion, Daesh also considers Shias as infidels and the cruelties and killings they have carried out against Shias and certain other sects in Iraq and Syria are not hidden from anyone.

Who is responsible for the incident must be sought out quickly and efforts should be hastened to secure the poor victims. The government officials and authorities claim that efforts are underway and certain teams of tribal elders have been assigned as negotiators who are in dialogue with the culprits and there are hopes that the victims will be released.

Seeking the support of the tribal elders is not a bad idea in this sort of incidents and if pursued with dedicated and sincere efforts there can be certain results. However, it is difficult to expect that the culprits would be ready to free the abducted passengers without having their inmates released. Therefore, government needs to follow cautious measures ensuring unharmed release of all abductees; else's the militants establishes putting forth their ill-demands works making the poor masses hostages at the gun barrel.

The authorities in Kabul must also ensure that they are fully in picture about every measure that is taken. The National Unity Government must itself pursue the developments in this regard as it is a matter of life and death of more than 31 people. Any negligence in this regard would mean a great and irrecoverable loss. Nonetheless, we can't undo the perception, the safe and secure release of 31 abductees is a test case for both foreign forces and Afghan National Army.

Asmatyari is the permanent writer of daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at asmatyari@gmail.com

Indirect Share in Crime and Genocide!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Many years before, when the brutality of militants was not as widespread, there were only Al-Qaeda and Taliban in the arena, and their worst shape in the form of ISIS had not yet emerged, I was sitting with a scholar of our neighborhood. Unlike a typical religious scholar, he was a person who enjoyed sitting with common people, had a mobile phone with latest features, was a strong supporter of modern education and encouraged his madrasa students to study English and it became the basis of our friendship as well. Those days were the days of suicide bombings and suicide bombers targeted people without any discrimination. No place was safe of their brutality; mosques, bazaars, wedding halls, sports grounds and all other places where neutral and innocent people assembled in large numbers. A latest suicide attack in a shopping mall had left dozens dead, hundreds injured, and there was an air of sorrow in the city. We were discussing the same sad incident and the scholar seemed sadder than anyone I had seen in those days. At once he said, 'I exactly don't remember if it was the saying of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) or one of the great saints but it said that a day would come when a person sitting in the east would be responsible for the death of a person who gets killed in the north. I thought about this saying for many days and searched in the books but could not find any satisfactory explanation but now I understand it. As these suicide attacks have started in the name of religion, in which large number of innocent and neutral people are killed, I am growing in confidence that it was said about people of this age.' Not understanding enough, I asked for some more explanation. The scholar said, 'These suicide attacks are carried out in the name of Islam but now everyone knows that there is no Jihad or Islam behind these and it is an international game played by international players on our soil and they use the name of Islam for promotion of their agendas. There are three kinds of people in our society in this regard. One who are directly involved in this. Their top leaders are given handsome money by some hidden hands and they absolutely know what they are doing. Then comes the turn of people who believe that a true jihad is in progress and they morally or financially support them. On the other hand, there are those who despise any violence and bloodshed on the name of Islam and they want to stop it but they are scared of becoming targets themselves and so they remain silent. However, in all these, the biggest and most disastrous share is of those who do not know the reality of this great game and they talk in favor of these. Just think about the suicide attacker of this recent attack. He was a teenager who had come from a village thousands of kilometers away. In his village, there are those who always talk in favor of jihad and suicide attacks but they never realize that their talks would persuade a person to fall victim to the group of terrorists and commit suicide. If they had realized that their persuasion would have killed dozens of innocent people, they could have never said anything but they keep talking. It is the reason why, they are also equally responsible for the death of people who are killed thousands of kilometers away from them.'

When he said this, I also started thinking about large number of people found in our surrounding who are in habit of talking about something

and they are not sure about the consequences of it. Thanks to the increasing access to internet, Facebook, Youtube and other sites where they can find a lot of false literature, photos and videos about these sensitive issues, they always have a lot to talk about. People in our society never think what might be the possible outcomes of their comments and put their indirect in the drastic and disastrous consequences that might stem from comments and thoughts expressed by them. Thanks to increasing awareness in major cities like Kabul where people are now getting bold to talk against anything stupid carried out in the name of Islam. The situation is the most painful for those religious scholars and educated people who see that the peaceful image of Islam has badly been shattered due to these suicide attacks. Islam, that was once associated with peace and tolerance has now become synonymous to violence, torture, and suicide attacks. It is the reason why, more and more people are now talking against acts of violence and religious scholars are also asserting that in true Islamic teachings, there is no room for torture, violence and suicide attacks and the people who do so are miles away from any kind of jihad and they are either the agents of their foreign masters or have become puppets in the hands of those who want to destroy the image of Islam by using its name. In the same way, common public is also getting confidence to talk against these things.

However, this is not the case in villages or far distant remote areas. There, people are still emotionally following those who take the name of Islam and suicide attacks are still considered as part of jihad. The reason is absolutely evident; they never had any opportunity to get access to neutral information and they believed in whatever was said to them. Even in big cities, there are present large numbers of scholars who still talk in favor of jihad or who are silent and afraid of talking against violence in the name of Islam. There is also present a small minority that seems much impressed from these scholars and they blindly follow whatever they hear from their favorite scholars. Their level of influence then makes them say the same things that they hear. Their illiteracy and limited access to religious teachings and literature make the work easy.

We are passing through hard times. The menace of terrorism is getting strong and many new organizations are getting birth. It started with Taliban, then Al-Qaeda, then Haqqani network and now the most disastrous, ISIS and of course, the new breeds of terrorism, Boko Haram and Al-Shabab in Nigeria and we are not sure as which shapes it would take in future.

It is a controversial issue as from where they are getting financial and strategic support and which countries are behind them. However, it is for sure that they are getting moral support from the masses of these countries. The menace will keep changing its name and shape but it will re-emerge from different parts of the world in different shapes and by different names until and unless we don't decide that after this, we will not support any organization that uses terror and violence in the name of Islam. There are so many ways of promoting Islam and changing the society but no scholar can claim that violence, terror and suicides have any room in true Islamic teachings.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com

Chairman / Editor in Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Phone: +93 799 005 019/799 408 271/777 005 019

E-mail: mail@outlookafghanistan.com, outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Address: V-137, Street 6, Phase 4, Shahrak Omeed Sabz, Kabul, Afghanistan

Sub Office: Shora Road, Street 10, District 6, Kartey 3, Kabul, Afghanistan

