

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



April 19, 2015

## Jalalabad Mass Massacre

Saturday April 18, 2015 turned to be another unfortunate day for poor Afghans that claimed lives of scores of people. The heinous suicide blast jolted Jalalabad city killings 40 precious lives and injuring over 100 others. According to reliable sources the blast was suicide that took place in front of a branch of Kabul bank in Mukhaberat square. It was the same branch that was stormed by suicide bombers in 2011 leaving at least 42 killed and dozens of others wounded. According to credible media sources the tragic incident took place when a suicide bomber detonated his suicide vest in a line of people queuing for salaries near the New Kabul Bank branch in Jalalabad city, at 08:00 AM. Subsequent to blast, Jalalabad Regional Hospital is put on alert to treat the victims. People have been rushing to the hospital to donate blood to the victims. Doctors have expressed concern over the health condition of dozens of people brought to them in wounded condition.

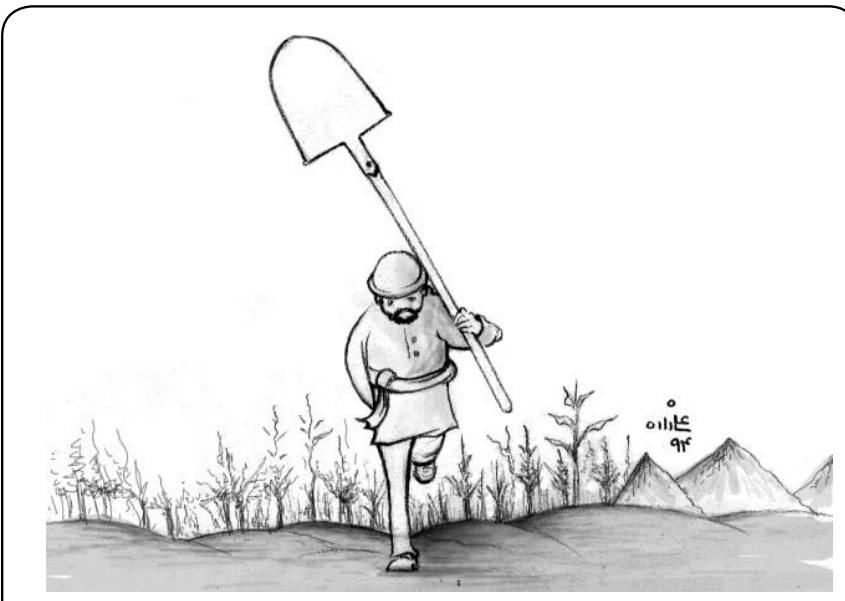
The President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, Interior Ministry, Defense Ministry, Parliament and NATO have condemned the attack in the strongest terms. President Ashraf Ghani condemned the attack and termed it as inhumane and un-Islamic whilst conveying the deepest condolences to the families of victims. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has condemned the suicide attack. "The continuing use of suicide attacks in densely populated areas, that are certain to kill and maim large numbers of Afghan civilians, may amount to a war crime," said Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA. "Those responsible for this horrendous crime must be held accountable," he said. On behalf of the United Nations in Afghanistan, the Special Representative expresses his condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery for the injured.

Following the attack the agencies were eager to hear who claims the responsibility of the incident. Nonetheless, Taliban rejected having launched the attack was a bit of great surprise, indicating both the trend proponents of militancy and terrorism changed with the course of time. Nonetheless, Shahidullah Shahid introducing himself as the spokesman for ISIS in the region has reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack in a text message to media. The claims depicts ISIS's irreversibly growing influence in Afghanistan if not constrained could force government surrender to their demands. Going through the strategy ISIS operates, it seems as if they have done already lot strengthening their footholds in some crucial areas of Afghanistan. Earlier, dozens of Hazara passengers were abducted on their way to Kabul some of whom are reportedly beheaded by militants of ISIS.

The successful terror plots undertaken by terrorists, strengthens the authenticity of several reports compiled by humanitarian organizations, showing a marked concern over declining security conditions. A 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. 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.

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. To constrain such evil programmed individuals the government must maintain law and order. The NUG is held responsible to make concrete measures to tighten security matters and rescue precious lives.



## A New Era of China-Afghanistan Relations

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

With China's explicit interest in helping Afghanistan's peace efforts, officials and analysts in Afghanistan are heralding a new era in relations between Kabul and Beijing. In February, visiting Chinese Foreign Minister told a press conference in Islamabad that Beijing is ready to facilitate the Afghan peace negotiations. This was the first time that a top Chinese official confirmed the country's intention to play an important role in ending the 14-year of the conflict in Afghanistan. With the government of Afghanistan attempting to start a new round of peace negotiations with the Taliban, it is widely believed that China is well positioned for Afghanistan in the process. The government of Afghanistan under former President Hamid Karzai made some efforts to expand relations between Afghanistan and the regional powers such as Russia and China. Both China and Russia are increasingly concerned with the future of Afghanistan and the possibility of a prolonged insurgency in the country after final conclusion of the US troop withdrawal. President Karzai made visits to China in recent years which underscored his government's efforts to boost relations with Beijing and promote regional support for Afghanistan. After a long absence from the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, China's signal of its will to play a more engaging role in the construction and the development sector as well as the country's post-NATO security is a promising development for the war-torn country.

President Ashraf Ghani's visit to China marked the beginning of the new era of relations between the two countries. During the visit, the president highlighted Chinese role and the country's unique position in supporting Afghanistan's peace negotiations to end the long-lasting insurgency in the country. The visit to China was aimed at Chinese help in convincing Pakistan to do more in helping Afghanistan to resume negotiations with the militant groups. The trip was part of regional diplomatic efforts by the new government in Afghanistan to kick-start the stalled peace talks which abruptly ended by President Karzai while he was in power.

China's future role is seen as highly important in the international efforts to stabilize the country and develop its fragile economy. China has invested extensively in development projects and mining sector and is expanding its presence in the Afghan market. The Chinese companies are considered as the leading investors in the crude Afghan mining and construction sectors. In addition to the economic ties, China also plays a remarkable role in promoting regional cooperation in supporting the Afghan government. Afghanistan and China upgraded their relations to "strategic level" during Hamid Karzai's presidency and Afghanistan was granted the status of observer country in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is led by China and Russia. With the US preparing to conclude its exit from Afghanistan, Chinese officials know very well that the post-2014 security situation in Afghanistan will have some inevitable impacts on China's security.

Closer relations between Afghanistan and China will attract more aid and investments from China which will greatly contribute to Afghanistan's economic development and extraction of the vast untapped underground resources.

China could also play a crucial in supporting Afghanistan in developing its armed forces. Given that China is a powerful member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), it can support development of Afghanistan Afghan security forces through the SCO.

Regional Security is a prime concern for China who is a major superpower and a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Beijing now appears to enhance its diplomatic engagement in the Afghan conflict. Summits participated by China, Afghanistan and Pakistan in recent years have signaled that Beijing is willing to increase its engagement in Afghanistan's security challenges. Since 2012, Chinese officials have made explicit efforts to convince the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan to work closely with each other on controlling the tribal and border areas between the two countries. It is believed that armed Uighur separatists of China, which demand independence of Chinese Muslim region of Xinjiang, a province bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan, are being trained at militants' training centers in North Waziristan. With the bulk of US and NATO forces withdrawn from Afghanistan, the operation of the Uighur separatists in the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan is a serious concern for Chinese authorities. After the US and NATO conclude their Afghan mission, the Afghan security forces may still remain engaged in a war with the Taliban. A prolonged war in Afghanistan will allow the 'Eastern Turkmenistan's Independence Movement' which is seen by Beijing as a terrorist group to seek shelter and find safe havens in Taliban-controlled areas on both sides of Afghan-Pakistani border. Chinese officials are also concerned that continued instability in Afghanistan will increase production of opium and drug trafficking into China through the volatile Xinjiang province of the country. Another concern for the Chinese officials is stability of Pakistan that is a closest ally to China. The prospect of a long-lasting war in Afghanistan and a possible Taliban resurgence could be seen as a potential threat to stability of Pakistan too. A prolonged turmoil in Afghanistan will unpredictably involve Pakistan, which is considered as a strategic backyard to China. However, instability in Afghanistan would trigger more proxy wars between India and Pakistan on the Afghanistan ground which leaves China in an extremely difficult position.

So far China and the United States have had a somehow shared approach over the Afghan conflict. Like the United States, China wants a stable Afghanistan as a regional economic partner and a crude market for Chinese products. On the other hand, China knows very well that Afghanistan's situation will have impacts on the central Asian States which are neighboring China and have direct impacts on Xinjiang. During the past decade and half, China has not had a significant place in providing aid assistance to Afghanistan, but it has been one of the leading investors in the country's nascent economy. With the US and NATO declining their presence in Afghanistan, China is moving in with its multi-billion dollar investments in the economy of Afghanistan which will, in turn, the efforts for making a long-lasting peace in Afghanistan.

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## Why Should We Help Afghanistan?

By Steven Kwon, Ph.D

Nutrition & Education International (NEI) started working in Afghanistan since 2003 and has committed another 10 years to the eradication of malnutrition in Afghanistan through establishing a self-sustainable soybean industry.

This long-term commitment by NEI raises a couple of questions, "Why Afghanistan? And, why commit another 10 years?" The answers to these questions can be revealed in the following figures: Out of 29 million inhabitants, more than a third of all Afghans live below the national poverty line, unable to meet their basic needs and dietary requirement. Poverty with its multiple aspects is the key factor infringing on food security and the fundamental rights of the Afghan people to have the "physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and culturally accepted food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (1996 World Food Summit). Recent NRVA results indicate that 7.6 million people or 30% of the population are food-insecure (i.e. consume less than 2,100 kilo calories per person per day) of which 27% or 2.1 million people consume less than 1,500 kilo calories per person per day and are considered severely food insecure. Five million Afghans, with over 20% comprising children under the age of five, consume inadequate amounts of both protein and calories.

Recent UNICEF and Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health data show that one in 5 children die before the age of five, One in 14 infants do not live to the age of one, One in 32 women do not survive childbirth and 54% of the population is chronically malnourished.

The primary cause of malnutrition is protein deficiency. We need to step up immediately. In order to save these lives in Afghanistan, we need to supply protein nutrients.

How we can supply protein?

In Afghanistan food availability is closely linked to wheat (and other cereal) production. Afghanistan is a cereal deficit country even in years of good harvests. Agricultural production, particularly cereal output, is highly dependent on and sensitive to weather conditions. Accounting for 70% of total cereal consumption, wheat is both the major crop and staple. Wheat flour contributes 57% to the total caloric content of the average bundle of food items of the relatively poor. Other important cereal crops are rice, maize and barley.

The evidence shows that lack of food diversity and dependency of Afghan people to the cereal crops is one of the reasons for food insecurity. To bring back the food security in Afghanistan it needs to import a significant amount of other food items such as poultry meat, eggs, dairy products, and other processed foods, of which commercial supplies are reaching mainly urban markets and at high prices.

Supplying the protein this way is costly and not sustainable. So, how can farmers gain access to protein in a sustainable way and at low cost? The answer is soybean cultivation.

Why Soy?

Because of soybeans, children suffering from acute malnutrition started gaining fat in their cheeks.

Malnutrition is a key factor that causes the high infant and maternal mortality rates in Afghanistan. Malnutrition is synonymous with protein deficiency. Soybeans are a rich source of protein containing nine essential amino acids. Soybeans are not only ideal for human nutrition but also cost effective as a farming product.

Since NEI first introduced soybeans to Afghanistan, we have made three key observations proving that malnutrition can be eradicated:

1. Soybeans can grow well in Afghanistan. Afghan climate and soil are ideal for soybeans to grow and flourish.

2. Afghans like the taste of soy. Soy and soy products can be integrated into their daily diet.

3. Afghans who consumed soy became healthier. Soy foods can be an essential component to the health of the Afghan people.

How NEI can help Afghan Farmer?

NEI is now working with Afghan farmers in twenty-one provinces where they are now growing soybeans. Over 10,000 Afghan farmers were trained in soybean cultivation in 21 provinces and 2,000MT soybeans were produced by the trained farmers.

We hope to eradicate the malnutrition in Afghanistan. Now, Afghan women are making soy naan by adding 10% soy flour to the traditional naan recipe. Soy naan doubles the protein absorption rate.

Our journey has been tremendous since we first introduced soybean in 2003. The people of Afghanistan are incredibly receptive to this crop. NEI currently plants soybeans in all 21 provinces. Together with these Afghan farmers, we have proven three facts:

- 1- Soybeans can grow in Afghanistan.
- 2- The Afghan people enjoy soybeans and will integrate soybeans into their normal diet.
- 3- Malnourished women and children are regaining health through the consumption of soy foods.

NEI will be with Afghan People

NEI has committed 10 more years to work with Afghan people and stand beside them. NEI's Vision in Afghanistan is to eradicate protein-energy malnutrition, especially among women and children.

NEI's mission is to establish a self-sustainable soybean industry in Afghanistan through developing a soybean full value chain, including seed multiplication, soybean cultivation, soybean processing, and soy market development.

The general objective of NEI's humanitarian distribution program in Afghanistan is to assist poor families suffering from protein-energy malnutrition. NEI distributes soy products to women and children, excluding infants and children under three (3) years of age, to supplement their diets with a complete protein source and help them prevent protein-energy malnutrition.

The objective of NEI in Afghanistan is to assist poor families suffering from protein-energy malnutrition through promoting self-sustainable soy value chain development.

NEI has committed another 10 years to Afghanistan to produce 300,000 metric tons of soybeans to provide an economical source of complete protein.

In addition, NEI aims to promote the health and nutrition status of the Afghan population through distributing soy products to women and children (excluding infants and children under three (3) years of age aimed at supplementing their diet with a complete protein source. NEI would like to contribute to preventing protein-energy malnutrition this way.

NEI set out to help a country that was unable to resolve the most basic human needs. NEI stepped forward to help women and children dying from malnutrition. During the first years, NEI's work was supported by generous donations from private citizens in the United States, Korea and Canada. As the soy industry development program was increasingly accepted by Afghan farmers, NEI reached out to other donor nations. First, the Japanese Government funded the program in 2008, and then NEI (in partnership with World Food Program) started receiving funds in 2012 by the Canadian Government, and currently, the Republic of Korea. Recognizing that malnutrition is linked with protein deficiency, NEI identified soybeans as the quickest solution to the most basic health concern for Afghanistan women and children. In 2004, soybean cultivation took place in a land that had never heard of the golden protein-filled bean. The government and the people of Afghanistan fully support NEI's mission to bring the winds of change.

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