

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



April 20, 2016

## Ruthless Kabul Attack

With the start of the spring season in Afghanistan insecurity seems to be on the rise. It is really unfortunate for the people of Afghanistan that they have to witness bloodshed and war in the season that should otherwise be for entertainment and enjoyment. They should smell the scent of blooming flowers and the dancing trees but what they actually smell is the blood of innocent people shed by insensitive terrorists that ill-fatedly include the blood of guiltless women and children as well.

The people of Kabul witnessed a terrifying attack by the terrorists yesterday that killed 28 people and injured around 327 people, including mostly civilians. The attack was a Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) that was followed by a protracted gun-battle between security forces and an unknown number of Taliban gunmen.

According to certain reports, the vehicle used in the bombing was a truck that was fully loaded with explosives that is why it resulted in a gigantic explosion that brought destruction to the houses in 1 kilometer diameter of the point of incident. Most of the people got injured because of the glass wounds that were shattered as a result of the explosion.

The attack was definitely one of the most tragic ones in the ongoing year and one of the largest in capital Kabul. It was definitely carried out without any consideration for the lives of the poor civilians and it clearly shows how insensitive Taliban are towards the lives of the people of Afghanistan. They, otherwise, claim that they do not target the impeccable civilians. It is also heart-breaking to even imagine the destruction that could be unleashed as a result of explosion by a truck-full explosives. This act of barbarism should be condemned as much as possible.

Different countries and international organizations in this regard have condemned the attack and have shown their condolences for the victims. President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah also showed severest condemnation. UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan said in a statement, "This attack shows the devastation caused by the use of explosive devices in urban areas and once more demonstrates complete disregard for the lives of Afghan civilians... The use of high explosives in civilian populated areas, in circumstances almost certain to cause immense suffering to civilians, may amount to war crimes." However, it is important that more should be done in addition to these condemnations. There are some very serious questions that should be answered and there should be strict process of accountability; otherwise, this matter will also die within few days as mostly happens after such attacks. Some people show their sympathies and then the incidents are forgotten altogether. No questions are asked and if they are asked they are not answered properly and no process of accountability is pursued.

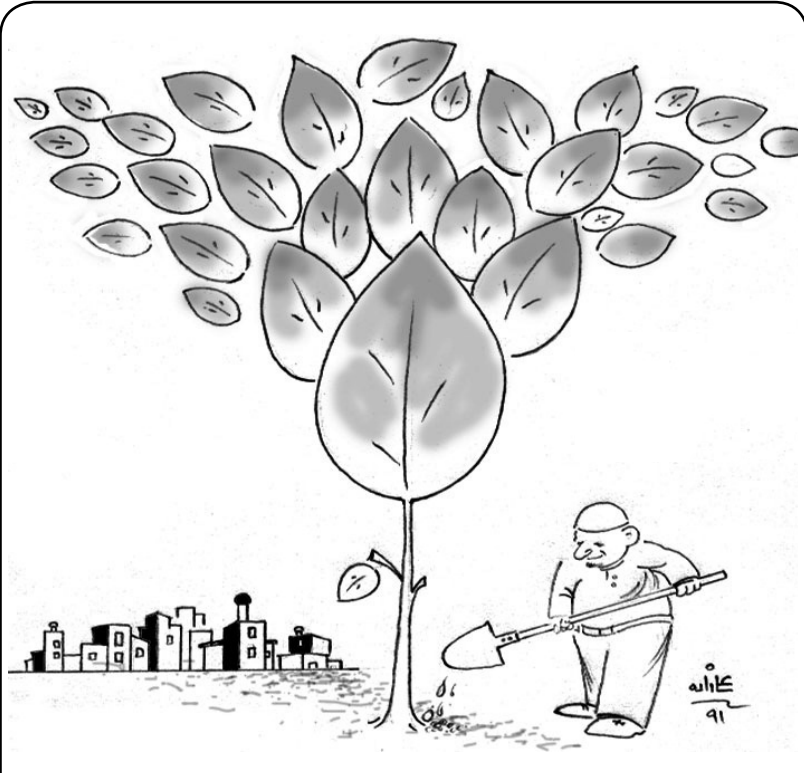
If it is confirmed that the vehicle used in the attack was a truck that was filled with explosives, how could it get into the city without the notice of the security forces. Even if it was not a truck, it was a vehicle filled with explosives and the amount of damage that it has incurred clearly shows how much explosive material it contained. Why could not any one notice it? There may not be any conspiracy theory involved but it clearly shows negligence of duty.

It is evident that the enemies of the country will not gift it with flowers. They are ready for war and they have openly announced it as well. It is, therefore, essential that security authorities must be ready to deal with the situation and carry out measures to control it. Definitely, it is really difficult to control such attacks after they start, but it is possible to stop them before they occur. Thus, it is essential that the security forces, under the guidance of the government must take precautionary measures and stop such incidents from happening. Government can keep on pursuing peace as its long-term policy, but at present there are urgent measures required to defend the country against the ongoing clashes.

Before, Taliban can be brought to the negotiation table, they should be responded in their own language. If they are ready to fight, government must show them that Afghan security forces have all the capabilities to fight with them and defend the country against their evil intentions. Weakness at this point would mean a submission to the barbarous policies of the enemies.

It would also mean that the Afghan government is not capable of providing security to its people.

Taliban have, on various occasions, shown that they are not interested in peace and they have kept on massacring the poor people. Therefore, it is essential to make them believe that they have no other choice but to come to the table and they have no right to take the lives of innocent people of Afghanistan.



# Kabul Bombing: Taliban Indifferent to Civilian Lives

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The deadly bombing that rocked Kabul city on Tuesday epitomized Taliban's spring offensive, codenamed for this year as Omari operation: soft targets such government buildings in populated areas are among key targets of the Taliban. Tuesday bombing in Kabul was the most brazen attack by the militants organized only a few days after the militant group announced start of its spring fighting. The Taliban had warned of large scale attacks targeting security forces, government institutions as well as taking territories from government forces. Perhaps the Tuesday bombing was the first of such attacks that targeted a heavily populated area and had incredibly high tolls from the civilians. The Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Like in the recent years, the Taliban seem to be focusing on organizing high-profile and spectacular attacks on public, government and military institutions. The Tuesday Kabul bombing draws similar pattern with previous large-scale militant attacks on security installations, government offices and public institutions. In such attacks, the militants organize assaults on key targets using bombing or suicide attackers who breach defenses and open the way for other assailants. These attacks have been highly devastating and deadly and have been used more frequently by the militants. Organizing such attacks seems to be particularly aimed at raging higher level of havoc and destruction as well as inflicting higher number of casualties.

Targeting vulnerable areas like government offices in populated areas indicate the Taliban's indifference to lives of the innocent civilians. Deliberately targeting areas that are populated by civilians and organizing attacks that harms the lives of the innocents is gross violation of basic Islamic and humanitarian principles. By organizing such attacks, the Taliban shun the very sacred principles and teachings of Islam and those of humanity. Despite the militants' claims of being concerned for safety of civilians, the Taliban has always refused to respect international war laws and regulations and avoid endangering the civilian population. A recent report released by the UN attributed the largest part of civilian casualties to the Taliban and the rest of the militant groups.

The Taliban's attacks on civilian areas and the high rate of casualties is devastatingly harmful for the public confidence to the overall situation in the country and the capability of the government and the Afghan national security forces for maintaining security and order in the country. These attacks and their aftermaths are more harmful than any other means of warfare and violence employed by the militant groups. Large-scale assaults on urban and populated areas potentially undermine government efforts to restore public confidence to the ongoing efforts for stabilizing the country and the prospect for future. Many Afghans remain deeply pessimistic to the current situation and the prospect of the country's future stability.

The Taliban are well aware of the potential harms that the group's large-scale attacks on civilian-populated areas inflict to the public confidence general views of the overall situation. It is part of the Taliban's strategy to target not only physical targets such as government institutions and security forces but also the morale of the Afghans and public confidence to the state and the Afghan security agencies. For countering Taliban's campaign of attrition of public confidence, the government must do more to boost governance and the economy and fix flaws that exist in the structure of the country's political system. Economic and political development progresses will help the government to win hearts and minds of the people and minimize the impacts of the Taliban's campaign of violence and destruction.

However, the day-to-day violence which affects lives of the innocent civilians and Taliban's deliberately targeting civilian populated areas is leading to further public alienation to the Taliban and their hardline ideology. This is a fact which the Taliban seem to be ignoring. The militant group also may have the false delusions that they will eventually win hearts and minds of the public after they make victories and gain power. However, the shocking high level of civilian casualties and Taliban's deliberate attacks on civilian-populated areas has profound and long-term consequences for the Taliban too. As result of Taliban atrocities, the mainstream harbor deep resentments to the militants and their harsh ideology. During last fifteen years, Afghanistan's social order has undergone profound transformations. The Taliban's indifferent assaults on civilian areas further build on the public resentments to the militant groups.

There is need for promotion of some sort of national awakening against the militant groups. There must be initiatives to help the public to condemn the atrocities that the militant groups commit on daily basis. All social classes have their own specific responsibilities to speak out against atrocities and war crimes no matter committed by the Taliban or any other side of the conflict. Civil organizations, human rights groups and clerical bodies such as the Ulema council and its members serving for the mosques' prayers all have to do their share of responsibility to condemn war atrocities to the civilians. On the other hand, the government must call on the civil organizations and other central and local non-government bodies to organize and start ceremonial programs and demonstrate against the indifference of the militant groups to the lives of civilians.

The international community and world bodies like the United Nations must act and condemn the Tuesday deadly bombing in Kabul as a war crime. The UN should send a clear and unanimous message to the Taliban over their strategy of violence and destruction and their indifference to safety of civilian population.

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## Terrorism Remains a Serious Issue

By Hujjatullah Zia

The despicable attack on the VIP protection unit in Kabul on Tuesday April 19, 2016, which led to the death of 28 and 327 injured, has shocked Kabul. It was a terrible tragedy both for the Afghanistan and international community.

UK, US, Pakistan, UN and NATO's Resolute Support strongly condemned deadly terrorist assault. "Afghanistan deserves peace and security, not attacks that victimize parents taking their children to school, workers on their morning commute, and people who have stepped forward to help defend their fellow citizens," the US embassy in Kabul stated in a press statement.

Right after the attack, Taliban's spokesman claimed the responsibility with arrogance. While Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah asked political leaders to wage a joint campaign against insurgents who carried out a coordinated attack in Kabul to avenge their defeat in the newly-launched spring offensive codenamed "Omari."

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, during a meeting in Presidential Palace to discuss security and Afghan peace process, has said the Afghan government will never make peace with the regional and international terrorists adding that said Afghanistan has proved sincerity to the world and the world strongly stands with Afghanistan today.

At present, the Taliban have multiplied their acts of terror by inflicting heavy casualties on Afghan people. It is obvious that the Taliban are victimizing Afghans more than before.

The attack in Kabul was followed after a series of attacks organized by the militant groups in other cities which came after a lull and ease of insurgent attacks in Kabul. It once again highlighted the worrisome prospect of overall security situation.

In recent months and weeks, the militant groups have organized assaults on security personnel and government and military installations. More notable has been the group's resurgence in rural and far remote areas of insecure provinces in the south and north of the country. Taliban's intensified campaign of violence needs to be dealt efficiently by security agencies, as the militants will further intensify their attacks. The rising insecurity shows that Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) still need long way ahead to completely secure Afghanistan on its own.

Ill-fatedly as we all are, struggle to extinguish the sparkles of moral values, to be blind to the core of religious teachings. In spite of religion, we perform illegal activities under the aegis of religion. We have closed the door to deliverance and truths, and live

in the darkness of our own world, which is empty of knowledge. It is ridiculous to impose our own ideas on religion rather than changing our life according to religious guidelines.

Further, as far as our radicals are concerned, the time for changes in their lives is over. Religious extremists are stuck in a time warp, inflicting violence upon innocent people. Neither modernity nor democracy can change their traditional frames of mind. By now, they have become addicted to violence and bloodshed. Their thirst will be quenched only by shedding the blood of innocent people. Cruelty runs in their blood and they find solace in the soulful sobs and cries of the victims' families. This is their totally inhuman face.

While Holy Qur'an says, "The taking of one innocent life is like taking all of Mankind... and the saving of one life is like saving all of Mankind."

They justify their inhuman acts under the guise and support of religion. Moreover, it is surprising how they rationalize and find excuses about sexual abuse of students at their madrassas. They have been found guilty of planting explosives inside copies of Holy Qur'an. Despite all such irreligious practices, they are convinced that they deserve going to heaven.

Taliban militants make no bones about their despicable acts of terror. They will find a mention in history as the religious villain of the century. Current events show that they are empty of moral and religious virtue.

Taliban have kept their lethal attacks continue and they do not seem in the mood to pursue any sort of negotiations. The efforts made by government for the reconciliation does not seem to be getting roots and even the soft instance of the government has failed to gravitate Taliban towards the peace talks and they have continued terrorism.

Within the last decade or so, people gained nothing. They acquired a hatred for the government; governance exhausted their patience. These challenges have not changed. Which of these have been addressed during the 15 years: poverty, insecurity, narcotic cultivation, official corruption or the issue of terrorism? So, what is the net result of the so called democracy within more than a decade?

Thus, it would be so kind of our officials to take serious actions in order to control the situation. Scapegoating cannot solve the problem rather will double it. Hence, officials should understand Taliban are not a kind of group that may lay down arms. The only way to bring them on the negotiation table is making them believe that armed struggle will never lead them to success.

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