

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



April 25, 2016

## NUG Needs to Take Difficult Decisions

President Ashraf Ghani is set to deliver a key speech to a joint session of the two houses of the parliament, the Meshrano Jirga and the Wolesi Jirga over government's plan on dealing with the Taliban insurgency and other issues of national importance. The president asked the extraordinary parliamentary meeting to be held after the Taliban's bloody attack in Kabul last week which left more than 80 people dead and 347 other injured. According to government officials, in the extraordinary session of the parliament, the focus will be on discussing security and relations with Pakistan. The government hopes that the extraordinary parliamentary session will help to garner support and create consensus for establishing a long-term anti-insurgency and security strategy.

At this difficult time when the Afghan government is trying to enhance the campaign against the insurgent groups, holding the extraordinary session of the parliament is coming as a right decision at a right time for rallying the lawmakers and the rest of the country's political class behind the government's anti-insurgency efforts. With the Taliban insurgency taking new momentum, Afghanistan is being tested if it can survive through one of the most difficult periods of its history. The government needs to go beyond ceremonial political arrangements and focus establishing a genuine plan aimed at containing the insurgency and maintaining security. What the government needs at this difficult juncture is to shape a national strategy for maintaining security and fighting the Taliban through making a broad consensus among the government, the MPs and other rest of the political spectrum in the country.

The government must heed the calls from the MPs and other politicians over the administration of the security agencies and should act immediately to end the stalemate for filling the vacant security posts. The President is expected to touch matters of security, peace efforts and relations with Pakistan in his Monday speech at the joint session of the parliament. The MPs want to hear from the President about his plans. But the lawmakers are demanding immediate actions from the national unity government for introducing nominees for security posts and filling the crucial posts. However, the government may again fail to make clear commitments to the parliament over the issue of the caretaker security officials.

President Ghani is expected to announce his plans for strengthening Afghan National Security Forces and enhancing the anti-insurgency campaign against the militant groups. The national unity government rightfully recognizes the fact that Afghanistan needs to build robust security partnerships with the US, other NATO member countries, and some regional supporters of Afghanistan. The Afghan government has managed to improve security cooperation with a number of Western and regional allies. However, the current level of international support to Afghanistan's security and defense forces is not sufficient and cannot ensure sustainability and success of the Afghan National Security Forces in the fight against the Taliban. The government needs to establish broader and more robust partnership with the United States and other NATO members. Afghanistan needs to seek regional integration and include Iran, Russia and India along with Pakistan in the collective efforts to help resolve the conflict in Afghanistan.

The Afghan government needs to pursue the required political arrangements to ensure that the Afghan National Security Forces will have uninterrupted and unhindered support of the international community in the coming years and maybe decades of fighting against the Taliban insurgency. Afghanistan and its international partners should ensure resiliency and sustainability of the Afghan security and defense forces by a comprehensive long-term plan. For this, government needs to do more to persuade the international allies to change approach and reconsider the current trend of disengagement from the Afghan conflict and expand security cooperation and boost support to the Afghan National Security Forces. This will ensure that the ANSF will have the crucial funding, weaponry and technical supports of the international community in the fight against the militant groups.

The government of Afghanistan needs to consider the anti-insurgency campaign a long-term and time-consuming effort that can only be won over time and not in a limited period of time. It must change approach on the anti-insurgency efforts and redefine Afghanistan's national strategy for winning the war. Given that the insurgency is being raging for last fifteen years and there is no solution in sight to end the conflict, the Taliban are effectively fighting a war of erosion. The government should plan to gradually weaken the Taliban.

The Afghan government will, nevertheless, need to continue its engagement with Western and regional powers including Pakistan for talking a peace settlement with the Taliban. However, the government needs to avoid pinning hopes on success of the peace efforts and see it as a less potential chance for ending the conflict. Instead, the government must focus on militarily winning the war a long-term erosive campaign against the Taliban and other militant groups.



# Ending the Prevalent Culture of Impunity

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

In a letter to President Ashraf Ghani, the New York-based rights advocacy group Human Rights Watch has urged the Afghan government to take measures to end the dominant culture of impunity in the country. The top international rights group has said in the letter that impunity is a prevalent culture in Afghanistan, and has existed since long ago. Human Rights Watch has argued that impunity for those in Afghanistan who commit crimes is a violation of human rights, adding that perpetrators of violence and crimes are rarely prosecuted and justice are not provided for the victims. Human Rights Watch added that Afghanistan must put an end to the culture of impunity and pave the way for operation of the International Criminal Court in the country.

The call from the top international rights organization comes at a time when cases of violation of human rights remain rife in Afghanistan with many anti- and pro-government armed groups operating across the country. This is in fact a wake-up call on the Afghan government to do more to impose law and order and prevent irresponsible groups and individuals commit crimes while enjoying immunity for persecution. The Afghan government joined the ICC in October 2003, but so far no action taken to carry out its obligations as a member of the court. Human Rights Watch has added that membership of the Afghan government to the ICC was a hope to promote law and order and rule of law would replace chaos and lawlessness. Promoting rule of law is a major test for efficiency and even sustainability of the government of Afghanistan. And rule of law would be incomplete if the government fails to end the prevalent culture of impunity and bring the criminals and perpetrators of violations of human rights to justice. Implementing justice and ending culture of impunity from persecution has undoubtedly gone into a marginal task in Afghanistan as the government's priority is dealing with the deteriorating security and the resurgence of the militant groups along with the country's economic and political challenges. Despite the rhetoric of the Afghan officials over rule of law and order, there has been little done by the government to help promotion of justice and rule of law in the country.

NUG is far from being able to bring the perpetrators of violence and human rights crimes - most notably the so-called powerful - to justice and restore rights of the victims. Violence occurs on daily basis in the country not only by anti-government groups but the very people who are supposed to make or enforce laws and implement those laws. Powerful warlords and militiamen are not the only ones who commit day-to-day violence against ordinary citizens and others but also government officials and lawmakers refuse to abide by laws and commit violent crimes with immunity. This has rendered Afghanistan as a society where lawlessness, chaos, violence threats are rife and those who means of power and authority continue to commit crimes.

The key factors behind the failure of the Afghan government to promote rule of law and end the culture of impunity are widespread corruption, misuse of authority by government officials, government's reliance on the influential groups and figures who have a role in past wars, presence of groups and individuals within the government who had or still have armed wings or armed loyalists. However, the biggest factor is the weak governance and the state's lack of control across the country to impose law and order and bring the perpetrators to justice. The Taliban insurgency will continue to remain the most single important factor failing the Afghan government to impose law and order, strengthen law enforcement agencies, implement justice and end culture of immunity for the influential people who have means of power and authority in the state.

The government's reliance on the influential mujahedin groups who had their roles in the past wars and have considerable influence over the government now undermined the efforts to promote rule of law and end the culture of lawlessness in the country. Struggling to establish and extend his control, former president Hamid Karzai remained heavily reliant on former mujahedin and the so-called jihadi leaders. From the very beginning, he founded the basis for some sort of power-sharing with the jihadi leaders by appointing influential members of the former jihadi groups to key ministerial posts in the government. This prevented Karzai from decreasing the influence and power of the mujahedin in the government despite his preference to run the administration with the help of Western-backed technocrats.

Many of the jihadi parties and jihadi figures still have considerable influence in local administrations and in the government in Kabul. Many of them even have maintained their armed wings or circles of loyalists who are ready to fight for them. This has failed the government to extend the government's authority and power across the country and impose rule of law against those who refuse to abide by law and continue to use their militias. The government must act to curb the power of those influential figures and end to the state of operation of states within the state.

It is important to end the parallel authorities that are long being tolerated namely influence of warlords and politicians who have had important roles in the past wars. The government should deprive them from their power bases by considering just shares of political power for the ethnic groups in the country.

On the other hand, corruption would remain a major challenge to the government's efforts to promote governance and extend control over all aspects of administering the country. In addition, empowerment of law enforcement agencies such as the courts and police force would be the key for Afghanistan's efforts to promote rule of law. The Afghan government needs to pursue bold plans on bringing reforms to police force and the country's judicial system.

Abdul Ahad Bahrami is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at [ahad.bahrami@gmail.com](mailto:ahad.bahrami@gmail.com)

## The Fourth Jihadist Wave

By Carl Bildt

Muscular language has become increasingly prevalent in the debate about how to counter the threat of jihadist terrorism. Television talk-show hosts speculate about when control of Raqqa in Syria or Mosul in Iraq might be wrested from the Islamic State (ISIS), implying that these cities' liberation will mark, at the very least, the beginning of the end of the problem. And in December, Ted Cruz, a Republican contender in the US presidential race, went so far as to raise the specter of nuclear strikes: "I don't know if sand can glow in the dark, but we're going to find out," he said. Such simplistic sound bites understate the severity of the challenge. As the International Crisis Group highlights in a recent report, the jihadist threat we are facing is the fourth in a series of increasingly perilous waves. If we are to avoid creating an even more powerful fifth wave, it is imperative that we learn from the mistakes we made in seeking to counter the previous three.

The first jihadist wave occurred when volunteer fighters from the war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan returned home and started attacking regimes they considered un-Islamic. This led to the second, far more deadly jihadist wave, as Al Qaeda launched spectacular attacks against the "far enemy," seeking to draw Western powers into violent confrontation and outright war. The attacks on the United States, on September 11, 2001, marked the crest of this wave. The global counterterrorist offensive that followed largely succeeded in eliminating Al Qaeda's ability to launch large-scale attacks. But the 2003 invasion of Iraq created the conditions for the third wave, triggering a vicious sectarian war between Sunni and Shia that allowed Al Qaeda to exploit the chaos of an increasingly fragmented state.

Eventually, the so-called Sunni Awakening broke the back of Al Qaeda's efforts in Iraq, and the 2011 Arab Spring redirected the region's political development. But the failure to build an inclusive government in Iraq, together with the violent repression of protesters in Syria, offered battle-hardened jihadist leaders an opening to initiate the fourth wave.

This wave is by far the most dangerous. Tens of thousands of recruits have joined the effort to build a caliphate in the Fertile Crescent. Meanwhile, ISIS has expanded into numerous other crisis zones and recruited or inspired terrorists within Western societies, as demonstrated by the attacks in Paris, Brussels, and San Bernardino.

Countering this threat will require a vigorous ideological battle against the forces of intolerance and hatred, building

on Islam's history of openness and tolerance. But ideological struggle, on its own, will not be enough.

We must also recognize the true origins of the jihadist threat: the conflicts and state failures ranging from West Africa across the wider Middle East to South Asia. It was not jihadism that created today's crises. On the contrary, bad governance and state failure provided jihadism with the opportunity to flourish.

Addressing these root causes will be a daunting, decades-long task. Much of the region entered the twenty-first century in a deplorable state; and in most places, things have only gotten worse. Trying to meet the jihadist challenge with repression, as Egypt is doing today, risks exacerbating the problem. And incarcerating Islamists often means providing them with an ideal environment for recruitment, indoctrination, and training. Instead, openings must be created for democratic Islamic political forces to operate.

Despite the scale of the challenge, the West lacks a clear policy on what to press for and how to obtain it. Clearly, military force must be used. But retaking Raqqa or Mosul is only the easiest of the tasks facing us. How many times have Western forces retaken Afghanistan's Helmand province or Anbar province in Iraq, and with what result?

Far more difficult - and far more important - will be ensuring that legitimate structures of inclusive governance are set up in the places from which ISIS is driven out. These must address feelings of persecution among Sunni Arabs as well as the victimization of large segments of the population that has fostered rage across the region.

Without such a strategy in place, retaking Raqqa and Mosul will merely be a prelude to an even more violent fifth wave of jihadism, which its committed and experienced practitioners will seek to portray as the final epic battle with "crusaders" in the West. It is no coincidence that ISIS has named its slick propaganda magazine Dabiq, for the name of the place where this Islamic version of Armageddon is prophesied to take place.

We must not hand our enemies what they want on a silver platter. We must instead wage an ideological battle against them, treat them as the terrorists that they are, and address the conditions that allow them to flourish. The jihadists are seeking escalation in order to drive us into total confrontation. If we have learned anything since 2001, it is that we must not fall into their trap. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Carl Bildt was Sweden's foreign minister from 2006 to October 2014 and Prime Minister from 1991 to 1994, when he negotiated Sweden's EU accession.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa  
Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari  
Email: [outlookafghanistan@gmail.com](mailto:outlookafghanistan@gmail.com)  
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019  
[www.outlookafghanistan.net](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net)



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.