

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

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## Why Taliban Kill Everyone Arbitrarily

Ideology is used as a justification means for the terrorists to justify their cruel acts. As a result one may conclude that, terrorism is political violence as a tool to ensure the interests of a group, organization country or alliance. Based on this, the terrorists kill different group of people by the means of ideology to ensure the political interests of a specific group. Thus, the motive behind killing and wounding tens of Islamic scholars by the Terrorist group of the Taliban was due to the pressures of the United States on our neighboring country due to lack of taking enough measures to destroy the safe heavens on the Taliban in its territory. As the Terrorist group of Taliban is a religious-political tool in the hands of certain countries, it only acts according to the orders it receives from its bosses and kill the people indiscriminately to ensure the interests of its founders. Hundreds of civilians have been killed and injured in due to Taliban attacks during the last days and yesterday 14 people were killed and 145 people were wounded by an attack Taliban carried on a police station in the west of Kabul as they were getting ready to celebrate Eid al Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice). Thus, it is not the first time the terrorists groups attack the civilians and kill them. However, killing the religious scholars on the Birthday of the Holy Prophet of Islam is one of the incidents that shocked different groups of the Afghan society. The angry reactions of the different groups of the society even made the Taliban spokesperson to deny the groups statement indicating that the Taliban members conducted the suicide bombing. This incident and the alike has made social scholars to pose the question what drives a person to engage in abhorrent and extreme violence, apparently in the service of some ideology? In an effort to understand the choice to participate in political violence, we often speak of radicalization. At its most basic, radicalization is a process best summed up as what goes on before the bomb goes off. Radicalization is a process that (sometimes) culminates in an individual's participation in terrorism and is often associated with an extreme ideology.

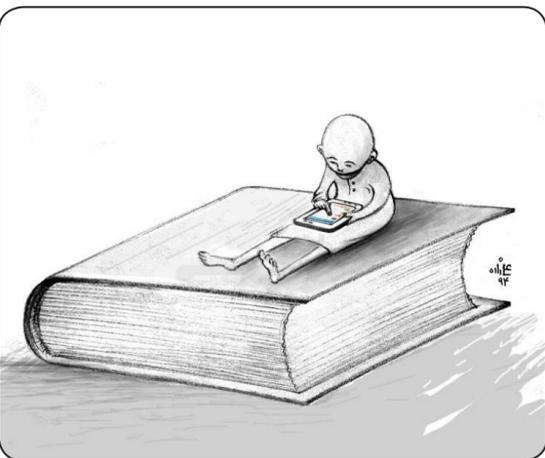
Notably, despite this association, having extreme ideas is not a necessary precursor for involvement in political violence. Social scholars argue that one's motivation for involvement is complex, multi layered and oftentimes unknowable. While the notion of motivation itself is a relatively straightforward one - motivation refers to the drive or desire to behave a certain way - identifying an individual's motivation or more accurately motivations for any behavior is unfortunately often an exercise in speculation. We can only know why people do what they do if they tell us. Understanding why people behave in a certain way is based on an individual's ability to participate in introspection - the process of reflecting on and interpreting one's own mental and emotional processes. Apart from introspection, understanding the drivers for our behavior is also reliant on social factors such as the perceived acceptability of our behavior, as well as how the passage of time impacts on our own reflections on that behavior.

Apart from all the complexity around understanding and interpreting motivation, when considering why people engage in terrorism and political violence, we need to reflect on how the reasons an individual joins a violent organization are very different from why an individual stays involved in a terrorist organization.

Anyway, remaining involved with a terrorist group often has little to do with those motivating factors that encouraged their initial participation. The power of the group becomes salient for an individual as they build relationships with other members and increase their commitment to the group itself. It is often the case that remaining involved with a terrorist group is linked to the interpersonal dynamics of the group and a creeping commitment to the organization, rather than any ideological reasons.

Despite the limited role of religious ideology in radicalization, the new recruits ultimately incorporate an extreme ideology into their own justification for participation in political violence after spending time on the ground interacting with jihadi group members. In effect, they use the ideology to retrospectively explain their motives for joining the terrorist organization.

Therefore, ideology is used as a justification means for the terrorists to justify their cruel acts. As a result one may conclude that, terrorism is political violence as a tool to ensure the interests of a group, organization country or alliance. Based on this, the terrorists kill different group of people by the means of ideology to ensure the political interests of a specific group. Thus, the motive behind killing and wounding tens of Islamic scholars by the Terrorist group of the Taliban was due to the pressures of the United States on our neighboring country due to lack of taking enough measures to destroy the safe heavens on the Taliban in its territory. As the Terrorist group of Taliban is a religious-political tool in the hands of certain countries, it only acts according to the orders it receives from its bosses and kill the people indiscriminately to ensure the interests of its founders.



## Targeting Civilians – A Lukewarm Response to Peace

By: Hujjatullah Zia

The Taliban leadership continues its talks with the US representatives and its war against Afghan state and nation. It has adopted an equivocal policy which triggers mixed feelings. The Taliban's war-war and talk-talk approach narrows down the possibility for peace. If the current round of peace talks, ongoing in Qatari capital of Doha, does not mitigate violence in Afghanistan, people will lose their hope and trust in the process. Civilian death toll has increased in the wake of the Taliban's deadly attacks, including Wednesday's heavy suicide attack in Kabul which killed and wounded dozens of non-combatants – for which the Taliban claimed responsibility.

The Taliban, as have threatened earlier, seek to mar electoral campaigns and send threatening message to Afghans not to participate in the presidential elections, slated for late September. They are unlikely to be able to reconcile their fundamental ideology with democratic principles.

The Taliban have to adopt an unequivocal policy. If they are sincere in the peace talks, they have to show their sincerity through reducing violence, mainly against civilians. The ambiguity in their policy is highly frustrating.

In the wake of the ongoing peace talks between the Taliban and US negotiators and the Taliban's words for reducing violence against civilians, Afghans felt a gleam of hope for peace and remain optimistic to some extent. But their daily attacks and suicide bombings against civilians leave people with despair and distrust.

On the one hand, the Taliban claim that their ideology had been moderated, but on the other hand, they carry out large-scale attacks to bar Afghans from participating in the elections. The Taliban have to clarify it if the view of their political leaders are in contrast with those of their military commanders. And they have to assure that they will disarm all their militants in case of reaching peace agreement with their negotiators.

It is self-evident that the Taliban have paid respect neither to the rights and dignity of Afghan people nor to their demands. For instance, in Loya Jirga (Grand Council) held in late April, Afghan representatives urged the Taliban to reduce violence and negotiate with the Kabul government. Moreover, President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani also called on the Taliban to listen to the voice of the public and stop violence. But the Taliban turned a deaf

year and continued their militancy.

It is also believed that the Taliban have recruited a number of thugs and mercenary fighters, rather than ideologues, to fight against the Afghan government. The Taliban leadership is unlikely to lose anything when their fighters are killed since there are many other mercenary fighters and thugs. The Taliban leaders reside in luxury and heavily-guarded apartments in foreign states, along with their families. They feel neither the pain and sufferings of Afghan civilians nor that of their rank and file. I believe that the Taliban are not undefeatable. The "war on terror" should not be compared to that of Soviet Union. In the war against the Taliban, both Afghan government and people support foreign forces and the Taliban are known as a militant group not "Mujahidin".

The Taliban group is not stronger than Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a guerrilla force fighting against the Sri Lankan government and designed as terrorist by 32 states. The LTTE was using women and children in combat and carried out a number of high-profile assassinations.

The LTTE was involved in four unsuccessful rounds of peace talks with Sri Lankan government and it was in control of 76 percent of the landmass in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. But the Sri Lankan government intensified its attacks and defeated the group.

With this in mind, if the Taliban continue their militancy and refuse to strike a deal with the Afghan government, the US-led NATO states should resume their military operations and increase the number of their troops in Afghanistan so as to defeat it similar to LTTE in Sri Lanka and IS group in Iraq. In other words, the Afghan government has left no stone unturned to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table, but if the Taliban still continue their militancy, all regional states have to support Afghanistan in dismantling the Taliban group. The regional countries should also share intelligence to defeat this group. If any countries are found or suspected to support the Taliban in one way or another, they must be pressured and sanctioned by all regional and global stakeholders.

In short, the Taliban either have to reduce violence and reach an agreement or face the consequences.

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## Killing a Silent Killer of Women

By: Muttaquina Hossain

In public health, discussions relating to women typically focus on maternal mortality, malnutrition, and more recently, sexual and reproductive health. But one facet of malnutrition – and a major killer of women – is often ignored: anemia. Anemia is the world's most common nutritional disorder, affecting more than 1.6 billion people. Broadly defined as an excessively low concentration of hemoglobin (an iron-rich protein that carries oxygen to tissues throughout the body) in the blood, anemia occurs either when there are too few red blood cells or when their oxygen-carrying capacity is compromised. It is caused by a deficiency in essential nutrients, most often iron, but also folic acid, vitamin B12, or vitamin A.

Although anemia can affect anyone, the majority of those affected are women of child-bearing age: in 2011, 29% of non-pregnant women worldwide (496 million people) and 38% of pregnant women (32.4 million people) aged 15-49 were anemic. The disorder was most prevalent in South Asia and Central and West Africa.

Anemia often goes undiagnosed, particularly in its earlier stages, but its consequences are serious. Iron-deficiency anemia alone – representing about half of all cases – causes about a million deaths per year, some three-quarters of which occur in Africa and Southeast Asia. Moreover, anemia contributes significantly to maternal and perinatal mortality: in Asia, it is the second leading cause of maternal death. About one-third of all anemia-related maternal deaths occur in South Asian countries. To spur progress in addressing this pervasive and deadly disorder, in 2012 the World Health Assembly endorsed a comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant, and early-childhood nutrition, which included the target of reducing anemia by 50% in reproductive-age women by 2025. To that end, the World Health Organization recommends strategies such as improving dietary diversity; fortifying foods with iron, folic acid, and other micronutrients; and distributing iron supplements. That is a good start. The question is how to implement these recommendations, particularly in developing countries.

In a country like Bangladesh, daily consumption of micronutrient-rich foods – such as red meat, green leafy vegetables, and some nuts or seeds – is often not an option, owing to household financial constraints. Even if it were, lack of education about nutrition would hamper the necessary behavioral change.

But employers – especially those that provide lunch to workers – have the power to boost micronutrient consumption significantly among their labor forces, thereby reducing the incidence of anemia. That is the conclusion of a recent study conducted by my colleagues and I at icddr,b, an international public-health research institute based in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

We began by developing several intervention packages, each involving some combination of nutritionally sufficient lunch meals, iron-folic acid (IFA) supplements, and nutrition-based behavior-change counseling (BCC). We then tested these solutions over a ten-month period on 1,310 women aged 18-42 working in four ready-made garment factories (eight in ten female

garment workers in Bangladesh suffer from anemia.)

The first set of women received a nutritionally enhanced lunch (with fortified rice) every day, one IFA supplement each week, and an "enhanced" BCC module (including information on anemia and dietary diversity) each month. The second set received their usual lunch, no supplements, and a "regular" BCC module (including information about nutrition, but not specifically about anemia or dietary diversity). The third set of women – working at a factory with no lunch program – received twice-weekly IFA supplements (daily for pregnant women) and the enhanced BCC module, whereas the fourth received no lunch or supplements, and the regular BCC module.

The results were promising, to say the least. The implementation of a full nutrition package in the first factory reduced the prevalence of anemia by 32%. Even just the inclusion of IFA supplements and enhanced BCC sessions (in the third factory) brought a 12% decline. Hemoglobin concentrations increased in both of these groups.

This reinforces the findings of separate studies, in which fortified foods caused the anemia rate among participants to drop by 46% over 6-11 months. Intermittent doses of IFA supplements reduced the prevalence of anemia in menstruating women by 27%.

In the icddr,b study, women from all four factories also reported a significant increase in knowledge of the main food groups, iron-containing foods, and the benefits of different vitamins and minerals as a result of the BCC sessions. But the actual results – including the regularity with which IFA supplements were taken – varied depending on the information relayed. Among the second set of women, who received the regular BCC module and no other interventions, anemia actually increased by 6%. This indicates that dietary and nutritional adjustments – not social or demographic factors – make all the difference.

If the clinical evidence is not enough to convince companies to invest in combating anemia among their workers, perhaps the productivity benefits will be. In our study, provision of a nutritionally enhanced lunch was associated with an increase in productivity: participants in the first factory were able to work more hours, and there were significantly fewer reports of common colds, urinary tract infections, and joint pain.

Nonetheless, we cannot count on companies to make the needed changes themselves. That is why icddr,b plans to engage Bangladeshi policymakers and other stakeholders who can effectively advocate for a comprehensive nutritional program to be introduced at all garment factories in Bangladesh.

We also plan to test the same packages in different settings – such as in schools or among domestic workers – in the hope that successful strategies can be rolled out more widely, especially in women-dominated workplaces. Such initiatives can serve as a model for other developing countries, where anemia continues to damage – and even end – women's lives.

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