

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



August 11, 2016

International Youth Day

August 12th is going to be celebrated as International Youth Day around the world. The day was endorsed by United Nations General Assembly on December 17, 1999, by accepting the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, 8-12 August 1998) that 12 August be declared International Youth Day. Different countries are going to be a part of day in their own ways and discuss and highlight the issues of the youngsters and even appreciate their achievements. This year's theme for the day is "The Road to 2030: Eradicating Poverty and Achieving Sustainable Consumption and Production". This year's Day is about achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It focuses on the leading role of young people in ensuring poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development through sustainable consumption and production. Sustainable consumption entails the use of products and services that meet the basic needs of communities while safeguarding the needs of future generations. The development and promotion of individual choices and actions that increase the eco-efficiency of consumption of all and minimize waste and pollution is critical to achieving equitable socioeconomic development.

Young people form one of the most important strata of the society. The condition of the young people within a country basically predicts the future of the nation. If youngsters within a society are properly educated, have required skills and are properly compensated within the social and economic lives, the prosperous future of the society can be guaranteed. But, if the youth do not have proper facilities of life, are not properly absorbed within economic setup, do not have incentives to follow ambitious careers and are considered as a burden on the society, the future of such a society would be, without any doubt, instable and uncertain. Though it is said that youngsters have the capacity to change the destiny of a nation for the better, often it is forgotten that they require proper care and nourishment before they are able to do so. A nation, if interested in cashing maximum of the potentials of its youth, must as a first step strive to take care of its youth. It has to make sure that it makes all the arrangements so that the potentials of the youth are used for positive purposes, like the development of country as a whole; otherwise, the same potentials can be used for the negative purposes and can, therefore, have negative consequences on the development of the nation.

Investing and investing appropriately on youth is like planting a tree. If the tree is properly watered and is taken care of, it would definitely produce tasty and juicy fruits but if it is left without enough attention, it would lose its life before it becomes a tree. Therefore, the nations require investing appropriately on their youth and their economic planning must have a large share for them. Ultimately, they would give back thousand times more than what is invested on them. The example of the youth in the developed countries can easily approve the claim. The youth in such countries are mostly involved in the betterment of their nations as they are given their basic rights and attention they deserve. For the underdeveloped and the developing countries the youth are a hope - a hope for a developed future. They are basically an opportunity that has to be availed. Such countries need to realize that the only way they can bring about prosperity and development is through the most energetic stratum of the society.

Afghanistan is also one of the countries that can benefit from its youth to a great extent as its 60 percent population is below the age of 25. Many of them have the tendency to bring about positive changes in the society as they seem tired of instability and war. However, there are many others who have been victimized by the ongoing conflicts and instability and do not see any hope to come out of the quagmire. However, Afghanistan has an opportunity to use such a large number of human resource for a better tomorrow.

Without the contribution of the youth in Afghanistan it would be very difficult to see a healthy transition towards a democratic country and better economy as youth can have the real understanding for such a system and can work for it, while the old generation did not have such an opportunity as they were going through civil wars and chaotic instability. However, without a comprehensive strategy it would be really difficult for Afghanistan to make any achievement regarding the development and the improvement of the youth and their roles within the society. Promises alone and separated actions would not bear any fruit and the youth would remain in the situation that is not favorable for their growth and capacity enhancement. Afghanistan has to prepare itself for providing job opportunities to this large number of people, which is the only way to make them play positive role. Every year a large number of youngsters complete their education and strive to find employment so that they are able to earn a livelihood and at the same time support their families and country. They should be provided opportunities so that they are able to play a positive role in the society instead of becoming a burden or part of problem.



Terrorist Attack in Pakistan

By Hujjatullah Zia

Pakistan is embroiled in mounting insurgency and people from various racial and religious spectrum fall victim to terrorist attacks. Their blood is spilt in public places and engenders fear and anxiety in social life. Pakistani nation suffers on the grounds of their race and creed, the same as Afghan nation, and left at the mercy of unmitigated militancy since the bulk of terrorist networks and Taliban's prominent leaders enjoy safe haven immunity.

According to reports, at least 90 people were killed and over 110 others wounded in a suicide bombing on August 8, at the emergency ward of Quetta's Civil Hospital, where scores of people had gathered to mourn the death of Baluchistan Bar Association (BBA) president Bilal Anwar Kasi in a gun attack earlier in the day.

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a splinter group of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) that has pledged loyalty to the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group, has reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack. JuA has been involved in several attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan's tribal belts in the past.

Terrorist networks carried out deadly attacks against people, mainly against religious minority groups, in Quetta within the past decade. I distinctly remember when the Shia minority group was being targeted by religious extremists in Quetta City while performing their religious rituals in holy month of Muharram. "What makes Balochistan's terror maze more complex is the presence of all kinds of militant groups, ranging from sectarian to separatist. The footprints of al Qaeda and IS have also emerged here," says a Pakistani writer. The militants stoke sectarian violence and target civilians to create mayhem.

Pakistan's top civil and military leadership called it an attempt by the "enemies of the country" to sabotage the ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and said that the menace was emanating from Afghan soil, which was being managed by Indian intelligence agencies. However, at the same time there was an acknowledgment that a network of "facilitators" within the country provided an enabling environment for the external enemy. It is an indisputable fact that a large number of terrorist networks such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ), Jaish-ul-Islam and Ahlesunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), formerly known as Sipa-e-Sahaba, Quetta Shura, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) and Haqqani network are the prominent and perhaps most dangerous groups that create chaos in Pakistan and violate the rights of Pakistani nation.

On the contrary, Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani said earlier that he could provide the addresses of the Taliban

leaders in Quetta city of Pakistan. In the interview with Geo News, he reiterated that Pakistan provided sanctuaries to terrorists and trained them. Moreover, at the NATO summit in Warsaw, Ghani said, "Our regional initiatives with neighbors are beginning to yield significant cooperative dividends. The exception is with Pakistan - despite clear commitments to a quadrilateral peace process; their dangerous distinction between good and bad terrorists is being maintained in practice."

The mutual assailing regarding terrorist activities and the Taliban's intensified attacks against Afghan nation led to tension between Kabul and Islamabad. Afghan officials believe that the Taliban group and Haqqani network leadership councils are based in Quetta and Peshawar cities of Pakistan from where they stage attacks against Afghan forces and civilians - however Pakistan denies the claim and condemns the Taliban's terrorist activities.

Since the IS has gained foothold in Pakistan soil, Pakistani officials accepted the facts that a network of "facilitators" pave the way for the militants. A number of the Taliban fighters pledged allegiance to IS group following the death of Mullah Omar - which led to splinter group - and played as catalyst for the emergence of IS both in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Indeed, both Pakistani and Afghan nations suffer from mounting insurgency and religious minority groups have sustained heavy casualties both inside and outside the border. In a nutshell, both countries are embroiled in violence and bloodshed. The question is that will the blame game alleviate the militancy?

Afghanistan has changed its strategy towards the Taliban militants and Afghan soldiers, along with US forces, have maximized their attacks as backlash to insurgency. Since the soft policy, peace-offering, was proved abortive and peace talks failed to bear the desired result, the hard policy namely military deal will be the only option to counter insurgency - it is what Afghan government has ushered in. Although, insurgency has not been mitigated in Afghanistan, Taliban also suffer large casualties and reel from the death of their high-ranking officials such as Mullah Akhtar Mansour and Khalifa Mansour.

Pakistan also needs a change in policy and has to intensify its attacks against the Taliban, without considering them bad or good Taliban. Following the suicide attack on Monday, several Pakistani parliamentarians and analysts declared the attack a result of "non-effective" implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP). So, Pakistan will have to adopt an effective strategy to combat terrorism and extend the Zarb-i-Az Operation so as to gain the upper hand over the militants.

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The Middle East Must Lead on Refugees

By Moha Ennaji

Since 2012, more than 12 million migrants and refugees have landed in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. The result has been an escalating political and humanitarian crisis - and increasingly heated debate about how to address it. In Europe, the debate is characterized by dissent and division, exemplified by the United Kingdom's recent vote to leave the European Union - an outcome that was shaped largely by overblown fears about immigration. With EU member states failing to agree on how to secure external borders, much less what to do with the refugees who have already arrived, an effective, unified response has proved elusive.

In the Middle East, the refugee debate is not nearly as loud, but it is no less passionate. Jordan, a country of 6.5 million, now hosts more than 1.4 million, mostly Syrian, refugees. Lebanon's 1.5 million Syrian refugees represent nearly one-third of the country's population of 4.7 million. Turkey, with some 75 million citizens, now hosts 2.7 million Syrian refugees, about 30% of whom live in 22 government-run camps near the Syrian border. With most of the refugees originating in the Middle East - especially Syria, but also Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya - the fact that the region is shouldering the overwhelming share of the burden is not surprising. But not all Middle Eastern countries have done enough.

The Gulf countries, despite their vast oil wealth, have taken in hardly any refugees; they contend that, because they are not parties to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, they have no obligation to do so. The United Arab Emirates, for example, has taken in just over 200,000 Syrian nationals since the Syrian crisis began in 2011. Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria permit Syrian refugees to enter, but provide no support to those who do; there are no refugee camps in these countries.

Meanwhile, their neighbors are straining under the weight of the crisis. Already, Jordan's social-welfare budget is reaching a breaking point, spurring social tensions. Schools in both Jordan and Lebanon were overcrowded even before the refugees arrived; now they are bursting at the seams. Even the refugees who work in Jordan and Lebanon are creating problems, as they inadvertently suppress wages for lower-skill jobs. Turkey's government has delivered more than \$8 billion in aid; by contrast, the EU has delivered only a small share of the €3.2 billion (\$3.6 billion) it pledged last November.

With host countries overstretched, it is unsurprising that refugees live in rough conditions, whether in camps or very poor neighborhoods, with no amenities or sanitation. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are unemployed, including the most highly skilled among them, whose qualifications are often not recognized. As a result, forced labor, slavery, prostitution, and social exclusion are on the rise.

Keeping the migrants largely in the Middle East is critical - not least to prevent them from drowning in the Mediterranean in their attempt to reach Europe. The Turkey-EU agreement con-

cluded last March - according to which non-refugee migrants who reach the EU are sent to Turkey - has helped, contributing to a sharp decline in the number of migrants arriving in Greece. But much more needs to be done - and Middle Eastern countries should take the lead. Most urgently, the wealthy Gulf states should provide more funding to the countries that are hosting the most refugees, thereby enabling them to begin improving living conditions for those seeking safety. Then, in order to develop a more comprehensive solution that keeps countries stable and ensures that refugees receive adequate protection, deeper collaboration among governments, as well as with the private sector and civil-society organizations across the region, is needed.

The problem is that there is no consensus in the Middle East, either among governments or civil society, about how to respond to the crisis. To break the impasse, one or two bold and far-sighted leaders need to remind their citizens of their countries' legal and, perhaps more important, moral duties to the refugees. The Islamic tradition of protecting the welfare of the poor can provide the language and legitimacy needed to inspire citizens to do their part.

In my book *New Horizons of Muslim Diaspora in North America and Europe*, I argue against the conventional wisdom that migrants and refugees are a threat to the Middle East's security and development. Just like in the developed countries of the West, migrants in the Middle East can offer untold contributions to their host societies. We just need to let them.

Above all, the refugees' basic needs must be met. Decent living conditions - including housing, nutrition, and health care - must be guaranteed, in addition to educational and employment opportunities.

If a few countries continue to shoulder the entire burden, however, it will be virtually impossible to meet the refugees' needs. Given this, the region needs to develop a mechanism for distributing refugees more fairly across countries, something like the EU's quota system. Standardized and streamlined procedures for handling asylum applications must also be implemented.

Even if all of this is achieved, a truly sustainable solution to the refugee crisis will not come until Syria is at peace, and order is restored in failing states across the Middle East. That is why it is so important for the region's governments to play a bigger and more assertive role in tackling the violence and instability that lies at the root of the crisis.

We cannot afford to wait for outside powers to resolve our pressing problems. Our governments must invest heavily in our neighbors' stability, including by bringing the Syrian peace process to a successful conclusion, and in the wellbeing of all of our citizens. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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