

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



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Open Violence against Women

Recently two incidents, highlighted in social media, clearly show the level of violence against women in our country. One of them is the video of a girl who is beaten up along with her father in an open court in Sar-e-Pul province. According to the reports the girl and father were beaten up by the head of the development council of Balkhab district in Toghi village after being accused of robbery.

The second video is of a few men who are brutally beating two women and a girl with sticks. The reason for the incident is not yet clear; however, the incident is said to have happened in Malistan district of Ghazni province.

These incidents show how Afghan society treats its women. Though Afghan culture considers women as the honor of the family, it does not hesitate to dishonor them in the public where everyone can see them being beaten. Women are not safe in their own families with their own family members. It is the men of the family who first target the women; how can they expect better treatment from others? Afghan women have always been the victims of domestic violence in different ways. Women are required to be docile and obedient in the families. They are required to be able to work hard along with having beauty and chastity while they are married. The suitability is searched only in women, while men are above all such considerations. Moreover, after marriage women are asked to compromise with men in every situation and condition. They are required to sacrifice their entire lives for the betterment of their husbands' houses and lives.

This situation has given rise to every sort of discrimination and violence against women. The unjust and ill-treatment of women in our society has given rise to every sort of trouble the women face. The whole social structure and behavior are designed in such a way that supports discrimination against them and they are expected to tolerate all these without even raising their voice.

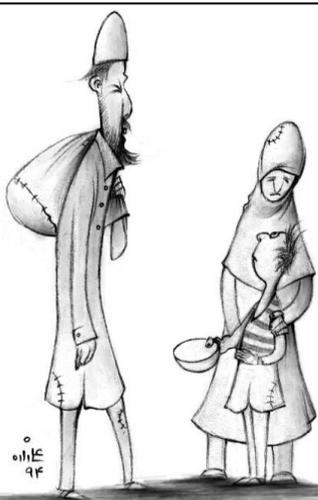
The incidents violating women rights in Afghanistan have not been stopped though there have been comparative developments made in the last some years and billions of dollars spent. In fact the changes are prevalent only on the exterior while from within the Afghan society still lacks the modernity and development it needs in order to reach to a respectable position. The support and assistance of the international community has only been able to provide clean and beautiful attire not a praiseworthy soul to Afghan society and this attire is going to get dirty very soon. The Afghan social structure has been vehemently dominated by religious extremism and tribal nepotism. Most of the self-designed religious doctrines and tribal norms are against the women and discriminate their basic rights. Unfortunately, these norms and doctrines have even gone to the extent of violence and have tortured women physically - mostly in the public. They, in the name of dignity of women, have in fact degraded them. The concept of Burqa and Chardiwari has not been able to provide safety and respect to Afghan women.

In the ordinary course of action, women are discriminated but the situation gets worse when a society goes through instability and disorder. The instability and disorder, though influence all the strata of society, are bound to effect the weaker strata the most and unfortunately women form one of the same strata. They bear the brunt of the conflicts and war and have to give sacrifices in different ways. The same can be observed in our country Afghanistan. Decades of conflicts and wars have influenced them to a large extent and today, when there has been some sort of development in different fields of life, there is still margin of considerable development regarding the emancipation of women.

Torturing, beating and discrimination unfortunately is quite a reality in Afghan society. It is not unusual in Afghan society to arrange the marriages of the girl before they are mature and in most of the cases before they are ten years of age and they really do not understand the dynamics of marriage and are sandwiched in the complexities of life. Another aspect of traditional marriage system in Afghanistan is that the girls after marriage are basically considered as a commodity that has been bought by the men so as to utilize it the way they please - in most of the cases they are no better in their parents' houses as well.

There is no doubt that the social and economic conditions in Afghanistan, to a large extent, are responsible for the deteriorating standard of living for all the people but the negligence of women's rights and dignity are also a dominant reason. On most of the occasions the rights of women are not only violated by the mere compulsions; rather they are choices made by the people - though a very hideous choice to make.

With such a situation prevailing around, it is really difficult to see improvement in condition of women who have been suffering discriminations since ages. Afghan authorities and all the Afghan people, especially women themselves, must strive to change the scenario as it would benefit the society as a whole as women are an integral part of it.



The Menace of Unemployment

By Dilawar Sherzai

The menace of unemployment is influencing almost every province of Afghanistan. Though Afghanistan has a very young population, which means that it has great potentials that can support the country in development and economic growth, the country has not been able to provide job opportunities to its youngsters and thus it is not able to take advantage of this distinction.

As the country has been largely dominated by different era of disorder and instability, the socio-economic infrastructure has not been developed much and as a result the job opportunities have always been limited. Though Afghan society is an agricultural society, the sector has not been able to absorb a large number of unemployed people. Mostly the people have been engaged in agricultural activities on personal basis and the sector has not been developed into an industry on modern grounds; therefore, the ones who own lands can benefit from them while the ones who do not own such lands are bound to remain out of work.

Undoubtedly, unemployment has done great damage to Afghan society. The people who have not been employed have mostly become the part of terrorist networks or the filthy business of narcotics, or even they have become addicted to drugs. As they do not have any other work to do or any way of making both ends meet they do not have much option but to join insurgency. A recent report reveals that there are many educated youth in northern Kunduz province, who have no other choice but to join the ranks of insurgents as there are no job opportunities for them. According to a statement by Abdul Ghafoor Hotak, youth director at information and culture department, "Over 1,200 youth having bachelor and master degrees and 18 with doctorates have not been provided employment opportunities in government departments in the last five years. And, some of these youth, having no other choice have been compelled to take up arms against the government". He also mentioned that these youth now were also convincing others to join them. He further warned that if the government did not take practical measure in bringing unemployment rate down security in the province would deteriorate further.

Same is the case with the other provinces of the country. It is really vital that the government must understand the link between the growing unemployment and increasing insecurity and instability. More than any other thing, government must concentrate on providing job opportunities to the educated youngsters and thus pave the way for prosperity and development. It is really unfortunate to note that the youth who should be having a constructive role in the country are now supporting the ranks of the terrorists.

It is essential for Afghanistan to create job opportunities for its population. Job opportunities would definitely enable the residents of the country to make positive use of their capabilities for

betterment and development of a society. It is important to understand that a state and its population are highly dependent on each other. It is difficult to imagine any of them living separately. As the state guarantees better life opportunities for its population, the population in return must, through thinking and action, strive to make the state stronger.

However, if the job opportunities remain limited and the unemployment remains rampant, the consequences will be really severe. Though unemployment in itself is a severe problem, it is also the root of many other problems. Unemployment is basically an injustice done to a population. It is basically the unavailability of jobs when there are people who have the required qualifications to be employed for different positions. Thus it is injustice, as the qualified people do not get what they deserve - a respectable profession to join so as to use their education and knowledge.

The people who spend a lengthy process of completing their education or acquiring particular skills should be absorbed by the job industry as soon as they are ready to work. Failure to provide such an opportunity may influence those people to a great extent. They, in order to live alive, need to earn a livelihood, which is threatened by unemployment; therefore, they seek to find out other ways of earning a livelihood. In the process they either join a profession that may not be of their choice or they may join illegal ways of earning, which would damage the society to a large extent.

It is also feared that in the post withdrawal era, the country would face major economic challenges. The financial support has already started decreasing for Afghanistan. In near future one of the biggest challenges would be to create job opportunities for Afghan people. In absence of sufficient job opportunities, it would be really very difficult to maintain peace, tranquility and order. The international community and the Afghan authorities must make sure that they create enough jobs so as to save the country from falling into instability and economic crisis.

The role of economy is very much vital for a country. It, for a country, is as important as circulatory system within a human body. As without circulatory system blood cannot be pumped through different parts of the body, in the similar fashion without economy, money and other basic requirements of life cannot reach to different parts of a country. And the economic system can only be strengthened when the capable and skilled individuals participate in strengthening the economic system. Especially the youngsters who get qualified from universities must be given opportunities to present and use their skills in the profession of their choice and interest. Young blood equipped with determination and patriotism can definitely play a significant role; all they need is equitable treatment from the prevailing system. Moreover, equal job opportunities must be created for girls and women as well as they form an integral part of Afghan populace and can play a tremendous role in improving Afghan economic system.

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The Heightened War Efforts in the North

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The intensive anti-insurgency campaign going on in the northern provinces of the country by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is emerging to be successful in repelling the Taliban offensive in the north. According to media reports, over 40 Taliban fighters have been killed in Qaisar district of Faryab while elsewhere more than 20 militants have been killed in Pul-e Khomri district of Baghlan province. Recently, First Vice President Gen Abdul Rashid Dostum, who has been in Faryab in recent weeks to lead the ANSF operation, said that he has had cleansed eighty percent of the province from Taliban and Islamic State militants. The Vice President indicated his willingness to lead the operation against the Taliban and the Islamic State in other northern provinces. He said if the central government in Kabul agrees, he would lead the operation being conducted by Afghan National Security forces in Kunduz province. He stressed that the campaign under his oversight is not the 'war of Faryab, Qaisar or Almar', but it is the war for salvaging Afghanistan.

The military operation that the First Vice President is leading in the northern province of Faryab is seen as a milestone in the anti-Taliban war efforts led by Gen Dostum, a prominent former military commander and a key figure in the government. The military operation launched in the Northern provinces in recent months had become a lagging war effort to push back the Taliban offensive and curb the growing insecurity in the north. However, despite the successes of the Afghan army and police forces in Northern provinces, the Taliban continued to wage violence in large parts of the north of the country. The prolonged violence drew much criticism to the war strategy of the National Unity Government (NUG) against the bloody summer offensive of the Taliban across the country particularly in the north. The Taliban managed to expand the group's annual offensive in large parts of the north including Faryab, Kunduz, Badakhshan, Baghlan and other provinces.

The Afghan army and police forces have performed remarkably in countering the Taliban, depriving them of capturing and controlling key areas for longer time.

The situation in the north will remain the national unity government's Achilles' heel in dealing with the growing instability in the country at a difficult time. Given the fact that thousands of foreign militants have come to Northern provinces, the government needs to focus on the war going on the north of the country. From the very beginning, the Taliban's spring offensive in north became a test of the central government's will in efficiently leading the war against the insurgent groups. The militants' offensive

in the North has demonstrated a different, and much complicated war strategy focusing on shift of war ground from south the north. The Taliban has been seeking a strategic military gain against the Afghan government by expanding the war into the Northern provinces. The government of Afghanistan has had relatively weak military presence in the north in the past years and security coverage in the Northern parts of the country was largely insufficient due to focus of the war efforts on the south. For most of the past fourteen years of the fight against the Taliban, the southern and eastern provinces have been the battlefield of war between the Taliban and the US forces along with the Afghan security forces. The Taliban has fought for the last fourteen years and have considerable capability in taking advantage of the Afghan government's security and defense weaknesses. The ongoing war in the Northern provinces would define the government's success in the fight against the insurgent groups not only in the north but across the country.

The government needs to intensify the campaign against the insurgent groups in Northern provinces to break the heightened momentum of the insurgency this year. The Taliban have had some gains in the north through expanding their spring offensive in vulnerable provinces of the North. The war in the north would be a key test for the Afghan government forces to effectively counter the Taliban and contain the fresh wave of the insurgency. Given presence of hundreds of foreign fighters in the country this year, there is a chance for the Taliban to join forces with other minor terrorist groups including the Uzbeks, Arabs and the Chechens to bolster their presence against the government of Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan formally believes that the foreign militants, and the Islamic State group in particular, are interested for taking ground in Afghanistan so to expand their activities beyond Afghanistan's border into the North. The government of Afghanistan needs to boost the anti-insurgency in the north to prevent various militant groups to struggle for finding a safe haven in Northern Afghanistan.

For this, the government needs to boost its support to the ANSF campaign in the Northern provinces led by Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum. The First Vice President's presence in the northern Faryab provinces is believed to have revived the lagging military efforts against the insurgent groups, forcing the militants to treat with heavy losses in many localities of the province. Dostum's presence in Faryab has boosted morale of the Afghan army and police forces. The government needs to deal with the war in the North as its top priority and extend the operation oversight by the First Vice President into other northern provinces. The anti-insurgency in the north needs a new approach and more effective leadership for which Gen. Dostum is the right person.

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