

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



August 26, 2018

### A Crying Need for 'Building a Community with Shared Future'

Humanitarian law is violated flagrantly as streams of civilians' blood are spilled without an iota of mercy. Children bear the brunt of casualties in Syria, Yemen and Palestine. The pain and sufferings of the people continue unabated in the wake of scourge of war. Regional conflicts and terrorism have inflicted indescribable pain upon both combatants and non-combatants.

Despite the human rights discourse, a large number of people are killed on the grounds of their caste, color and creed. Ethnocentrism, racial injustice and lack of tolerance have left little room for a peaceful coexistence. Peace and prosperity remain elusive as men, women and children are killed in the worst possible way on day-to-day basis. Life has turned extremely cheap and almost 511,000 people mostly civilians were killed only in Syria's conflict.

The vacuum for tolerance and spirit of brotherhood is strongly felt in human societies. To put it in the words of Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King, "We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers". Violations of human rights and humanitarian law make the headlines around the globe.

"To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small," which are stated in the preamble of the UN Charter, the world will have to adhere to building "a community of shared future for mankind," as it was put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013.

To build a community with shared future, President Xi calls the world to seek common ground and settle the conflicts through communication rather than confrontation and partnership rather than alliance.

Building a community with shared destiny is a highly essential for mitigating violence and extending the room for peaceful coexistence. It is self-explanatory that we live in the "global village" with shared destiny. For example, the death of Alan in Mediterranean Sea was outrage to all individuals around the world regardless of his ethnic background. If a child is killed or a woman is dishonored in any corner of the world, the entire humanity will be shocked. In other words, the outbreak of a disease jeopardizes the life of all, the economic crisis hurts prosperity everywhere, the danger of nuclear attacks threatens all nations, the operation of extremists puts the life of all at risk, and the violent death of an individual outrages the collective conscience. Hence, human societies have shared destiny in this global village and have to seek common ground to change this village into a utopia that all could live a free and prosperous life, that all could enjoy equal rights and liberties and all could exercise their human rights without fear of being discriminated on the basis of their color, race or belief. Although constructing a community with shared future is ambitious and challenging, it is possible if the world practices upon the following principles:

(1) Respecting the Inherent Rights and Dignity of Mankind:

It is aptly said in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". It is further stated that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts".

With this in mind, all the ongoing war and violence originate from disregard to the inherent dignity and fundamental rights of peoples. That is, individuals are not able to exercise their rights and liberty and they are discriminated on the grounds of their racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

To view the issue of terrorism, the radical militants, mainly the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) group, stoke sectarian violence in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan and spill the blood of people merely for their religious practices. The deadly attack on an educational center in Kabul on 15 August which killed and wounded more than 100 students from Shiite ethnic group shows that the militants seeks to foment sectarianism. Moreover, the IS group killed thousands of Shiite and Yazidi people in Iraq due to their faith unlike to that of the IS. Thus, people rights and dignity are trampled upon on the basis of their color, race and faith, which is against international principles and rule of war.

(2) Practicing upon Moral Values

All human beings "are endowed with reason and conscience" and should listen to the call of their conscience and "act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

Martin Luther maintains in his Nobel Lecture, "If we are to survive today, our moral and spiritual 'lag' must be eliminated."

We also feel the void of moral values in our collective life. People tend to care only about their own life showing less concern to the pain and anguish of the individuals around them.

Lack of ethical code is easily tangible in the life of modern men, who show no empathy or sympathy to the civilians who lose their life in conflicts. The world turns a blind eye to the blood of Yemeni, Syrian and Palestinian children which is drying up.

But if people practice upon ethical code, they will feel the anguish of one another, raise their voice against injustice, peace and prosperity will emerge and building a community with shared future will be possible.



### Taliban Earns Political leverage at National & International Levels as Afghan Government Failed to Assert Itself

By Mohammed Gul Sahibzada

The matrix of Afghan Government failures to manage the most important national projects - that include upcoming parliamentary elections, peace process with Taliban, provision of security for the people across the country and fight against corruption - has become chronically long, which has tarnished the ability of Government to deliver effectively on any of these projects. This has in turn started to diminish peoples and international partners' trust on the ability of Government of Afghanistan to effectively deliver and manage projects of such national importance.

The process for undertaking parliamentary elections was started in April this year. Major milestones were supposed to be accomplished within calendar schedule / plan, prepared and disseminated by Independent Elections Commission (IEC) at the time. But none of these milestones were met within pre-set timeframe by IEC, which has crippled operational ability of IEC to achieve logistical and procurement objectives for all thirty-four provinces across the country. IEC landed in controversies leading to allegations of frauds in voter registration and resignations and appointments of senior officials of the IEC and these impacted adversely on the integrity of the election process. These could have been avoided. In addition, lack of strong political will and assertiveness by Government to push forward with constitutional agenda through whole of government approach and implementation of Independent Election Complaint Commission (IECC) decisions has created unnecessary headaches, which included demonstrations by disqualified candidates, closure of IEC and IECC offices by so called supporters of these disqualified candidates and unnecessary delays in announcement of final list of qualified candidates. IEC and IECC offices have been shut down since last more than ten days, which continues to take toll on scheduled performance towards organization and undertaking of elections in October 2018. Worse of all, neither IEC nor IECC or the Government has come out to explain to the people of Afghanistan what is cooking for them. This silence has exacerbated the present situation by giving way to all kinds of rumors including possible delays of parliamentary elections or complete cancellation. The Government is losing trust among the people and has weakened its ability to deliver on such important national project.

Government offered peace negotiation to Taliban insurgents and managed a short stint of ceasefire with the Taliban during last three days of Eid festivities in June 2018. But as the clock ticked past 12am, Taliban fighters returned to their barracks and resumed attacking Government positions across the country. Government of Afghanistan and its international partners have termed this a 'success' without realizing that Taliban had social and political agendas when they reciprocated for ceasefire and flocked in thousands to cities hugging people and security personnel and waving their white flags. They succeeded in their strategy. Based on this apparent success of this ceasefire, Government once again announced 'conditional ceasefire' with Taliban on 19 August 2018 for three months. But Taliban refused to reciprocate with ceasefire. In the meantime, Taliban and US Government started talking within this period without participation of Afghan Government. Though Government of Afghanistan has announced it was aware of the ongoing talks between US Government and Taliban, but it has never provided any details of these talks to the people of Afghanistan. The only hint about these talks between Taliban and US Government was given in the message of Taliban leader, Mr. Mollah Haibatullah, who said 'what the US wanted was neither acceptable, nor implementable'. This whole episode questions Government position in the ongoing peace process, and the message delivered to the people of Afghanistan is that Afghan Government is not the only authority deciding their fate. Even regional countries Uzbekistan and Indonesia engaged Taliban in discussions after inviting their delegations. Now, Moscow is in the process of hosting a summit on 4 September 2018 inviting Taliban and other countries. It is quite clear that there are others, more powerful hands at play. This situation - if continued - will not bode well for the Government, and will dent its credibility to act as sole, legitimate body on behalf of the people of Afghanistan.

Provision of security, law and order and safety are the most important duties of Government towards its subjects to deliver. But Afghan Government continued to fail on this important deliverable. The incident on 21 August 2018 where so called insurgents have fired rockets / missiles on Presidential Palace appalled the whole nation. Government security institutions have failed to secure the heart of capital. This has given way to

rumors that 'attacks like these are carried out by people inside security institutions, who are assigned in important positions by powerful people, and who are at present in loggerhead with Government due to their disqualification to contest elections...'. Every time after incident, agencies started blaming each other and put onus of intelligence failure without addressing fundamental flaws in security structure and policing and their accountability mechanisms, so preventive methodologies could be well adopted. According to Mr. Upendra Baghel, a scholarly specialist in security and building state institutions, 'Intelligence is an analysis of an array of information which are gathered and collected through various means. The agencies will never be able to preempt all breaches but they learn lessons from each to prevent further breaches. It is simply not possible to prevent all otherwise US would have prevented 9/11 and India would have prevented 26/11...'. In Afghanistan, repeated breaches do take place and it raises serious concerns to reflect upon our security set up. But, not to mention attacks on educational institutions, which has killed and injured more than hundred people, incidents such as fateful attacks on entire province in Ghazni by thousands of insurgents has put a big question mark on the ability of Government to protect civilians from such blatant, visible and large scale military operation. Afghan Government is not fighting with external, organized and large military contingents. It is engaged in fight with insurgents who carry out guerrilla type attacks on Government institutions since last eighteen years. We are under insurgency and terrorism and these are to be tackled through robust policing with appropriate soft skills and proportionate armed response. This is a time enough to learn psychology of enemy, how they make a move, where their fighters are and where to focus intelligence agency to gather information in order to make plans and preempt any attack of the size and scale carried out in Ghazni. It is incomprehensible a failure by Government forces, which warrants proper explanation and investigation within the system.

Corruption is the one major problem and the most dangerous threat to national security before this Government. It is important to understand that delivering good governance to masses and building inclusive state institutions depend on corruption free environment. Government is checked with endemic corruption, and the toll it is taking on resources and efforts on the part of Government to deliver services is vast. National institutions - in particular the present parliament - have been the main impediments before Government to clean up corruption. Many centers of powers within Government system continue to create chaos and disruption. Political affiliation, campaign contributors, nepotism and favoritism, all play a role in spreading corruption in Government institutions. It is unfortunate that in spite of focused anti-corruption efforts, we are not able to make an impact on the lives of people. The efforts largely continue to remain academic and selective without whole of government people inclusive approach. Unless this menace is completely eradicated, Government will not be able to deliver.

On the other hand, Taliban have increased frequency of their attacks on Government positions, have widened their political and diplomatic spectrum, added in their list of countries who have established diplomatic relationship with the group, which include Uzbekistan, Turkey, Russia, China, UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Taliban have become more organized, their operations have synchronized across the country, they exhibit political and diplomatic maturity and their dealing with local populations have improved a great deal. Recent rush and spasmodic approach by Government of Afghanistan towards Taliban to negotiate peace and reach a ceasefire exhibited a little bit hasty handling of the matter by Afghan Government. It seems like Government is not acting within the free space required to undertake such moves, which - if true - will backfire and put the Government in the lowest ebb of its credibility to undertake or participate in matters of national importance.

It is incumbent on Government to come up with better approach which is clear, be frank and honest with its people. Silence on the status of the above mentioned important national projects is not a solution to ongoing problems. Government should take the people, its subjects and international partners in confidence and share the facts and figures of the depth and width of the problems it is stuck in, and should take a strong stand in accomplishing these national priorities - be them with some delays, but should come up with a pragmatic plans and milestones to succeed.

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### Challenges Widen the Gap between State and Nation

By Hujjatullah Zia

Despite the peace talks held between the US representatives and the Taliban in Qatar, Taliban insurgents have intensified their attacks against Kabul government, which indicates their lukewarm response to the peace process.

With the recent unmitigated insurgency, there seems no light at the end of the tunnel and the pain and suffering of the public continue unabated. As a result of growing challenges under the National Unity Government, the rift between state and nation has been widened.

It is believed that the Taliban seek to sabotage the upcoming provincial and parliamentary elections and demonstrate their power through intensifying their attacks against Kabul government. They have held out against the olive branch offered by the government and signaled their preparation for sitting around the table with US representatives. But it is understandable that peace and war will not go together. If the Taliban does not come to the table with genuine intention, peace talks will be no more than a political game.

Worst of all, the so-called Independent Election Commission has decided to deprive Ghazni province from participating to upcoming elections, which will be held about three years later than its legal period, in the wake of Taliban's attacks against the province.

Constitutionally, the elections should be "free, general, secret and direct" but depriving the residents of Ghazni province from their suffrage will be a slap on the face of democracy and flagrant violation of the Constitution for not conducting free, fair and general elections. Meanwhile, the government will accept, through this decision, that it is not able to ensure citizens' security.

Excluding Ghazni from election is the worst-case scenario for the residents, who on the one hand have sustained heavy casualties by the militants and on the other hand deprived of their suffrage by the government.

The challenges have mushroomed under the NUG despite the mouth-watering promises made by President Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah during their presidential campaigns. In other words, the current government could not reduce the challenges such as insecurity, corruption, narcotic drug, poverty, unemployment and economic crisis. Therefore, people are suffering in the worst possible way.

To strengthen democracy, Kabul government has to conduct free, fair and general elections and ensure citizens' security rather than depriving people from their suffrage, which is against Constitutional and democratic principle.

The war is going on in many provinces and the solution is to stop war rather than stopping elections. Hence, the government is responsible to conduct elections across the country and do not deprive a single citizen from participating the election.

It should be noted that a number of people have already refused to register for voting in the elections as they believe that their vote will make no change similar to that of the 14 presidential election. That is, they lost their confidence and trust in the government since they still suffer as a result of insecurity. Now the government should bridge the gap rather than widening it through conducting free, fair and general elections.

To win the public support, the government needs to win the heart and mind of the people and implement Constitution and other national laws strictly. In other words, violation of national laws by a handful of people, including warlords and government officials, is one of the major challenges in the country. Implementing law will mitigate both corruption and insurgency to a considerable extent. For example, if those officials who neglect their legal duties or break the law by getting bribery are brought to justice, they will do their best to fulfill their responsibilities in the future. But Afghanistan still remains on the top list of the most corrupt countries. Does government have any answers this question?

Being unable to ensure the citizens' safety, conducting a fair, free and general election, fighting corruption and terrorism, the government will also lose its reputation at international level and may lose the support of its international allies. That is, Afghan government has not only made big promises to the nation but also to its international allies, but none have been fulfilled so far. The challenges such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, narcotic drug, insecurity have not only not alleviated but also aggravated. The citizens' dissatisfaction with NUG has reached its peak due to the growing challenges. If this trend continues, the situation will be highly critical.

To address the challenges and regain its reputation at national and international levels, the government will have to stop the empty talks and take more concrete step. As elections are in the pipeline, the government should prioritize security situation so as to conduct fair, free and general election based on national laws, without leaving a single province or district behind, this is the very responsibility of the government.

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