

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


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Afghans' Concern over US-Taliban Peace Agreement

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 The Taliban and US representatives have resumed negotiations in Qatar's capital on finding a peaceful solution to the 18-year conflict in Afghanistan. The US Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad tweeted that "now the priority must be an honorable and lasting peace and sovereign and united Afghanistan at peace with itself and posing no threat to any other country".

The withdrawal of US forces and a commitment by the Taliban that Afghanistan will not be used as a launch pad for global attacks have been discussed between the two sides. Taliban chief spokesperson Suhail Shaheen is cited as saying, "We have an agreement on a time frame for the withdrawal. Discussions are now focused on its implementation mechanism".

The Taliban, who have refused so far to negotiate with the Ghani administration, say that they would sit for an "intra-Afghan dialogue" as part-II of the overall peace agreement once they reached an agreement with the US on troop pullout time frame. Taliban say they recognize the Afghan government as a key player only. Afghans are concerned about the content of the US-Taliban agreement which is supposed to be signed. The public believe that a hasty withdrawal will jeopardize Afghanistan's gains within the past 18 years and will put the civil and human rights of individuals and their freedoms at stake.

"A hasty process that creates an impression of Taliban strength, and US and Afghan government weakness, risks triggering a cascade where even forces that loathe the Taliban shift to their side because it appears that they will come out on top, and it does not pay to be aligned with losers," wrote Dr. William Maley, a professor at the Australian National University, in his commentary titled "Caution Rather Than Haste Needed in the Afghanistan Process".

The talks between the US and Taliban representatives are ongoing behind closed doors and Afghans have no idea about the content of the agreement. Afghanistan's achievements and women's rights under the nascent democracy have been the main concern of people since the Taliban rank and file militants still practice radical ideology.

With this in mind, President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani asserted that his administration would see the final draft of a US-Taliban agreement for a "comprehensive discussion" before it was signed. The content of the draft should be released to Afghan people before being signed between the Taliban and US negotiators so that they be assured that the past achievements will not be jeopardized and the Taliban will be integrated into the Afghan government with moderated idea. The Taliban should assure that they will not act against women's rights and freedoms and will respect the democratic achievements. A referendum should be conducted whether Afghan people demand a democratic state or Islamic Emirate. In short, Afghan people should have part in the agreement since their fate is being discussed.

Disregarding the role of Afghan people in the talks is really outrageous. In the intra-Afghan dialogue, the controversial issues should be resolved through public referendum. That is, the Taliban should not impose their own will on Afghan people.

Afghans believe that the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban played a destructive role in the past and harmed Afghanistan socially, politically, and economically. The Taliban regime brought nothing to Afghanistan except for violence and destruction. After killing thousands of people and destroying the country, it is really brazen of the Taliban to push for establishing an Islamic Emirate. Overall, at least four issues should be considered in the agreement with the Taliban. First, the role of the Afghan state and nation should not be disregarded. The US should not only consider the interests and safety of the American people but also those of Afghanistan.

Second, it should be noted that a hasty withdrawal is likely to lead to horrible consequences and the issue of Iraq will be repeated in Afghanistan.

Third, the Taliban should pledge that they will not campaign against the past gains, namely the women's rights and liberty and Afghan constitution. If the Taliban return with their radical ideology, the "blood" and "treasure" invested in Afghanistan will be undone.

Forth, the Taliban should disarm their rank and file militants or integrate them into Afghan national police. Their militants should be trained by government officials and learn basic legal principles. Meanwhile, it is recommended that the Taliban war criminals should be brought to justice.

Peace agreement is supposed to put an end to the conflict, safeguard past achievements, and lead to prosperity - these should be regarded at the negotiating table.

A Vacuum for Spirit of Brotherhood

By: Hujjatullah Zia

It is true, political problems are not solved by love and mercy. But the world of politics is not the only world, and unless political decisions rest on a foundation of something better and higher than politics, they can never do any real good for men. When a country has to be rebuilt after war, the passions and energies of war are no longer enough. There must be a new force, the power of love, the power of understanding and human compassion, the strength of selflessness and cooperation, and the creative dynamism of the will to live and to build, and the will to forgive. The will for reconciliation."

Historically, Afghan nation underwent great suffering. Thousands of people were perished or had their limbs amputated in jihad against the Soviet, in civil unrest and in the war imposed by the Taliban regime.

The glorious victory in the Jihad against aggression brought us national honor. We deem it a religious incumbent to fight for our rights and dignity and fight to save our religious values, moral and cultural norms from erosion. In other words, whenever our social and cultural standards are exposed to decadence, we should voice our concerns against the phenomena. We do appreciate "the sacrifices, historical struggles, jihad and just resistance of all the peoples of Afghanistan", and admire "the supreme position of the martyrs of the country's freedom." The Mujahidin, who lost their lives on the grounds of safeguarding religious values, ethical code, national unity and territorial integrity, have to be considered the heroes of our history. We should value our martyrs' blood - shed to cultivate compassion and devotion - and nurture their human ambitions. In short, our martyrs were the epitome of humanity, who sacrificed their lives to protect our nation and uphold our religious beliefs, moral standards and national values.

The high ambitions of jihad, however, fell into ruin and the characters were totally besmirched. The sanctity of jihad violated and ignored the call of conscience through shedding the blood of our brethren for satiating carnal and corporal pleasures.

Rather than maintaining the achievements of jihad, the financial interests and physical desires with no sense of responsibility were pursued. The inalienable rights and dignity of innocents were trampled

upon. It was stoop so low to be bogged down in vicious issues and moral turpitude. The nondescript violence and atrocity, which originated in voracious appetite for everyday life and pleasures, put our national honor under question.

Under the Taliban, Afghans suffered in the worst possible way. The Taliban's fundamental ideology and radical interpretation of religious texts led to heavy loss across the country. Claiming divine legitimacy, the Taliban regime ruled Afghanistan at gunpoint. The carnage and genocide perpetrated by the illegal potentates outraged our people's conscience. They adopted a discriminatory attitude towards individuals on the basis of religious beliefs, race, color and sex. Women and girls were bereft of their basic rights, especially from going to school or presenting in public, kept within the four walls, sustained mental and physical tortures and had their honor and reputation tainted with impunity.

The sufferings of Afghan nation still continues unabated. People are targeted on the streets, in markets, restaurants, mosques, etc. The security situation is deteriorated despite the ongoing peace talks between the Taliban and the US representatives in Doha.

We have to learn from checked past and do not let the history repeats itself. Our nation should instill the morale of brotherhood in the society through practicing religious tolerance and ethical code. Revitalizing national solidarity is the responsibility of each individual. Moreover, since we are born with certain rights and dignity, we have to respect them. "There must be a new force, the power of love, the power of understanding and human compassion, the strength of selflessness and cooperation, and the creative dynamism of the will to live and to build".

The war and violence will lead to human loss and social and political destructions and sow the seeds of discord - the fact proved by history. Afghans have to bridge the gap between past and present and value our national glories. Afghan officials should try to "form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights".

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Hong Kong Must Not Be Reduced to a Place of Riot and Colour Revolution

By: Wang Daxue

Backed by external forces, some people with ulterior motives in Hong Kong have recently instigated a series of serious violent incidents, trampling on the bottom line of any civilized society and challenging China's national sovereignty. As a result, the Pearl of the Orient famous for its freedom, openness and rule of law has been plunged into the abyss of riots. Stopping violence and ending the chaos has become a strong societal demand in Hong Kong. However, not everyone wants calmness restored in the metropolitan. Ignoring the facts and interfering flagrantly, some international forces are making attempts to prolong the chaos. But as justice will always prevail over evil and truth will for sure trump lies, their attempts will never succeed.

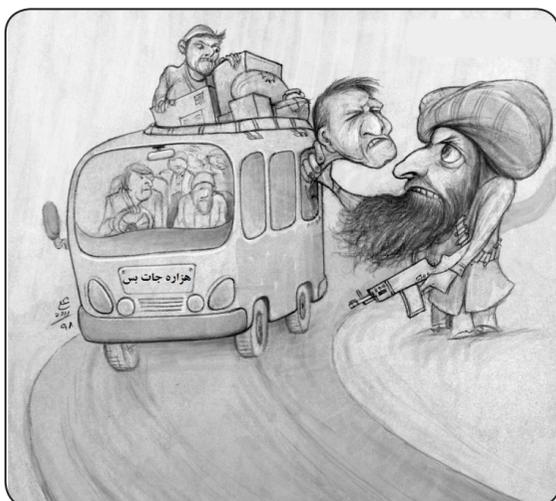
The government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) proposed to amend the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance within the 'one country, two systems' framework. The proposed amendments originated from an ordinary criminal case. Hong Kong resident Chan Tong-kai was suspected of killing his girlfriend in Taiwan in February 2018 before fleeing back to Hong Kong. As Hong Kong does not have jurisdiction over the case, the HKSAR government has proposed to amend the above-mentioned two regulations to transfer Chan to Taiwan for trial. The proposed amendments will not only facilitate handling of the above-mentioned case but also plug existing legal loopholes. They are designed to bring Hong Kong's cooperation with other parts of China in the transfer of fugitive offenders and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters into the scope of the two ordinances by applying mutatis mutandis the existing institutions of cooperation between Hong Kong and foreign countries. A necessary legal activity within 'one country, two systems', the arrangement will in no way affect Hong Kong's judicial independence. However, some people and media with ulterior motives misused the chance and spread various alarmist remarks to create panic. To restore calm to the society as soon as possible, the HKSAR government decided on 15th June to suspend fugitive law amendments and the relevant legislative proceedings also came to a complete stop, for which the central government expressed its support, understanding and respect.

In handling the outrageous illegal acts of violence, the Hong Kong police have been professional and restrained. Since June, the opposition and some radical forces have carried out various radical activities in the name of peaceful marches and rallies. Under the guise of anti-fugitive offenders law amendment, they have engaged in various radical and sabotage activities, pushing violence to escalate. While advocating 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'rule of law', they have trampled on all the values preached by themselves by beating journalists, detaining tourists and attacking the police. Some even openly advocated Hong Kong independence and chanted 'Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times'. They surrounded and attacked central government offices in Hong Kong and want only insulted the national flag, national emblem and HKSAR emblem, openly challenging the bottom lines, i.e., national sovereignty and the principle of 'one country, two systems'. No country shall tolerate such thugs. As the last shield for law and order, the Hong Kong police have stuck to their posts under great pressure and acted in a fearless and professional manner above criticism. So far, about 200 policemen have been injured in violent demonstrations. Some have fractures in the face and eyes, some had his fingers bitten off and some have not recovered from the injuries and trauma over 50 days ago. However,

in western media, the disciplinary force which had long been internationally recognized as the most professional and superior for its partiality, integrity and readiness to serve the people was vilified as a 'negative force' while the thugs committing numerous crimes and acting like terrorists were called 'democracy fighters'.

External forces have been openly interfering in Hong Kong affairs in attempts to instigate a 'colour revolution'. Hong Kong is part of the Chinese territory and no foreign force has any right to make wanton comments on its affairs. This is not only a common sense but also a universal norm. The Chinese government did not intervene in American government's suppression of the Occupy Wall Street movement nor pointed fingers at the British government when it dealt with the London riots. On the other hand, in obvious display of double standards, some countries have been making irresponsible remarks and pointing fingers on affairs of HKSAR, China, even to the extent of high-profiled, open and deep involvement. In the crowds of illegal demonstrations, all kinds of foreigners were seen talking with radicals and acting as their villainous advisers. Leaders of Hong Kong's opposition and pro-independence organizations secretly met officials of the US Consulate General and coluded with the latter in both overt and covert ways. The US and British governments turned a blind eye to the extreme violence in the course of development while glorifying the thugs with the crowns of freedom, democracy and human rights. According to some international media with conscience, the law amendment disturbance is gradually transitioning to a 'colour revolution' of Hong Kong style as the US moves to support separatist forces in China when the latter is not crushed in the trade war. Some people in Britain said Hong Kong needed democracy. The truth is, during the British colonial rule, Hong Kong people had no democratic right at all. The hypocrisy of the US and other Western countries on this issue cannot hide their strategic intention to contain China. The Chinese government will never allow anyone to mess up Hong Kong in any name. Hong Kong does not have an inch of land belonging to any country other than China. In face of the foreign interference and destruction, no other country in the world will demonstrate the same level of restraint as China has. But there is a bottom line for our restraint. Serious violence in Hong Kong has changed the nature of the incident with obvious 'colour revolution' characteristics. If violence and chaos prolong and external forces are allowed to interfere in Hong Kong's affairs, not only public order will be seriously undermined, endangering the lives and property of residents there, but also the city's prosperity and stability and the 'one country, two systems' formula will be destroyed. The great majority of Hong Kong residents will not agree to this, nor will the Chinese government and people. Hong Kong must not become a capital of riots and an outpost to contain China. Stopping violence, ending the riots and restoring order is now the overriding task. No illegal or criminal act openly challenging the principle of 'one country, two systems', trampling on the rule of law, undermining social stability and infringing upon public interests will escape the sanctions of law and history. The Chinese government has enough methods and strong enough power to quickly quell all kinds of disturbances that may occur in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, we would like to advise some countries to withdraw their manipulating hands from Hong Kong. Gross interference in other countries' affairs will come to no good. History has proved this and will prove it again.

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