

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



August 28, 2016

International Day against Nuclear Test

Tomorrow, i.e. 29th August is going to be observed as International Day against Nuclear Test. The day was first declared on December 02, 2009, in the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly when it unanimously adopted a resolution that called for increasing awareness and education "about the effects of nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and the need for their cessation as one of the means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world." The resolution was initiated by the Republic of Kazakhstan, together with a large number of sponsors and cosponsors with a view to commemorate the closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test site on August 29, 1991.

The Day is meant to galvanize the United Nations, Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, youth networks and the media to inform, educate and advocate the necessity of banning nuclear weapon tests as a valuable step towards achieving a safer world.

A closer look at our world would depict that today's men, in the struggle for their survival, have gone to every possible extreme. They, both individually and in the form of some groups, have proved the Darwin's Theory of "Struggle for survival and survival of the fittest" correct in human society as well. There have been clashes and wars among human beings for the sake of the same survival. These clashes and wars have given rise to the invention and proliferation of different sorts of weapons. These weapons, highly modernized because of the development in science and technology, can prove fatal to thousands of people upon their use. This has already been proved by the nuclear weapons used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Though there have been considerable efforts since the incident regarding the non-proliferation movement, the world is still threatened by the uncontrollable strength of nuclear energy. The research for the development of nuclear weapons basically started in World War II when the then powerful nations of the world turned violent in order to subjugate each other. The countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic all were in competition with each other to design a way to turn nuclear energy for use in evil intentions. But the only country that used it for the first time was the United States. Afterwards, USSR tested its nuclear weapon in 1949, the United Kingdom in 1952, France in 1960, People's Republic of China in 1964, India in 1974, Pakistan in 1988 and North Korea in 2006.

There are some other countries as well, which though have not gone for nuclear tests, are believed to have acquired the capability. Though the people around the world seem to have realized the extent of its destruction, they are yet to exclude the world from the possibility of a nuclear war. Today all the major countries in the world and the United Nations Organization have been striving for some sort of Nuclear Non-proliferation.

This is more directed towards the states which are not yet recognized as "Nuclear Weapon States" by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is basically considered to be discriminatory as the countries are divided into "Nuclear Weapon States" and "Non-nuclear Weapon States". The countries that acquired the nuclear weapons prior to 1968 are considered as the "Nuclear Weapon States" and are above any sort of sanctions, while the other countries (Non-nuclear Weapon States) which may strive to acquire, must go through severe scrutiny by those states.

The basic question at this instant is, "Why are the other countries not allowed to have nuclear weapons, as they are threatened by the nuclear power of the 'Nuclear Weapon States'?" There can be a comprehensive discussion on the matter and there can be different answers but the only idea that stands true is that the nuclear weapon in possession of any country can be a threat to the world. Though at present there are about 189 countries that have signed the NPT, its credibility is yet to be verified considerably.

This fact should not be forgotten that the arrangements mentioned above have not been able to solve the serious issues of nuclear weapons, among which the issues with Iran and North Korea are of utmost importance. Proper care should be taken in this regard and the issues should be solved through diplomatic prudence, not the blunder of war. Definitely, nuclear weapons because of their capacity of mass destruction are a serious threat to mankind. No guarantee of secure existence can be established with the inclination of the countries towards the growth and development of this evil. But the arrangement for this purpose has to be made on strong and just footings. They should never be inclined towards the objectives of few powerful states of the world; otherwise they will be doomed to failure. Moreover, the overall tone of the today's politics must change - it must be based on the peace not war and struggle



Ideological Outlooks Hamper Human Rights

By Hujjatullah Zia

In the state of nature, there were no rule and regulation and the community was empty of virtue and moral values. For instance, when a member of a tribe was killed in the past, a serious fight broke out between the two tribes leading to further deaths. The rich were exploiting the poor, the strong bullying the weak, the kings torturing and killing with no iota of mercy and it was 'war of all against all'. The world was in deep barbarity and rights and freedom were meaningless terms. To get rid of such turbulence and disorder, people submitted some of their rights to a person or a group of people to have their rights and liberty safeguarded in return - the idea of "social contract" suggests.

The concept of "rights" emerged among the people in a very basic form, though. The tribal conflicts were gradually brought to the elders to prevent from bloodshed. With the passage of time, the basic concept of "rights" developed and "natural rights" came under the discussion of scholars and philosophers. It was believed that men are born with natural rights which are unalienable and inviolable and the state is not allowed to deprive one of his/her natural rights. The idea of natural rights had root in religion and it was deemed as divine rights since it was bestowed by Lord.

Following historical wars and violence, which inflicted heavy casualties upon the world and outraged human conscience, the "human rights" discourse came under discussion. Since a large number of people were killed on the grounds of their race, beliefs and color, human rights suggested that men are born free and with a set of dignity and equal rights on the basis of being human irrespective of their accidental backgrounds. Ultimately, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was approved in 1948 under which the world is supposed to respect the rights and dignity of mankind. Besides being originated from ethical code and golden rule, it has also some religious bases.

Human rights, which claim to decrease the pain and sufferings of mankind and prevent from war and violence, should be discussed from secular point of view rather than religious perspective.

A religious approach towards human rights will widen the schism among religious and secular parties and religious wars and crusades will repeat around the globe - which is against the objective of the UDHR. It is believed that the soul of religions nurture the UDHR but fundamental interpretations of religious texts, which deny pluralism and relativism, challenge the Declaration.

Human rights, which are unalienable and inherent rights that men are equally endowed with irrespective of their race, sex,

color, belief, etc, have passed many ups and downs throughout the history. The scholars who played significant role in developing human rights believe that - in addition to all man-made rights - there is a body of rights which were not the product of civilization and which have always existed and will exist for ever. These are the Natural Rights. They, as Tom Paine says, "appertain to man in right of his Existence." Simply by being a human, one possesses these inalienable and immutable rights - regardless of the government, religion, or ethical system under which one lives.

Experiencing the boundless pain and suffering in Second World War and the fear of Nazism and Fascism awakened the conscience of mankind and triggered the discussion of universal human rights. Men's painful experiences of war and bloodshed were combined with the survival of natural rights' theories to be resumed in human rights' frame. In other words, natural rights, which were weakened by the conceptual confusion, high ambitions and strong criticism of positivists, were recovered in International instrument and here claim to decrease the pain and suffering of men and provide the human societies with justice, freedom and peace. Hence, the theories of natural rights survived the historical challenges and crossed that tortuous path successfully.

However, the rights and liberty of mankind has been left at the mercy of war and violence once again and being violated to a great extent, which is a great cause for concern. The religious extremists, who interpret human rights through ideological lens, spill the blood of individuals on the grounds of their accidental backgrounds.

The radical ideologues divide the world into the sacred and the profane and believe that those who live out of their ideological line are in the profane world and deserve to be disposed off. In other words, they consider the rights and dignity of mankind on the basis of their faith and religion and whoever does not exercise their ideology will be deemed to deserve death - such mentality is extremely perilous and poses serious threat to the world.

Painting human rights with the brush of faith and ideology will place barriers before developing the human rights and increase the pain and anguish of mankind around the world rather than alleviating the challenges. Since ideologies were the main reason behind global wars, they will slow down the human rights' discourse and make the history repeat itself in human societies. So, a philosophical view and secular approach towards human rights will mitigate the current violence and carnage which menace the public rights and liberty and take their toll on innocent individuals.

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The Education Roadmap to 2030

By Helle Thorning-Schmidt

When I visited the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan earlier this year, I met with children who told me what education means to them. For Syrian youths who have been forced from their homes and have lost everything, education is about more than qualifications or test scores; it embodies their hope for the future.

Children like those in Zaatari, and millions of others around the world, are central to the work of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, which I joined last September. This commission is committed to the fourth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal, which aims, by 2030, to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

This goal is still a distant prospect for far too many children. With so many development issues demanding our attention, policymakers should bear in mind that education is not just a good in itself; it is also a catalyst for many other development gains.

As the old African proverb goes, if you educate a girl, you educate an entire nation. Ensuring access to quality education for children, especially girls, will lead to fewer child marriages and less child labor and exploitation. And education has long-term societal benefits: aside from increased political engagement, educated children contribute intellectual capital and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities when they grow up, boosting economic growth.

Tackling the education challenge needs to start from two principles embedded in the goal.

First, "for all" means that we must focus on the children who have been left behind. Millions of children are out of school or are receiving a substandard education because of who they are or where they live. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than other children in the countries to which they've been displaced. And in all but two African countries, girls remain less likely than boys to complete a primary education. Getting these children into school will require new approaches that directly address their exclusion and make schooling genuinely accessible and relevant.

Second, "quality": Education must be effective, so that children actually learn. For the 61 million children who are out of primary school, formal education is beyond reach. But, just as urgently, more than one-third of children of primary-school age - 250 million - are not learning the basics, according to the

UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Half of these children have been in school for at least four years. We must address the barriers to learning, both in the classroom and at home, by improving the quality of teaching and classroom conditions and teaching parents how they can support their children's education.

Upholding these two principles will require increased investment. Last year, UNESCO calculated that governments must double education spending as a share of national income to achieve the 2030 goals. This will require increased revenue from taxation and stronger efforts to collect what's owed. Donors also need to live up to their aid commitments and target aid more effectively. For example, less than one-third of education aid goes to Africa, even though the region accounts for almost two-thirds of out-of-school children. Moreover, at the moment, education budgets are often regressive, with almost half of spending in the poorest countries allocated to the most educated 10% of the population.

Fixing education investment requires action in two key areas. First, we need equitable financing, with more investment in early childhood care and development, where there is the biggest potential for returns. Budgets must be focused on the most excluded children, and primary education must be free at the point of use, so that every child can learn. We also urgently need more transparency and accountability, so that budgets are visible and communities have a say in school governance.

Second, we need to strengthen domestic education systems so that governments see themselves as the guarantor of accessible, quality schools for their citizens, rather than abdicating that role to outside development agencies.

In particular, we should push for partnerships between government and business to boost domestic resources for education, and eliminate illicit capital flows that deprive governments of the means to fund it, such as tax evasion and money laundering across national borders.

With these priorities in mind, the education commission will deliver its recommendations at the UN General Assembly on September 18, when the Secretary-General will receive and act on them. The education commission will have succeeded if we are able to leverage the funding and political will to ensure that every child learns, regardless of their income, location, or social status. Our work will not be complete until that happens. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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