

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



December 03, 2016

Widening Gap between the Rich and Poor

The so-called development in Afghan society since the downfall of Taliban has not been even. There are different problems that suggest that development has not taken place in the real sense. Some of the most important factors that define development in the modern sense are non-existent in Afghan society. Poverty is still rampant and the class disparities have widened. The gap between the rich and the poor has been stretched to a large extent. There are millions of the people who suffer from lack of basic requirements, while only few families possess most of the wealth of the nation. At the same time social justice is not found anywhere and the inequalities and inequities are frequent.

The stratification among different strata has intensified, which is affecting the society as a whole. The wealth that has poured in the country in the last decade does not seem to have benefited the needy people of the society rather that has been accumulated by certain authoritative people who use it for their own benefits and grandeur. Though the stratification into rich and poor classes existed in Afghan society earlier as well, but it has changed its primitive shape; even in the urban regions the stratification is more like modern upper class and lower class division.

Some argue that this stratification of the society in different strata is a necessity. They believe that it is because of interaction of various strata that the society tends to function as whole - more like functional theory in sociology. However, this argument is quiet debatable. Actually the class based setup in a society is mostly the outcome of the practice of Capitalism. Capitalism, at least in theory, tends to follow justice and demands that everyone should be gifted according to his ability. Thus people with more ability can have as much as they deserve lawfully. Further, the system of Capitalism also allows the individuals to have lawful private property. The modern countries in Europe and America that are based on Capitalism can easily be observed to be having different classes in their societies.

This system seems to be working for them, but there are controversies regarding the future of the system. In fact, if this system has been working for so many countries, there are few pre-requisites that are maintained to a varying extent by these countries that have been helping the system to develop instead of facing a failure.

First, it has been made sure that justice should be maintained in its true spirit, i.e. it must not favor only the upper class; rather the upper class itself should be treated by the law and order system in the same way as the other two classes; namely, lower, middle and upper classes. To put it in simpler terms it can be said that social stratification has not been changed to social injustice. Second, social mobility has been made very easy in such societies. Social mobility basically means movement from one social class to another.

For example, it has not been very difficult for a person taking birth in a lower class to work hard, develop the capability and move to the middle and even to upper class. There have been equal opportunities for almost all the members of the societies to excel in their lives and become rich. The reverse has been maintained as well, i.e. the people born in rich families but not working hard, have been pushed to the lower strata. Social mobility has been able to provide some oxygen for the social setup to inhale so that it must keep on living.

It is also vital to note that in Afghanistan the wealth has poured in without much accountability and weak check and balance system, therefore, the stratification has led to sufferings. The upper class in Afghanistan cannot be said to be in the form as it exists in an industrialized society. Rather, it includes the landlords, tribal heads and religious leaders. Both political and economic systems tend to revolve around these people who are in total control of entire wealth and its distribution. Further, it is also true that all these people do not seem to have the ability for what they are gifted.

They in pursuit of their own benefits have only made the opportunity of development favor themselves. The poor people of Afghanistan, who have been badly stricken by decades of wars, have only suffered the worst manifestations of poverty. There are millions who do not have the basic requirements of life and are compelled to live their lives in the remotest areas, without much support and attention. Food, cloth, shelter and other requirements like education and security are non-existent for them. And at the same time there are people who own properties worth millions of dollars. These are all the results of an intense stratification. The poor do not seem to be having many opportunities of improvements in their lives and that means that social mobility, which can provide oxygen to a stratified society does not exist, while the social injustice is on the rise.

The law and order system, instead of treating everyone alike, has served as the slave of the upper-class. The current scenario if goes unchecked can bring further misery to Afghan society.

Cannibalistic War in Syria

By Hujjatullah Zia

Syrians burn amidst war and violence as militancy escalates. The self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) violates humanitarian law and spills the blood of men, women and children on the grounds of their racial and religious backgrounds. ISIL practices its radical ideology and pays no heed to international law. Life is highly cheap in Syria and the locals' freedoms are curtailed on a large scale. No iota of mercy is shown to women and wounded soldiers. The pictures of war victims, who lay in the streams of blood, fill one with a strong sense of hatred.

The idea of "man is man's wolf" comes true when the militant fighters reveal their megalomania and evil in the battle grounds. The ISIL insurgents behead the masses violently out of rage and discrimination. The fighters do not have basic knowledge of humanity and custom of war. The situation in the besieged, rebel-held neighborhoods of east Aleppo has "gone from terrible to terrifying to now barely survivable by human beings", UN humanitarian chief Stephen O'Brien told the UN Security Council during his monthly briefing. Civilians in rebel-held eastern Aleppo are expressing desperation over their survival as fighting between the government and the opposition carves deeper into their half of the city. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces intensified their push for control over eastern Aleppo.

They have reportedly captured a third of the area in what residents describe as an unrelenting ground and air campaign. The city, which was once Syria's largest, has been divided between government and opposition control since 2012. The UN reports that at least 250,000 civilians remain under siege in the eastern part of Aleppo. For months, they have faced severe shortages of basic supplies, including food, water and fuel, in addition to constant bombardment.

With fighting edging closer to their homes, many civilians have sought refuge in two main shelters, Jibreen and Mahalej, set up by the ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) in the west of the city. "Local authorities and humanitarian organizations do everything possible to help but the conditions are very dire, as we are talking about some 20,000 people fleeing into these places," the ICRC's communication coordinator Pawel Krzysiek is cited as saying.

The protracted war in Syria inflicted countless casualties upon the civilians, mainly women and children who have nothing to do with the war. After all, the ethnic minority groups bear the brunt of the militancy on the basis of their race and beliefs. For instance, Yazidi women fall victim to sexual harassment of Al-Baghdadi's fighters.

The Syrian freedom fighters resorted to armed conflict to protest against Assad's regime and establish a democratic administration based on public election. The victory of Arab Spring was the only gleam of hope for Syrian people and prompted them to seek democracy through any possible means. They dreamed of utopian world where they could exercise their rights and liberty without any barriers. According to the public belief, the traditional type of kingdom, in which the throne was handed from father to the son, was over and it was time to embrace democracy so that all should have equal share and active role in the government - it is the very rights of a nation and legal demand.

To their unmitigated chagrin, their dreams did not come true and the tension led to the proxy war, in which the ISIL plays a highly active role in it. This war imposed irreparable loss to this country and painful sufferings upon the Syrian nation. The situation has been changed worse than Iraq as the state reacted strongly against the legal demand of the nation. In other words, the Arab Spring started and went on gloriously but finally came to a stalemate in Syria.

Approximately 400,000 Syrians have been killed in the conflict that dates back to a 2011 popular uprising against Assad's regime, according to the UN.

In addition, about five million have fled into neighboring countries over the years, while six million remain internally displaced. The UN has described the situation as the "biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time".

It is believed that current wars will lead to the spread of terrorism since the terrorist networks along with political mastermind fish in the troubled waters. What if the warring parties win the battle in Syria? Will the Syrian nation establish a democratic administration? No way. It will fall in the grip of terrorism the same as Iraq or Afghanistan. The ISIL seeks its political interests there and that is why the fighters muddy the water. In case of the regime's downfall, the ISIL will claim share in the country's control and will resort to terrorist acts while being denied.

It is believed that the ISIL group operates as a terrorist network in Syria and has to be eradicated by the world. The first issue is that ISIL fighters are widely involved in anti-human crimes. Secondly, it is based on no legal basis and blackmails the world through carrying out suicide attacks not only in the Middle East but around the globe. In a nutshell, ISIL came out of Iraq and Syria's tension to usher in ideological and religious wars, perhaps to fill the vacuum of Osama's death or strengthen some warring parties which are moribund.

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A Better Global Framework to End AIDS

By Isabella Lövin and Michel Sidibé

This week, we celebrate the tremendous progress that has been made in the struggle against HIV and AIDS. In many countries with strong health systems, HIV is no longer a death sentence, but a chronic condition. And Africa has reached a critical milestone: each year, there are now more Africans starting HIV treatment than being infected.

Still, even as we celebrate, we must also mourn the 1.1 million people who lost their lives to the disease this year. HIV still infects 6,000 people every day, and AIDS remains a leading cause of death among children, adolescents, and women in Africa.

The movement against AIDS has inspired all of us to help the people who continue to be left behind, and to commit to ending AIDS once and for all. Fortunately, we already have the know-how, resources, and, crucially, the political momentum to do this; and at the High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS this year, United Nations member states made ambitious commitments that will put us on the fast track toward our goal.

What's more, in September, Canada hosted a successful financing conference for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, which brought in almost \$13 billion, replenishing the Global Fund for 2017-2019. Meanwhile, individual countries have increased their domestic investments, and international partners - big and small - have maintained their support, which is how we will reach the \$26 billion needed for the global AIDS response in 2020.

But funding parts of the global health system is not enough. The international community must take a more holistic view and reinforce a global-response architecture that features a clear division of labor and seamless cooperation among various stakeholders. Ultimately, the goal of such a framework must be to support countries' own health systems, by marshaling public and private actors at all levels in a given country, so that every facility - from the public hospital in the capital to the village clinic - is properly provisioned.

Sweden is proud to continue its support for the Global Fund; at the replenishment conference in September, it pledged 2.5 billion krona (\$271 million). The Global Fund is by far the largest multilateral source of financing for efforts to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria; but just like the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (now known as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance), it is part of a global architecture, and relies on a range of partners to deliver aid effectively. So, if country-level support for other global-health organizations - such as UNAIDS, the World Health Organization, and the UN Development Programme - dries up, continued progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS will be at risk.

Providing the necessary support will require donors to coordinate with one another, so that all parts of the existing architecture for managing global health issues are adequately funded. This will then ensure that all countries - and, more

importantly, all people - receive the support they need.

UNAIDS is setting a powerful example for international collaboration, by organizing partners around a common 2016-2021 Strategy to end AIDS.

This unique and innovative partnership brings together 11 co-sponsoring UN agencies, each with diverse sector-specific expertise, and mobilizes various government stakeholders. Partners include business, community, and faith leaders, as well as teachers, judges, members of law enforcement, parliamentarians, and many others outside the health sector whose actions nonetheless affect health outcomes.

One of UNAIDS' tasks is to encourage national governments to keep AIDS high on their public-health agendas, and to invest in joint efforts to end the disease. It is also the only organization with a mandate to set norms and standards for the global response to AIDS, which means that it plays a key role in the current international framework.

UNAIDS maintains a close partnership with the Global Fund. It has a presence in more than 80 countries, and its regional teams provide technical support and strategic information, which helps the Global Fund direct its grants to the right programs, locations, and populations at sufficient scale. Moreover, it helps to create the social, legal, and political conditions for people to use health services, not least by promoting gender equality and ensuring that populations at higher risk of contracting HIV do not face adverse discrimination.

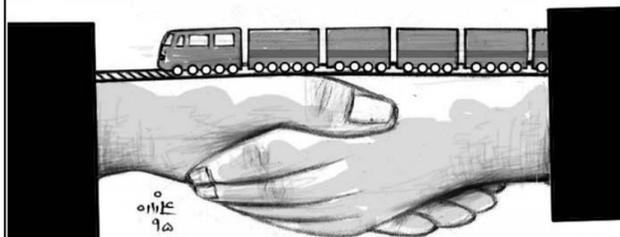
UNAIDS engages with civil society at all levels, by leveraging the international AIDS response to promote equality, dignity, and human rights around the world. As such, UNAIDS works to expand the political space for - and investment in - civil society.

Yet, despite its broad mandate and many functions, UNAIDS lacks adequate resources, which threatens past achievements and future programs alike, and poses a danger to people and communities that depend on the lifesaving support the organization helps facilitate.

Sweden and UNAIDS will work together to ensure that the international AIDS response continues to transform - and save - lives. We will safeguard and empower women and girls, and make sure that vulnerable populations' voices are heard. But, at the same time, the international community must strengthen the existing framework for managing global-health issues. As Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said in Montreal in September: "Today we are focusing on the Global Fund, but tomorrow let's not forget to provide sufficient funding for the entire global health architecture."

It is time for the international community to meet that challenge, by pledging to support our global health infrastructure, so that no agency - and no country or person - is left out. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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