

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



December 03, 2018

## Empowering Persons with Disabilities

Today is going to be observed as Inter Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPwD) around the world. The day was first proclaimed by United Nations General Assembly in 1992 and since then the day is being observed every year with a certain theme. This year, the theme of the day is 'Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'. The theme emphasizes that people with disabilities must be empowered for an inclusive, equitable and sustainable development as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is really imperative that a society must ensure that all its residents get their due rights. And these rights must be ensured without any sort of discrimination as all the members of the society stand equal as far as justice and fair play are concerned. In particular, the rights of the special people - the people suffering from different sorts of disabilities, must also be ascertained through proper policies and actions by the relevant authorities. The underdeveloped and the developing countries, in particular, need to give proper attention towards the disabled as such countries face many other problems to tackle with; therefore, they are not capable of giving time and attention to them. Moreover, in such countries the opportunities and proper arrangements are not there that can help the disabled to fight with the harsh challenges of life and be the part of normal lives. Afghanistan is one of the similar types of countries where the opportunities are limited for the disabled.

Some NGOs on certain occasions made some efforts in this regard. They have provided fund and support to uplift their standard of living. Such efforts, if followed and monitored with determination, consistency and honest intentions will definitely support the disabled to live normal life and become productive citizens of the society. In addition, positive attitude of the society can assist the disabled in developing optimistic approach towards life and bring prosperity and development not only to themselves but to the country, as well.

Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the negative attitude of the people towards the disabled may discourage them to a large extent. Unluckily, it can be observed in our country that both the government and the people do not treat them properly. Although Afghanistan has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, concrete steps are not taken yet in that regard. According to the convention people with disabilities must be given all the opportunities of having proper treatment and the feasibilities to live their daily lives normally. Unfortunately, the government of Afghanistan has been suffering on both the fronts. The medical facilities for the disabled are in no way sufficient. Hospitals and care centers for them are not enough, while the existing ones suffer seriously from the lack of modern equipments. The methods of treatment are obsolete. The compensations or improvements that can be made in their lives are not realized appropriately and they go unchecked. Furthermore, the endeavors of government to support them in their daily lives need to be invigorated and they should be supported voluminously. However, it should be noted that the financial compensation alone is not enough to support their families. At present, the disabled people receive about 500 Afghanis a month from the government, which seems negligible, keeping in mind the rising inflation. It should be noted that more important than the compensation is the job opportunities and vocational training. That will support the disabled people in standing on their own and live a life of self-esteem and reverence. They cannot keep on depending on the favor of the government indefinitely - if the government feels sympathy they should get their share, if not they will stay underprivileged.

Another important issue in this regard is the response of the fellow citizens towards the people with disabilities. Instead of assisting them out, most of the people further torture them by their discriminatory and even abusive attitude. There are many instances when such people are socially neglected. Since, they are not able to do the things in the way the other people do, they are considered weird and even called with various inapt titles.

The families with economic hardships and other difficulties curse their children with disabilities and treat them as burden on the family. Many of them are forced to go for begging; in addition, it is hard to find people who readily get into any type of relation with the disabled people. In particular, the females who are with disabilities do not get proper chances of getting married. They remain neglected throughout most part of their lives and suffer from severe kind of social isolation. It is really imperative to understand the difficulties faced by the people with disabilities; whether the disabled are so naturally or as the aftermath of disasters or wars, they should be treated appropriately.

The government has to make sure that they receive all the facilities for their treatment and modern facilities are available for them free of cost, and they get feasibilities that may support them in living their daily lives about normally. On the other hand there should be marked changes in the attitude through which the fellow citizens treat the disabled people; in particular, they should be considered equal human beings.



## Ghazni IDPs: Worsening Condition with Entering the Cold Season

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Hundreds of families who have been displaced due to the recent conflicts in Ghazni districts (Jaghori, Uruzgan and Malistan) are living under harsh living conditions with entering the winter season. From one hand, they have lost everything in war. For example their livestock were perished, their winter fuels have been ignited, their houses were destroyed, and their properties were looted. Now, they do not have any way of living to cope with their basic needs such as food and accommodation. On the other hand, the fear and concerns of Taliban aggressions are not completely dispelled. Some of the displaced families are still live in the west of Kabul while faced with numerous problems. From among the displaced families of Ghazni and Uruzgan, nearly hundreds of them are living at a mosque in the west of Kabul and the rest are living in other places, mostly at mosques. A number of them are burdened on their relative families in Kabul or Ghazni province while neither have a right condition to go back or stay.

Families are complaining about lack of hygiene, fuel and other materials needed for the cold weather, dozens of them are getting sick every day. According to the families, they want to return homes, but insecurity in their districts has forced them to stay in Kabul. "The situation is not good there. The schools are closed and teachers are all here," quoted from Juma Khan, member of a displaced family. "Before this there was no war in (Jaghori), but now we are afraid and cannot go back," said Nazanin, member of a displaced family. A young displaced boy, Farhad, said he along with his four brothers, mother and father were injured in clashes between security forces and Taliban in Jaghori district earlier this month. "The clashes have displaced the people. Before that, I was in school and had schedule for my activities," Farhad said.

"We were studying our lessons, but we have not attended our exams. We are here right now and we are faced with lack of food and every day we are sick," said Ali Ahmad, a resident of Ghazni who has been displaced to Kabul. Although in a corner of the mosque there are separate places for the displaced families to prepare food and wash their cloths, but they said the facilities are not enough and that they will face more challenges as the weather is getting cold. "The situation has not changed, still there is war," said Gul Bakht, a displaced resident of Ghazni. The families said they are supported by local

people in terms of food, accommodation, clothing and other necessary items. "At least 240 people are living here in a space of 30 to 40 square meters. It is about two weeks they are living in this space which even has not enough oxygen," said Haji Shah Wali, a local resident.

In the meantime, a praying ceremony was held in another part of Kabul for 52 people who, their relatives say, they lost their lives in recent clashes in Jaghori, Malistan and Khas Uruzgan districts. "Over 50 families have held the praying ceremony in this mosque and every family has lost their members who were mostly their breadwinners," said Ahmad Shah Nawazi, a resident of Jaghori. "There are lots of concerns regarding Jaghori, because if the people return to their homes, there is no guarantee over their security," said Fahim Sadiqi, a resident of Jaghori. While the families raised concerns over continued insecurity in their provinces that has forced them to remain in Kabul, the Interior Ministry said security will be maintained in Jaghori, Malistan and Khas Uruzgan districts.

Statistics by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) show that around 4,000 families have been displaced due to recent fights in central region, Ghazni province. However, the situation in some regions has turned normal there. Most of the Residents of Uruzgan, Malistan and Jaghori went back but the bordered area with Taliban is still under treats. The clashes in Jaghori district started last month and Taliban launched coordinated attacks from few directions on the district. Following the attack on Jaghori, Taliban attacked on the neighbor district, Malistan. The clashes between security forces and Taliban continued for around two weeks which was followed by sharp critics from the public.

Similar attacks have been increasingly carried out on Hazara community in recent years. Taliban and IS have been accused of committing human rights violations against certain group of people. In the capital, Kabul, Hazaras have suffered repeated violence. Hundreds have died in the attacks, which have targeted Hazara protests, Shi'ite mosques, and shrines. IS has invariably claimed such attacks to create sectarian division in the country. Afghan authorities accept the recent fighting has forced thousands of Hazara families to seek shelter in the city of Ghazni, Bamyan and Kabul.

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## Angela Merkel's Long Goodbye

By: Joschka Fischer

With Angela Merkel having announced that she will step down as leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and not seek reelection as chancellor when her current term ends in 2021, Germany is approaching a watershed moment. Since 1949, the country has had only eight chancellors, which means that Merkel's departure will be anything but an everyday occurrence. Moreover, a change at the top in Germany is usually accompanied by broader political and social change.

Merkel's decision was not entirely unexpected. Having elected her for the fourth time in September 2017, German voters were unlikely to give her a fifth term. People tire of leaders over time. Even without her recent announcement, it thus could have been assumed that Merkel's current term would be her last.

But the ongoing transformation of Germany's domestic and foreign-policy position is more important than a change in leadership. International ruptures are shaking the very foundations of Germany's post-war democracy. Under President Donald Trump, the United States has repudiated the West and everything it stands for. On March 29, 2019, the United Kingdom will leave the European Union. And to the east, China has emerged as a new global power.

More broadly, the world's economic center of gravity is quickly shifting from the North Atlantic to East Asia. The digital revolution, big data, and artificial intelligence are changing the way we work and live. And the EU's internal crises have not just continued but intensified, while chronic turmoil in the Middle East and Africa represents a persistent external risk to Europe's stability.

These and other developments have shaken Germany's once-firm foreign-policy footing. For years, the country's economic model and security strategy have both centered around integration with the West and Germany's role within the EU. But today's challenges require a new strategic outlook. The question for the next chancellor will be: "Quo vadis, Germany?"

Wherever Germany is heading, one thing is already clear: the transition from Merkel to her successor will bring about a far-reaching reorganization of the country's party system. For decades, the center-right CDU (in alliance with the Bavaria-based Christian Social Union) and the center-left Social Democratic Party have served as the two great guarantors of political continuity and stability. But, like mainstream parties across Europe, the CDU/CSU and the SPD are now in crisis. The SPD has lost so much support that it may not survive; and while the CDU/CSU is still the strongest single force in German politics, it is facing a deep structural challenge.

Since 1949, the CDU/CSU's "sister-party" structure has routinely allowed it to secure the chancellorship as the largest party bloc in majority coalitions. But in an enlarged, reunified Germany with seven separate parties holding seats in the Bundestag, this arrangement no longer works as well as

it once did.

In the years preceding Merkel's first election as chancellor in 2005, Germany had been governed by a coalition comprising the SPD and the Greens (in which I served as vice chancellor and foreign minister). During that period, Germany underwent a painful adjustment as the welfare state was brought into line with the post-reunification realities of high unemployment and a new economic geography. At the same time, German foreign policy had to be adjusted to account for the country's new role in the context of the 1990s post-Yugoslav wars, and to address the threat of international terrorism after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, reunification, and a period of high unemployment and seemingly endless reforms, Germans had experienced quite enough excitement. Merkel's chancellorship was meant to put an end to all of that. Cool pragmatism became the order of the day. With the economy booming, it seemed as though the sun was always shining and the skies were always blue. Hovering above it all was "Mutti" (Mommy), simply letting things take their course. German voters saw little reason not to elect her three more times.

Now, the sunny days are gone. The emergence of a new global order presents policymakers and politicians with weighty strategic questions that cannot be ignored or deferred. Chief among them is what role Germany - and Europe - should carve out for itself in the years to come. A decade hence, where will we as Europeans stand, and what will we stand for?

Merkel does not offer satisfactory answers to such questions. With her consummate pragmatism, she has become her own worst enemy. Even when she has made great - indeed, historic - decisions, they have been based on narrow, short-term political considerations. Merkel's phasing out of Germany's nuclear power plants, suspension of compulsory military service, and responses to the 2008 financial crisis were merely tactical moves. The one exception came in 2015, when she took a moral stand and opened Germany's doors to one million refugees.

Merkel's approach to the financial crisis would turn out to be her biggest mistake. At the time, she opposed a joint European response, instead advocating national-level measures and mere coordination among eurozone governments. The entire European project has been off track ever since.

Of course, Merkel will be remembered as the chancellor of the "peace dividend" and, possibly, as the last chancellor of the post-war (West) German party system. But Europe's persistent crisis will now form part of her legacy as well, and it will pose a difficult challenge to her successors.

What comes next is anyone's guess. Much will depend on whether Germany, together with France, continues to pursue its European mission.

Joschka Fischer, Germany's foreign minister and vice chancellor from 1998 to 2005, was a leader of the German Green Party for almost 20 years

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