

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



December 05, 2018

The Role of Parliament in Afghanistan

The parliament in Afghanistan can be referred to as National Assembly, which carries out legislative work in the country. The Assembly is an important organ of government, where laws are made. The Afghan National Assembly has two chambers, one is the Wolesi Jirga and the other is the Meshrano Jirga. Members of the Wolesi Jirga from all over the country, through a free choice of people are elected in accordance with the election law directives for a five-year term of office. It has 249 members. The Meshrano Jirga, on the other hand, has 102 members. One third of them, 34, are elected by provincial councils, another one-third, or 34 from district councils, and one-third of them, or 34 by the president, from distinguished individuals (scholars, scholars, Kuchis, the disabled and the disadvantaged) are appointed.

According to Article 81 of the Constitution of the country, the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is the most prestigious legislative body, which represents the will of its people and their rights.

A government system that has a parliament is considered by many experts as the best guarantee of the democratic system. Because it is based on the participation of the people. In general, the existence of a parliament means the rule of law, and it is a parliament in which representatives of all groups and units negotiate and represent the political unity of a country. The National Assembly in Afghanistan discusses and ratifies all laws, with the exception of the constitution. The rules are first to be considered and approved in the Wolesi Jirga, and then goes to the Meshrano Jirga. Funding is first sent to the Meshrano Jirga for study and approval, and then comes to the Wolesi Jirga.

One of the most important tasks of parliament is legislation but its role is not limited to legislation. Parliaments in the current world are multi-tasking centers. It is can be like a central nervous system of a country that is based on true democracy. Parliament, in accordance with the needs and changes of the time, refines the law and acts like the mirror of the community.

One of the other most important tasks of the parliament in the present day is to monitor the performance of the executive branch. This will enable the parliament to review the executive branch in different sections, taking into account the principle of executive responsibility vis-a-vis the parliament. The monitoring operation is carried out in a variety of ways. The most common of these methods is done in three ways:

1- Question 2- Emergency discussion. 3- Committees of inquiry.

Since parliamentarians are elected by the people, they can supervise all executive functions and oversee the work of the government by questioning and impeaching ministers and setting up research committees or regulatory bodies. Even the parliament can give the head of state or ministers a vote of no confidence and lead to the collapse of the government.

It can be observed that in all political systems, parliaments have considerable discretion over political oversight over executive power. The result of this kind of monitoring is that the executive branch must be held accountable to the parliament from a political standpoint. In accordance with the provisions of the constitution of Afghanistan, the National Assembly exercises its political control over the government through the following:

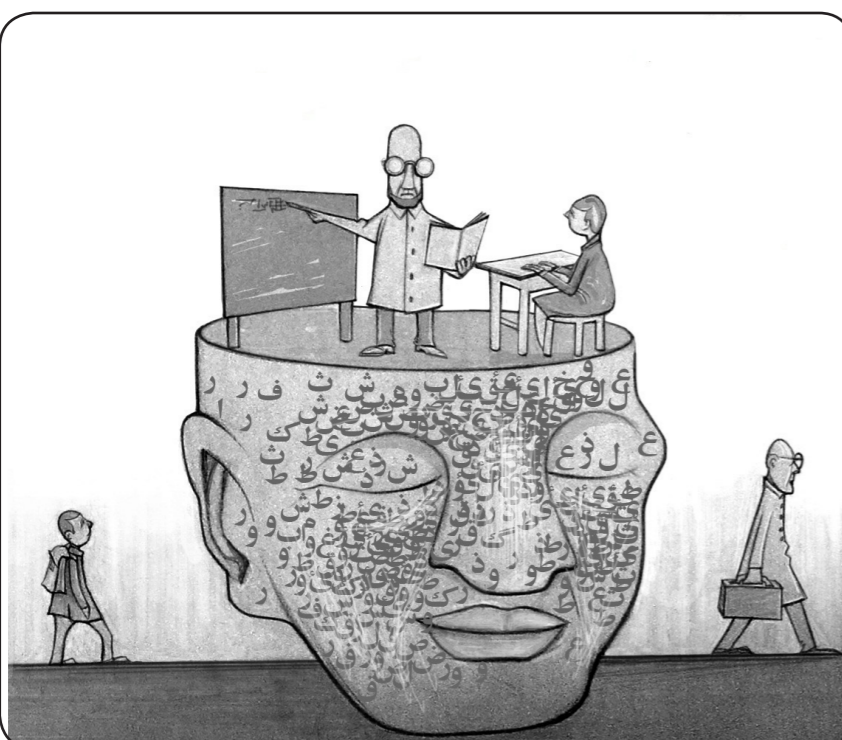
Through voting, delegates can monitor the benefits and function of the government. It means that in determining the members of the cabinet or government the consent of the parliament is a prerequisite, and if the members of the cabinet fails to obtain parliamentary approval, they cannot be assigned a duty.

In Afghanistan, in accordance with Articles 64 and 157 of the Constitution, the appointment of ministers, the Attorney General, the head of the Central Bank, the head of national security, the head of state, and the appointment of the commission for the monitoring of the implementation of the constitution are determined by the approval of the Wolesi Jirga.

The accountability of the executive branch to the parliament is because the parliament has called for the representation of the people, and therefore the executive branch must be under constant control and supervision. The strongest element that gives power to parliamentary democracy is the same task of accountability.

Members of the parliament, as representatives of the people, have a duty to discuss important national issues. The discussion of important issues sometimes comes at the request of the government, sometimes by the demand of a number of parliamentarians or opposition parties, at the request of the parliament itself.

However, it has been observed in Afghanistan that the parliament members do not fulfill all these duties. Firstly, because the presidential system in the country tries to dominate the parliament and deprive its members of their due roles and authorities. Secondly, the parliament members do not have enough capacity to run the affairs of the parliament and their roles as per the requirements of the system. Let's hope that the parliament members, who will be announced successful in the elections that have already passed, will perform their duties and provide this institution its true position as per the Constitution of the country.



Reactions to Collective Transfer of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

After the July deadly attacks on Hindu and Sikhs in the Nangarhar province which left 19 people dead and dozens wounded, the World Sikh Organization of Canada (WSO) have advocated the Canadian government to recognize Hindus and Sikhs of Afghanistan as vulnerable minorities and develop an appropriate plan to directly evacuate them to Canada. Following this, The Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship of Canada, Ahmed Hussen, as quoted, said on Tuesday that the Canadian government is working on a plan to approve private sponsorship and resettlement of Sikh and Hindu citizens of Afghanistan who have fled the country due to religious persecution. The offer has had different social reactions in Afghanistan, especially in social media networks.

The Afghan Hindus and Sikhs thanked and welcomed the offer but complained about inability of Afghan government in securing their rights and freedoms. Nirindar Seng Khalsa, the only Hindu and Sikhs candidate for the House of Representatives in Afghanistan, said that the government of Afghanistan has not given any rights to Hindu and Sikh citizens in the last few years. Mr. Khalsa adds that if the government gave their rights and living facilities, they would not compel to abandon their homeland. Khalsa says that the rights which are considered for other Afghan citizens are not considered for them. He stress that they have repeatedly asked the government for the acquisition of property, but no attention has been paid. "We understand that there is war in Afghanistan, but if our rights are given, we will never leave our homeland," he summed up.

It seems that life has been increasingly hard for them in the few last years. They have repeatedly complained about the bad behavior of citizens in the city and in schools with their children. Mr. Khalsa says, "They have encountered a lot of problems during the burning of the corps bodies. Three days ago, when they wanted to burn one of their corps body at its place, the people threw them stones and prevented them from running the ceremony, he says. With these conditions how we can stay in Afghanistan? What's left for us, our honor and dignity and our land was usurped. It's good to seek refuge in another country," he says.

Sikhs and Hindus are from the religious minorities in Afghanistan. According to official statistics, three decades ago, some 200,000 Hindu and Sikh families lived in Afghanistan, but now, based on the Khalsa's saying there are about 250 Hindu and Sikh families throughout Afghanistan. Whereas, most of them belong to Sikh people who have no accommodation and living facilities. They live in Kabul, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Qandahar, Herat, Qundoz and Helmand. Mr. Khanza says that he has been one of the social activists and he would not leave the country until there is a single Hin-

du and Sikhs in Afghanistan. He says, I have pledged to my people to remain beside them either inside or outside of Afghanistan.

After the recent attacks on Sikh candidate in Nangarhar province, the Hindu and Sikh community of Canada wrote a letter to the Afghan consulate in Canada, asking for the security of minorities in Afghanistan. In the mentioned incident, dozens of innocent Sikhs killed and injured. Javad Soltani, a sociologist, says that and ethnic contradictions, has grown more than ever, especially in the era of president Ghani, and now hatreds and social dissatisfaction are appeared in one or other way. Mr. Soltani said: "The current conditions for minorities are the conditions for death and life, their life is in danger. We must give them the right to seek the ways for their survival." "Mr. Soltani continues that collective moving of Hindus and Sikhs from the country is a great shame for all of us.

Naeem Nazari, a civil activist, says that Hindus and Sikhs of Afghanistan are leaving Afghanistan because of inevitability. Mr. Nazari adds that the governments of Afghanistan and a number of citizens have so far neglected the religious rights and freedoms of Hindus and Sikhs. Mr. Nazari continued that leaving of Hindus and Sikhs from Afghanistan could be a disgrace to the people and the government of Afghanistan. He says that it is a painful situation as they are forced to leave the country and if we look realistically there is no chance for religious freedom and citizenship to these minorities in Afghanistan.

Thus, a number of social media network users also reacted to the matter. Some expressed that they are happy because their peaceful compatriots are reaching human rights and better facilities. Others say that they do not know whether they are happy or upset. Qanbar Ali Tabish, a university professor wrote in his face-book "this news made me happy and also upset. This made me happy because they will not be humiliated because of their race and religion and will not be victimized by terrorist attacks any more. No one will bother their children in schools and streets. I am also upset because a group of peaceful people are compelled to move because of our behavior."

Nabi Sultani, another face-book user, wrote: "I am happy from the plan for moving the Afghan Hindus and Sikh citizens. We were not good compatriots and we will never be in the future. Let them go; they can have better life and facilities in Canada." Shah Hussain Murtazawi, Deputy to the President's Spokesperson, says, "according to the law the citizens can obtain the citizenship of other countries. Anyone can choose to gain the citizenship of a second country."

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Beyond GDP

By: Joseph E. Stiglitz

Just under ten years ago, the International Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress issued its report, Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up. The title summed it up: GDP is not a good measure of wellbeing. What we measure affects what we do, and if we measure the wrong thing, we will do the wrong thing. If we focus only on material wellbeing - on, say, the production of goods, rather than on health, education, and the environment - we become distorted in the same way that these measures are distorted; we become more materialistic.

We were more than pleased with the reception of our report, which spurred an international movement of academics, civil society, and governments to construct and employ metrics that reflected a broader conception of wellbeing. The OECD has constructed a Better Life Index, containing a range of metrics that better reflect what constitutes and leads to wellbeing. It also supported a successor to the Commission, the High Level Expert Group on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. Last week, at the OECD's sixth World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge, and Policy in Incheon, South Korea, the Group issued its report, Beyond GDP: Measuring What Counts for Economic and Social Performance.

The new report highlights several topics, like trust and insecurity, which had been only briefly addressed by Mismeasuring Our Lives, and explores several others, like inequality and sustainability, more deeply. And it explains how inadequate metrics have led to deficient policies in many areas. Better indicators would have revealed the highly negative and possibly long-lasting effects of the deep post-2008 downturn on productivity and wellbeing, in which case policymakers might not have been so enamored of austerity, which lowered fiscal deficits, but reduced national wealth, properly measured, even more.

Political outcomes in the United States and many other countries in recent years have reflected the state of insecurity in which many ordinary citizens live, and to which GDP pays scant attention. A range of policies focused narrowly on GDP and fiscal prudence has fueled this insecurity. Consider the effects of pension "reforms" that force individuals to bear more risk, or of labor-market "reforms" that, in the name of boosting "flexibility," weaken workers' bargaining position by giving employers more freedom to fire them,

leading in turn to lower wages and more insecurity. Better metrics would, at the minimum, weigh these costs against the benefits, possibly compelling policymakers to accompany such changes with others that enhance security and equality.

Spurred on by Scotland, a small group of countries has now formed the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. The hope is that governments putting wellbeing at the center of their agenda will redirect their budgets accordingly. For example, a New Zealand government focused on wellbeing would direct more of its attention and resources to childhood poverty.

Better metrics would also become an important diagnostic tool, helping countries both identify problems before matters spiral out of control and select the right tools to address them. Had the US, for example, focused more on health, rather than just on GDP, the decline in life expectancy among those without a college education, and especially among those in America's deindustrialized regions, would have been apparent years ago. Likewise, metrics of equality of opportunity have only recently exposed the hypocrisy of America's claim to be a land of opportunity: Yes, anyone can get ahead, so long as they are born of rich, white parents. The data reveal that the US is riddled with so-called inequality traps: Those born at the bottom are likely to remain there. If we are to eliminate these inequality traps, we first have to know that they exist, and then ascertain what creates and sustains them.

A little more than a quarter-century ago, US President Bill Clinton ran on a platform of "putting people first." It is remarkable how difficult it is to do that, even in a democracy. Corporate and other special interests always seek to ensure that their interests come first. The massive US tax cut enacted by the Trump administration at this time last year is an example, par excellence. Ordinary people - the dwindling but still vast middle class - must bear a tax increase, and millions will lose health insurance, in order to finance a tax cut for billionaires and corporations.

If we want to put people first, we have to know what matters to them, what improves their wellbeing, and how we can supply more of whatever that is. The Beyond GDP measurement agenda will continue to play a critical role in helping us achieve these crucial goals.

Joseph E. Stiglitz is the winner of the 2001 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. His most recent book is *Globalization and its Discontents Revisited: Anti-Globalization in the Era of Trump*.

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