

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



December 06, 2015

Mass Killing in California

A couple of days earlier a couple massacred 14 people and wounded 21 others at a year-end office party in San Bernardino, California - the deadliest mass shooting in the United States since the Newtown school massacre in 2012.

The two attackers were later killed in a gun battle with police. They were US-born Syed Rizwan Farook and Pakistani national Tashfeen Malik and they had an arsenal of ammunition and pipe bombs in their Redlands home.

The investigators are trying to find out the real motive behind the attacks and they are now investigating the case as an act of terrorism. According to FBI Director James Comey, "The investigation so far has developed indications of radicalization by the killers, and of potential inspiration by foreign terrorist organizations," He added, however, that there was no indication that Syed Farook, 28, and his 29-year-old Pakistani wife Tashfeen Malik were part of a network.

David Bowdich, the assistant FBI director in charge of the Los Angeles office told reporters that investigators were examining a Facebook posting in which Malik is believed to have pledged allegiance to Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, made around the time of Wednesday's attack.

The massacre, if proven to be terror-related, would be the deadliest such assault on American soil since the September 11, 2001 attacks. However, it is already evident that it is yet another example of mass shooting in US and adds a bad chapter to the list of such killings that have been carried out around the world mostly by individuals because of psychological perversions or perverted behaviors. However, there are possibilities that the killings allegedly carried out by Farook and Malik may have some different reasons.

Unfortunately, mass killings have a long history within human societies. They have taken place in different parts of world with different intensities, reasons and outcomes. Apart from the mass shooting in United States, there have been many other incidents as well around the world that have depicted the worst manifestation of violence by human beings. One such incident happened in Norway on July 22, 2011. The incident was carried out by Anders Behring Breivik. He set off a fertilizer bomb that tore the facade of the high-rise that housed the government's headquarters, and drove toward Utoya unhindered as chaos reigned in the capital. Arriving on Utoya, disguised as a police officer and armed with a handgun and semi-automatic rifle, he unleashed a shooting massacre that sent panicked teenagers fleeing into a chilly lake or hiding behind rocks to save their lives. More than half of the victims were teenagers - the youngest had turned 14 five days earlier.

The incidents mentioned above clearly show how brutal such incidents can be. However, they depict the worst manifestation of violence in human behavior.

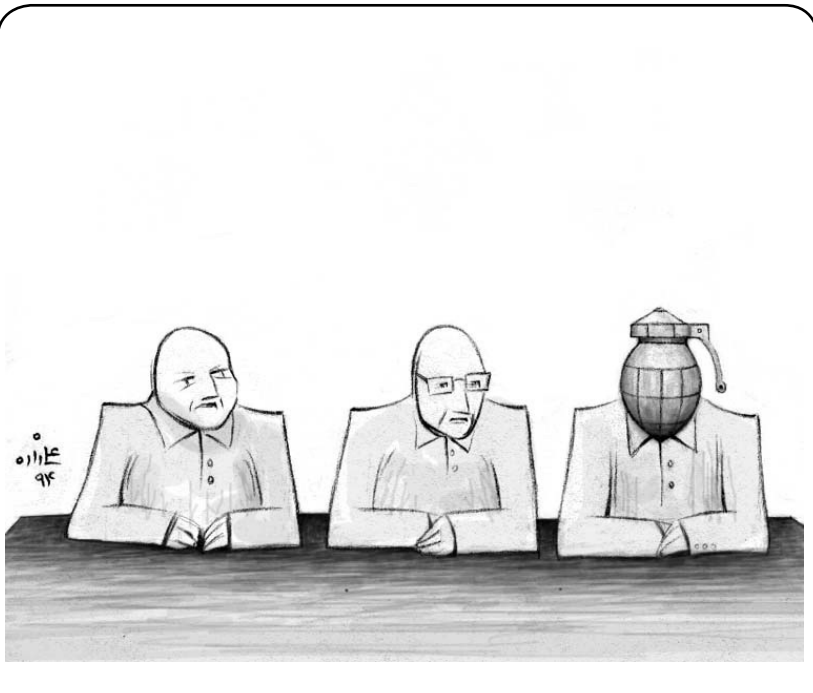
Though they are not very much systematic and happen randomly, they have been able to happen quite often in history. Some of the major reasons behind such actions are; psychopathy and depression, social isolation, insecurity, the impacts of movies and video-games and gothic cults. The impacts of such incidents are tremendous, long-lasting and agonizing. The ones who are able to escape such incidents can never erase the horrible chapters from their psychology and may be haunted by constant fear that may give rise to some sorts of psychological problems. On the other hand, the relatives of the victims, the spectators and the entire community cannot escape the influences and have to undergo an ugly experience.

As such incidents are carried out randomly and mostly in isolation, without consultation with others and in solitary abodes, there are great difficulties in stopping such incidents. The only way to counter them is to strive to reduce their consequences. On the other hand, some very important changes can be brought in social setup to reduce the social and psycho-social problems. As most of these incidents are because of the psycho-social behavior, the authorities and all the people can play their roles in making societies participatory, caring and dominated by positive and healthy social interactions.

It is because of the mechanical approaches in our society that give rise to the problems like depression, isolation and delinquency. Human beings are not born as criminals and killers; it is the societies that make them so.

The problems and troubles that human beings face in their social lives make them criminals, delinquents and murderers if they are not able to react to them appropriately. Unfortunately, the belief systems that can play a very dominant role in providing contentment and satisfaction to human beings and can deal with their spiritual and emotional lives to a satisfactory extent are themselves the cause of division and hatred within human race. They, on most of the occasions, make human beings cruel enough not to bother while killing their fellow beings mercilessly.

In fact, behind most of such incidents, the society is involved in some way or the other. Today, it can be claimed that they are carried out individually, but it is sure that they have their roots in the social atmosphere. Human societies need to take responsibility for such actions and should try to amend the circumstances that lead to such incidents.



Trilateral Efforts for Peace Talk

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghan nation suffers from political instability and there is a sense of fear and despair in the air. Militancy continues unabated. The wall of mistrust between nation and state has grown high. A great number of Afghan people cross the border to flee the insecurity.

"At the moment 40 percent of terrorists who are fighting against us are those who have been released from our own prisons. Those who have released these terrorists from our prisons must apologize to the nation." These words were spoken by Afghan Chief of Army Staff General Shah Shahim. He might have alluded to the release of the Taliban militants during Karzai's presidency. As a result, more than 500 prisoners have been freed from Bagram Prison by the decree of Afghan ex-president Hamid Karzai. The repeated release of terrorist, mainly a group of 88 "dangerous prisoners", drew the condemnation of Afghan MPs and led to tension between Kabul and Washington. Although, Karzai sought to persuade his "discontented brothers" through his generous act to sit on the table of negotiation, nonetheless he failed to reap a fruitful result within the last decade of his administration.

The Afghan government decided to hold negotiations with Taliban militants as a mechanism to end terrorism. President Karzai constantly called on the Taliban to join the peace process. In late 2008 he even offered to provide security for the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Omar, if he agreed to peace talks - this was not incentive enough.

On June 18, 2013, Taliban opened an office as the first move towards peace deal after 12-years of fighting, but it enraged Afghan President by styling itself as an unofficial embassy for a government-in-exile. Mr. Karzai raised his concerns about the peace process not being Afghan-led. He suspended plans for Afghan officials to meet the Taliban in Qatar. His concerns were so great that US Secretary of State John Kerry had to promise that the Taliban flag and their sign reading "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" would be removed. The flag remained, albeit on a shorter flagpole.

The US President Barack Obama's administration supported peace talks with the Taliban after the US-led forces lost ground against the militants across Afghanistan.

The reconciliation process, which failed during Karzai's administration, continued up to the establishment of National Unity Government (NUG). The rift between Kabul and Washington was bridged as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani signed Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) - what Karzai held out against it despite Loya Jirga's agreement and persistence of US officials. Similarly, Pakistan hosted a face-to-face talk between Afghan officials and Taliban representatives for the first time in the hill resort of Murree near Islamabad on July 07, 2015 in what was described as an ice-breaker aimed at ending the 14-year-old conflict. Pakistani, US and Chinese officials also took part in that meeting, which ended with a

resolve to continue the dialogue. The discussion was concluded with an agreement to meet again after the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

However, the revelation of Mullah Omar's death - which was kept secret for two years - on July 29 stalled the talk. On top of this, Mullah Akhtar Mansour's appointment as Omar's successor was changed into a controversial issue and led to splinter group. Following the appointment, Mansour held out against peace negotiation and intensified the terrorist offensive in Afghanistan so as to gain further support. A number of terrorist networks' heads endorsed Mansour in a session held in Pakistan and called the splinter group to pledge allegiance to him as a legitimate leader.

Subsequently, a sense of mistrust resurfaced between Kabul and Islamabad. In the wake of escalated attacks and Taliban's open session in Pakistan, Afghan high-ranking officials, including the President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, charged Pakistani officials with insincerity. The tension disrupted the reconciliation process and Afghan authorities denied Pakistan's mediation stating to initiate an Afghan-led talk. Recently, Pakistani officials re-push Afghanistan to resume peace talk with the Taliban elements and assert that negotiation is the only way for bringing peace. In a visit to the United States, Pakistan's Army Chief General Raheel Sharif focused on reconciliation process about Afghanistan.

China urges both the countries to bury the differences and orchestrate peace talk with mutual cooperation. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated with a sense of delight that an agreement is brokered between Afghanistan and Pakistan on Monday to promote the Afghan peace process with "legitimate political actors" and take action against those who hold out to join the peace process. The understanding was reached at a meeting between President Ashraf Ghani and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the sideline of the Climate Change Conference in Paris, reports say.

Allegedly, Omar's successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour was wounded or even killed in the past days over a reported infighting between Mansour's supporters and opponents near the southern Pakistani city of Quetta - the claim which was rejected by the Taliban. "Local media, citing a former Taliban leader Mullah Amir Khan Mutaqi, has reported the death of Mansour on Thursday," local news said. It is believed that if Mansour has been died in the clash, the peace talk will be procrastinated once more - such cases have always posed impasse to peace negotiation. Hopefully, Afghan government will pay serious heed to security crisis, China will broker the Afghan-Pak tie and Pakistan will break the stalemate through nudging the Taliban elements to sit on the table of a genuine negotiation. In short, regional cooperation in promoting peace talk plays a key role in the country and sincerity is highly integral in continuing relations.

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Hard Work Needed

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

There may be many frightening factors in one's life but worrying about it and feeling disappointed has never solved any problem. The news of withdrawal of International forces last year has spread like a viral disease that hovered in the air and traveled fast and infects all those who heard it. This fear has not only made the people worry but also let them go to the farthest ends. When the fear occupies your mind, you consider every possible option open to you. There are people who are selling away their property and transferring their wealth to the foreign lands. There are those who are shifting their families to the other countries. There are those who have closed down their businesses and are looking forward to re-establish it outside the country.

Every factor adds more to the intensity of this fear and rumor. People talk about Taliban intensifying operation across country, emerging of ISIL, withdrawal of international forces and joblessness in their gatherings and mostly negative things are discussed. Similarly, most of the things shown or mentioned in the media are also negative, adding to the pessimism of the people. In this regard, there are very few who try to make the assessment of the situation with a positive and logical approach. On the other hand, if we observe the situation with an open mind keeping aside all our fears and before-hand information, the situation does not seem to be as worse as it is shown. First, the country has come a long way towards establishment and stability. Last 14 years were the years in which every effort was made to make the country stable and make its different departments and organs established and functional. No doubt, a large amount of aid that were meant for the progress and establishment of the country has been wasted in corruption and most of the objectives that these aids were meant for has not been achieved but even then, the country has come on a path from where it can continue its journey forward and gain the benefits of progress and stability.

Once, there was no established Army and anyone with enough money was able to establish an army of armed men and did whatever pleased him. This situation was dangerous with its outcomes as any such group never remains bound to any law or regulation and does whatever is necessary to achieve their objectives. This sparks an unending series of cruelties and problems in the society and mostly, these armed groups keep fighting against each other. This also results in the division of society into numerous factions, making it more vulnerable for the ethnic or racial confrontation.

The establishment of a well-organized Army and other security agencies closes down this door permanently and makes sure the observance of a single law in all the corners of the

country. This also ensures that the Army would be able to grow and get strong with the passage of time and its efficiency would grow with every passing day. This is a very pleasing and hopeful factor that we have now an established Army, well-trained and sufficiently equipped with the arms to ensure the law and order in the country.

No doubt, there would be some shortcomings in the standard or number of personnel of Army and there have also been some complaints against the behavior and practices of police but such exceptions should always be expected. No Army or police in the world is perfect and there have been such complaints from the police and army of established countries as well.

Most hopeful reason in this regard is the establishment and functionality of our educational institutes. Now, we see that a large number of schools and universities are functioning in different corners of the country that are working to educate our brothers and sisters and provide the country with skilled and educated experts who would run the country in the future. Once again, there are present many weak factors to be corrected but if there is present an educational system, the necessary corrections would happen with the passage of time and this is a slow and a long run process. Even in our neighboring countries, there are many complaints against the educational institutes but presence of system is still a satisfactory factor in these countries.

There are present a number of frightening factors like unemployment and absence of local industries but it should not be forgotten that loss of three decades cannot be recovered in a decade only. Greece, an established and educated country in Europe is also passing through worst economic crisis of its history so if we also have some, we need not to be much worried about them. It is also a fact that if our country was not established with the assistance our international allies, then it would be impossible to establish it in future.

It is also worth-mentioning here that we do not have any other option except to be confident on ourselves and abilities and work hard to bring this country among the developed nations of the world. The path of action is very clear now. We need to ignore all the negative elements and concentrate fully on the brighter side of the picture. Similarly, we need to change our behaviors and every Afghan should prefer country over personal benefits and objectives. In the presence of above realities, it is necessary that we all should think positively and expect good from the future of our country. This responsibility lies equally on common public and the media.

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