

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



December 10, 2017

Standing for Human Rights

All the human beings, just because of the fact that they are human, have certain rights. These rights are to make sure that human beings have secure life, favorable circumstances to live and have the basic requirements that can ensure a dignified life within a human society. One of the most remarkable achievements for the promotion and preservation of human rights was the adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1948. The day was 10th of December; therefore, today, December 10th is being celebrated as the International Human Rights Day. This year, the day is going to kick off a year-long campaign to mark the 70th anniversary of the Declaration. It was the same document which for the first time proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is the most translated document in the world, available in more than 500 languages.

Though the Declaration has been widely shared and disseminated, practical steps to safeguard the rights of human beings in different parts of the world have not gained strong support. Therefore, there are millions of people in the world, whose rights are violated in some way or the other.

Though human rights violations and issues are almost in every part of the world the underdeveloped and developing countries are suffering the most in this regard. Afghanistan is also a type of country wherein insufficient development and persistent instability, extremism and terrorism have violated the rights of men, women and children to a large extent. These all evils, in addition to violation of human rights have also made the tasks of those individuals and organizations difficult that have been active to safeguard human rights. However, there have been many brave individuals who have proved that they have the will and intention to stand strong and such people should be appreciated as much as possible.

Afghanistan needs to play a tremendous role in the area of human rights because of the basic reason that there have been evident violations of human rights on Afghan soil and they have even continued after so much emphasis and efforts. Even today there are many examples of clear violation of human rights throughout the country and they make the headlines in the national and international media, while there are many that go unrecorded. Looking at the plight of human rights in Afghan society, it is really important that the Afghan authorities must do something more than promises and commitments.

Unfortunately, Afghanistan lacks the basic democratic principles and the requirements of welfare state and therefore fail to provide the citizens their due rights. To be very specific about Afghanistan it can be said that a so-called democratic government has been installed, which has taken oath to provide the people their basic rights, yet there are millions who remain unattended.

For Afghan government and national organizations that want to develop a framework for the protection of human rights the United Nations Charter and UDHR can play a tremendous role.

Article 1 of the UDHR says, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Its preamble also emphasizes on the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Meanwhile, the preamble of the United Nations Charter reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the equal rights of men and women, while the Article 56 of the charter says, "All members pledge themselves to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organization for the achievement of the purposes set forth in Article 55, which suggests for '(a) higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; b) solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; c) international cultural and educational cooperation; d) universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.'"

The objective for Afghan government to play a tremendous role can be what is set forth in Article 55 of United Nations Charter. To be very much realistic about Afghanistan, one can say that guidelines are many; the only missing factor is practical measure. There is a wide gap between the guidelines/commitments and actions, and this gap becomes wider once the intentions and honesty are doubted; and in case of Afghanistan the gap is wider. Meanwhile, the scenario is no better on the individual level. Many individuals are not even sure about how to protect the rights of others. They, in their daily lives, violate the rights of the poor, women and children and do not even feel guilty about it. It is very important that the protection of the rights must start on the individual level as well and everybody must make sure to play his/her part.

Where is the International Community?

By Hujjatullah Zia

Civilians suffer severely as a result of war and militancy. Regional conflicts and terrorist acts have inflicted heavy sufferings and casualties upon them. Both states and terrorist networks are responsible for killing civilians, including women and children. Nowadays, non-combatants are burning amidst war and violence in different parts of the world, particularly in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar, and Afghanistan.

Since the start of conflict in Yemen, more than 20 million people, including 11 million children, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. Some 17 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from and 7 million are totally dependent on food assistance. Severe acute malnutrition is threatening the lives of almost 400,000 children. At least 14.8 million are without basic healthcare. Only 45 percent of the 3,500 health facilities are fully functioning. They have struggled to cope with the world's largest cholera outbreak, which has resulted in more than 913,000 suspected cases and 2,196 deaths since April 2017. Two million Yemenis are currently internally displaced due to the conflict and 188,000 others have fled to neighboring countries. More than 8,600 people have been killed and 49,000 injured since March 2015. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 2.5 million people have no access to clean water and one in every 12 is severely malnourished.

Civilians bear the brunt of the violence in Yemen. As well as causing the deaths and injuries of civilians, the conflict has exacerbated an already severe humanitarian crisis resulting from years of poverty and poor governance causing immense human suffering. In order to deny supplies to the Houthi forces, the Arab coalition imposed a partial aerial and naval blockade. This is severely limiting the import and provision of fuel and other essentials, obstructing access to food, water, humanitarian assistance and medical supplies and causing food prices to soar, creating a desperate situation for millions of people. Damage to key logistical infrastructure, including bridges, airports and seaports, from air strikes has also severely hampered the movement of crucial humanitarian supplies.

For two years, much of the world has ignored this raging conflict and heard little about its devastating consequences and human rights violation. A large number of Rohingya Muslims suffer on the grounds of their race and religion in Myanmar. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands of others were forced to flee their country as a result of cruel practices of Myanmar police. Al-

though the reports about the flagrant violation of human rights and civilian casualties in Myanmar went viral, officials in Myanmar claim that they fight militants.

Political upheavals and global war and violence wreaked havoc on countries and inflicted heavy casualties upon nations. Throughout the history, human societies sustained indescribable casualties in the wake of war, which mostly originated from lack of tolerance. There were many reasons behind war. Intolerance and claiming racial and religious superiority were the main reasons behind global wars. However, those bloody and destructive wars were not an eye-opener for the world. Human societies still suffer from violence and bloodshed.

To reduce the sufferings and casualties, human societies have found out the reasons behind violence as well as the solution. It has been said in the preamble of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". It further adds, "Disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind". Hence, underestimating human rights resulted in destructive wars; whereas respecting the natural rights and dignity of mankind is the cornerstone of a civil society. Despite realizing the grounds for war and solution to it, human societies are still bleeding and human fatalities continue unabated. On the one hand, terrorists spill the blood of men, women, and children, and on the other hand, states are involved in civilian casualties. For example, in the conflicts of Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar, states are highly responsible for killing civilians.

The widespread violation of human rights by the states shows negligence of the international community. The international community will have to put pressure on states not to infringe international instruments through violating human rights. War criminals ought to be brought to justice and the states that do not respect international law, must be sanctioned in some ways. Indeed, if the international community plays the role of a viewer, violence and bloodshed will never come to an end.

In brief, human rights violation, especially human casualties, is highly shocking. Launching a global, military campaign against terrorist networks will reduce militancy to a great extent. Similarly, being united against violators of human rights, be it a state or individual, will be a positive step in terms of advocating human rights and preventing from unnecessary wars.

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The High Cost of Denying Class War

The rise of populism on both sides of the Atlantic is being investigated psychoanalytically, culturally, anthropologically, aesthetically, and of course in terms of identity politics. The only angle left unexplored is the one that holds the key to understanding what is going on: the unceasing class war waged against the poor since the late 1970s.

By Yanis Varoufakis

The Anglosphere's political atmosphere is thick with bourgeois outrage. In the United States, the so-called liberal establishment is convinced it was robbed by an insurgency of "deplorables" weaponized by Vladimir Putin's hackers and Facebook's sinister inner workings. In Britain, too, an incensed bourgeoisie are pinching themselves that support for leaving the European Union in favor of an inglorious isolation remains undented, despite a process that can only be described as a dog's Brexit.

The range of analysis is staggering. The rise of militant parochialism on both sides of the Atlantic is being investigated from every angle imaginable: psychoanalytically, culturally, anthropologically, aesthetically, and of course in terms of identity politics. The only angle that is left largely unexplored is the one that holds the key to understanding what is going on: the unceasing class war unleashed upon the poor since the late 1970s.

In 2016, the year of both Brexit and Trump, two pieces of data, dutifully neglected by the shrewdest of establishment analysts, told the story. In the United States, more than half of American families did not qualify, according to Federal Reserve data, to take out a loan that would allow them to buy the cheapest car for sale (the Nissan Versa sedan, priced at \$12,825). Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, over 40% of families relied on either credit or food banks to feed themselves and cover basic needs.

William of Ockham, the fourteenth-century British philosopher, famously postulated that, when bamboozled in the face of competing explanations, we ought to opt for the one with the fewest assumptions and the greatest simplicity. For all the deftness of establishment commentators in the US and Britain, they seem to have neglected this principle. Loath to recognize the intensified class war, they bang on interminably with conspiracy theories about Russian influence, spontaneous bursts of misogyny, the tide of migrants, the rise of the machines, and so on. While all of these fears are highly correlated with the militant parochialism fueling Trump and Brexit, they are only tangential to the deeper cause – class war against the poor – alluded to by the car affordability data in the US and the credit-dependence of much of Britain's population. True, some relatively affluent middle-class voters also supported Trump and Brexit. But much of that support rode on the coattails of the fear caused by observing the classes just below theirs plunge into despair and loathing, while their own children's prospects dimmed. Twenty years ago, the same liberal commentators were cultivating the impossible dream that globalizing financialized capitalism would deliver prosperity for most. At a time when capital was becoming more concentrated on a global scale, and more militant against non-owners of assets, they were declaring the class war over. As the working class was growing in size worldwide, even though its jobs and employment prospects were shrinking in the Anglosphere, these elites behaved as if class were passé. The 2008 financial collapse and the subsequent Great Recession buried that dream. Still, liberals ignored the undeniable fact that the gigantic losses incurred by the quasi-criminal financial sector were cynically transferred

onto the shoulders of a working class they thought no longer mattered. For all their self-image as progressives, the elites' readiness to ignore widening class divisions, and to replace it with class-blind identity politics, was the greatest gift to toxic populism. In Britain, the Labour Party (under Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and Edward Miliband) was too coy even to mention the post-2008 intensification of the class war against the majority, leading to the rise across the Labour heartland of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), with its Brexit parochialism.

Polite society seemed not to give a damn that it had become easier to get into Harvard or Cambridge if you were black than if you were poor. They deliberately ignored that identity politics can be as divisive as apartheid if allowed to act as a lever for overlooking class conflict. Trump had no compunction to speak clearly about class, and to embrace – however deceitfully – those too poor to buy a car, let alone send their children to Harvard. Brexiters, too, embraced the "great unwashed," reflected in images of UKIP leader Nigel Farage drinking in pubs with "average blokes." And when large swaths of the working class turned against the establishment's favorite sons and daughters (the Clintons, the Bushes, the Blairs, and the Camerons), endorsing militant parochialism, the commentariat blamed the riffraff's illusions about capitalism.

But it was not illusions about capitalism that led to the discontent that fueled Trump and Brexit. Rather, it is the disillusion with middle-of-the-road politics of the kind that intensified the class war against them. Predictably, the embrace of the working class by Trump and the Brexiters was always going to arm them with electoral power that, sooner or later, would be deployed against working-class interests and, of course, minorities – always the penchant of populism in power, from the 1930s to today. Trump has thus used his working-class support to usher in scandalous tax reforms, whose naked ambition is to help the plutocracy while millions of Americans face reduced health coverage and, as the federal budget deficit balloons, higher long-term tax bills. Similarly, Britain's Tory government, which has espoused Brexit's populist aims, has recently announced another multi-billion-pound reduction in social security, education, and tax credits for the working poor. Those cuts are matched exactly by reductions in corporate and inheritance tax cuts. Today, establishment opinion-makers, who so forcefully rejected the pertinence of social class, have contributed to a political environment in which class politics was never more pertinent, toxic, and less discussed. Speaking on behalf of a ruling class comprising financial experts, bankers, corporate representatives, media owners, and big industry functionaries, they act exactly as if their goal were to deliver the working classes into the grubby hands of the populists and their empty promise of making America and Britain "great again." The only prospect for civilizing society and detoxifying politics is a new political movement that harnesses on behalf of a new humanism the burning injustice that class war manufactures. Judging by its callous treatment of US Senator Bernie Sanders and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, the liberal establishment seems to fear such a movement more than it does Trump and Brexit. Yanis Varoufakis, a former finance minister of Greece, is Professor of Economics at the University of Athens.



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