

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



December 13, 2018

Human Rights Must be Valued

Human beings around the world, because of the mere fact that they are human and are born in this world have their rights, which are recognized as human 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, the day is celebrated as the International Human Rights Day. This year as well, the day was celebrated around the world to emphasize what the Declaration proclaimed – the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being, regardless of race, color, 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.

Effective Factors in Mental Health

By: Ali Rezayi

There is no agreed definition for mental health or illness. Those who play their role constructively in society are mentally healthy and vice versa. Culture will strongly affect a society's values and beliefs, which will, then, affect health and disease defined by the society. An issue will be deemed right in one society but wrong in another society. The word "health" refers to a state of complete emotional and physical well-being. Healthcare exists to help people maintain this optimal state of health. In 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." In 1986, the WHO further clarified that health is, "A resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities". This means that health is a resource to support an individual's function in wider society. A healthful lifestyle provides the means to lead a full life. More recently, researchers have defined health as the ability of a body to adapt to new threats and infirmities. They base this on the idea that modern science has dramatically increased human awareness of diseases and how they work in the last few decades. Mental health refers to a person's emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing. Mental health is as important as physical health to a full, active lifestyle. Environmental factors play a role. Sometimes the environment alone is enough to impact health. Other times, an environmental trigger can cause illness in a person who is genetically susceptible. Education is usually assessed by the use of two standard questions that ask about the number of years of schooling completed and the educational credentials gained. The quality of education also may be relevant to health, but it is more difficult to assess accurately. An extensive literature has linked education to health outcomes, including mortality, morbidity, health behaviors, and functional limitations. The relationship between lower educational attainment and worse health outcomes occurs throughout the life course. Those who are educated will learn the better way of protecting their health. Moreover, they have greater information about health care and the way for asking information about health. Researches have shown that the high education rate will let people to be in pursuit of early cure and prevention. They also learn in social media how to help people afflicted with mental

health. Stressful circumstances, making people feel worried, anxious and unable to cope, are damaging to health and may lead to premature death. Social and psychological circumstances can cause long-term stress. Continuing anxiety, insecurity, low self-esteem, social isolation and lack of control over work and home life, have powerful effects on health. Cultural issues can affect health. The traditions and customs of a society and a family's response to them can have a good or bad impact on health. For example, around the Mediterranean, people are more likely to consume high levels of fruits, vegetables, and olive, and to eat as a family, compared with cultures with a high consumption of fast food. Family also plays a pivotal role shaping the personality of people. It is said that parents are the most significant instructors of children. A healthy family will support all peace and tranquility of all family members. The family environment will affect the physical and mental health of its members. To have a healthy family, parents will have to pay attention to their children and their needs. Children acquire all behaviors of their parents. Hence, parents have to put positive effect on them. Economic environment is also crucial in one's health. Poverty and unemployment will trigger a strong mental stress that put one's health at risk. On the contrary, job safety and fair job opportunity will increase one's satisfaction and ensure mental health. The high unemployment rate will lead to various diseases, including mental disease, and shorten life expectancy. It will further result in stress, depression, cardiovascular disease, etc. It is worth saying that only having job will not mitigate the disease, the quality of job is also very effective. People have to have suitable jobs that should not degrade their personality. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared in 2001 that it is not only radical violation of human rights such as rape and domestic violence that put an adverse effect on one's health but lack of food, lack of justice in distributing facilities, and lack of access to health care are also the factors associated with mental health. Many factors combine together to affect the health of individuals and communities. Whether people are healthy or not, is determined by their circumstances and environment. To a large extent, factors such as where we live, the state of our environment, genetics, our income and education level, and our relationships with friends and family all have considerable impacts on health.

Ali Rezayi is the emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.

The Political Roots of Falling Wage Growth

By: Jayati Ghosh

It's now official: workers around the world are falling behind. The International Labor Organization's (ILO) latest Global Wage Report finds that, excluding China, real (inflation-adjusted) wages grew at an annual rate of just 1.1% in 2017, down from 1.8% in 2016. That is the slowest pace since 2008.

In the advanced G20 economies, average real wages grew by a mere 0.4% in 2017, compared to 1.7% growth in 2015. While real wages were up by 0.7% in the United States (versus 2.2% in 2015), they stagnated in Europe, where small increases in some countries were offset by declines in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. The slowdown in "success stories" like Germany and the US is particularly surprising, given the former's expanding current-account surpluses and the latter's falling unemployment and tight labor markets.

In emerging markets, average wage growth in 2017, at 4.3%, was faster than in the advanced G20 economies, but still slower than the previous year (4.9%). Asia enjoyed the fastest real wage growth, owing largely to China and a few smaller countries such as Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. But, overall, wage growth in Asian economies mostly decelerated in 2017. And in Latin America and Africa, several countries experienced real-wage declines.

Moreover, the ILO report finds that the gap between wage growth and labor productivity remained wide in 2017. In many countries, labor's share of national income is still below the levels of the early 1990s.

That raises an obvious question: Given the global output recovery of recent years, why have conditions for workers in most parts of the world not improved commensurately?

Neither of the usual suspects, trade and technology, is entirely to blame. To be sure, large labor-surplus economies' deepening integration into the global market, together with increased reliance on automation and artificial intelligence, has weakened workers' bargaining power and shifted labor demand into very specific and limited sectors. But these factors alone do not explain the lack of material progress for most workers. The real reason workers are getting a raw deal is not so much economic as institutional and political. From country to country, legislation and court judgments are increasingly trampling on long-recognized labor rights.

For example, governments focused solely on improving "labor-market flexibility" have pursued policies that privilege employers' interests over those of workers, not least by undercutting workers' ability to organize. An obsession with fiscal consolidation and austerity has prevented the kind of social spending that could expand public employment and improve

workers' conditions. And the current regulatory environment increasingly allows for large corporations to wield power without accountability, resulting in higher monopoly rents and greater bargaining power.

In short, neoliberalism's intellectual capture of economic policymaking across a wide range of countries, is resulting in the exclusion of most wage earners from the gains of economic growth. But this was not inevitable. China, after all, has achieved rapid wage growth, and the share of national income accruing to labor is rising, despite the country's pursuit of trade and rapid labor-displacing technologies.

China's success may vindicate a model advanced by the late Nobel laureate economist W. Arthur Lewis, which explains how employment in new, more productive sectors can absorb surplus labor and push up wages over all. But, more to the point, China has augmented this effect through systematic state policies designed to improve labor conditions.

As a result, the average nominal minimum wage in China nearly doubled between 2011 and 2018, and wages for workers in state-owned enterprises rose even faster. At the same time, the government has expanded other forms of social protections for workers, all while pursuing industrial policies geared toward boosting innovation and productivity growth, thus moving the country up the global value chain.

True, China's political economy is unusual. The government's concern for workers' wellbeing could simply reflect the Communist Party of China's need to secure its domestic political position. In that case, it has forged a Faustian social bargain that is typical of East Asian autocracies.

Still, if China can buck the trend of declining wage growth, other countries can, too. First, though, economic policymakers around the world will have to shake off the neoliberal paradigm, which has left them incapable of imagining alternative policy approaches. As a political project, neoliberalism has run its course. If workers are going to partake in the gains of growth once again, governments will need to start adopting more progressive policy alternatives.

Fortunately, the ILO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development have begun to put more sensible policies back on the agenda, as have some politicians in the US, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. But ensuring that the economy serves the bulk of society will require a much bigger push across the board.

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