

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



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Heightened Role of Women in Peace Process

Afghanistan can only play any considerable role in uplifting the position of women within the country, if women are allowed to participate in different spheres of life. They should have a say in decision-making processes in different social, political and religious institutions. One of the reasons that the different policies and measures carried out by different authorities were biased in favor of the male members of the society was that women were never involved in them, or if they were, their number was too little to have any influence.

Therefore, it is necessary that they should have sufficient participation within different processes and their point of view should be given due importance. Involving the women within different processes is also important because of the fact that they have the potentials to bring about important changes. Their ways of thinking differ and mostly revolve around peace, tranquility and stability.

They do not favor instability and war because it has influenced them in the most drastic manner for the last few decades. They have been the victims of extreme violence and injustice. Different sorts of discrimination have been carried out against them and they have suffered an imbalanced role and status. This has further influenced the institution of family and the matters of the society as a whole.

Considering them incapable of playing any prominent role within the social and political decision making processes in a folly. They have the potential and they have proved that as well, whenever they have been given any opportunity to do so.

Moreover, their potentials can already be gauged from the nature of the work that they perform within their families and mostly under immense social and psychological pressure.

Therefore, keeping them away from social and political lives on the basis of the claim that they do not have the potentials is totally based on wrong assumptions. As Afghanistan is passing through a very crucial juncture, it is really vital that the women should be made an integral part of peace building measures.

They should have a role not only in different development activities but also a central role in any sort of peace process that may be pursued. Since the downfall of Taliban there have been certain improvements regarding the rights, status and role of women and there are fears that those improvements may be lost because of compromises that may be made during peace negotiations with Taliban as Taliban are not ready to accept the heightened role of women.

However, if women participate in the process, they may have their point of view and may also have certain pressure throughout the process to ensure that the improvements are not lost, rather there should be more efforts for further progress.

Highlighting the same importance of the contribution of women in issues of national interest and decision-making, the Swedish ambassador to Afghanistan Andres Sjoberg and EU deputy envoy George Cunningham earlier in the week called for the meaningful engagement and inclusion of Afghan women in the peace process. Joining the western envoys, Afghanistan's First Lady Rula Ghani concurred and said women must be included in the peace process. She said that the peace process will not reach inclusive outcomes if there is not substantial participation by women.

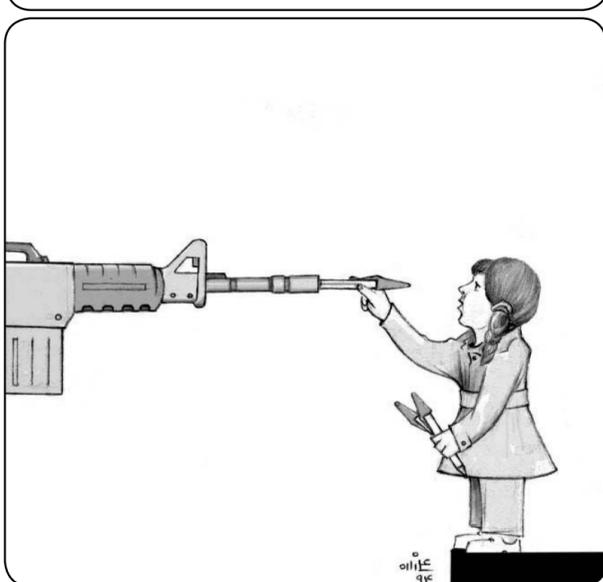
Talking on the importance of Afghan women's engagement in peace talks, the Swedish diplomat suggested 50 percent of a peace negotiating team be made up of women. While, the EU's George Cunningham said that a substantial presence of women in the peace process would achieve meaningful negotiations.

However, it is important to see how the Afghan authorities would perceive the role of women in the process. There are many among the authorities themselves who do not see the heightened role of women with comfort as they have been the part of a patriarchal system, therefore, it is very difficult for them to accept that women can be 50 percent of a peace negotiation team, while, on the other hand, it seems difficult that Taliban can agree to that.

Nevertheless, it stands paramount that the role of women and their participation must improve in the process.

They, like all the other members of the society and as per the law, have all the rights and the government is responsible to pave the way for proper protection and deliverance of those rights. Though National Unity Government (NUG) had made some huge promises during its initial days regarding women rights, it has not been able to deliver upon those promises at all.

Therefore, the situation has not changed for Afghan women, particularly those who have been badly victimized by insecurity, domestic violence and extreme poverty and lack of basic resources. If the government is not able even to solve the most basic issues pertaining to women, it is very difficult to expect that it would perform miracles in uplifting the position of women and involving them in the decision making process in important political and social issues.



NUG Facing Serious Challenges

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

In the last two years, Afghanistan has been facing unprecedented challenges. However, several major development projects have initiated, launched or completed. But the government has failed to deliver its promises. Thousands of Afghans died in violence. Terrifying groups considerably increased and the government frequently lost control of several districts across the country and hundreds of thousands of Afghans forced to flee their home.

Unemployment and corruption is at its peak. Disunity among the Afghans has increased and the country is more fragile than ever. If the International community does not engage immediately, Afghanistan will turn into a second Iraq. Afghanistan is facing a complex humanitarian crisis and the National Unity Government (NUG) are harshly accused of failing and not fulfilling their promises given during election. As a result of poverty and joblessness, the Social insecurity such as robbery, kidnapping and explosions in all parts of the country including the capital has become a common practice.

On the other hand the illegitimate crisis widely debating in the media. The legitimacy of the National Unity Government (NUG) derived from a political agreement has already expired. Around 70% Afghan citizens are dissatisfied with NUG government; as they defied all types of threats to go to the polls under tough conditions but they have been compelled to pay \$3 billion in bribe in a year. As a result day to day people are getting more disappointed! Although, a number of civil activists and patriotic politicians opposed the make-up two headed government system from the very beginning.

Their concern came true, and all Afghans, except the two leaders, acknowledge the debacle of the government two years after its formation. The government not only has failed to deliver in areas of good governance and development, but it also has not fulfilled any of its main commitments agreed upon in the power-sharing agreement.

No tangible progress has been made so far with respect to the convention of constitutional Loya Jirga (grand assembly), and satisfactory electoral reforms.

Even, since the beginning, there have been seeing Insincerity and inconsistency, and even turning down the decisions of each other, and disagreeing for a 50 percent share in nearly everything, from key national issues to low-ranking appointments. Over the past two years, they did not make any significant changes to in economic and political arena. Instead, they repeatedly blocked the appointments of individuals who are politically at odds with his team despite the fact everyone has the right to hold a different political vision or standpoint in democratic systems.

Similarly, they mostly focused on appointing his own team members in the government, and even their interpretation

of the electoral reform is to equally divide the seats of electoral commissions with the both team, though the people will never tolerate the division of electoral commissions under the so-called electoral reforms.

The National Unity Government (NUG) not only has failed to honour its biggest promise - the fight against corruption-, but the vicious phenomenon and national shame has also become more rampant. Some anti-corruption watchdogs say the NUG was initially expected to take concrete anti-corruption steps, but its performance over the past two years dashed the hopes.

As in the previous government, the current government has also made sham promises in the battle against corruption, and has not taken any practical step thereof so far. While the government leaders are bragging about addressing the Kabul Bank scandal case, and the termination of fuel contracts of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) as achievements of their anti-corruption drive, none of government bodies involved in probing the two cases shares the details with media. Public contracts which were the biggest source of corruption over the recent years still remain a point of serious concern. Even the Chief Executive Officer of the NUG, without further elaboration, accused President Ghani's close aides of corruption in public contracts a while ago. The massive scale of graft in the National Unity Government finally prompted the US as its biggest supporter to criticize the government.

A number of US Senators have blasted Afghan government for failing to curb corruption, and warned of scaling back American assistance to Afghanistan. Robert Menendez, a senior member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, warned President Barack Obama that failure to address the problem of corruption in Afghanistan could lead to a reduction in the \$5 billion yearly aid to the country. Leaders of the National Unity Government have to understand that not only Afghans, but also their international supporters no longer can tolerate the continuance of corruption. Corruption is not only the second biggest challenge for Afghanistan after war it is also one of the root causes of the war. Therefore, given its significance, anti-corruption needs be prioritized, and the struggle against this phenomenon should yield palpable, positive results through practical steps. Overall, Afghanistan is in a serious economic, political and security crisis!

The NUG facing serious challenges which need serious attention of the international community. On the other hand, it needs to be notified that Afghan people are deeply tired of promises. No promise will satisfy them unless they see the real changes in the country such as peace, free corruption government, building infrastructures and so on.

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The Perfect Paragon of Humanity

By Hujjatullah Zia

Muslims across the world celebrate the birth of Holy Prophet (PBUH) on the third month (Rabiul Awal) of the Islamic lunar calendar. Muslims celebrated the day with religious zeal and fervor. The way in which the occasion was celebrated depicts several colors of local traditions, besides touch of their religion and their association to the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Considering moral turpitude and unmitigated war and violence, the vacuum of prophets is deeply felt in our age. Violence and carnage, flagrant violation of human rights and cruel practices prevail in human societies. Human dignity is held in contempt and people suffer from inhuman acts in one way or another. Men's megalomania and selfishness led to bloodshed and play a highly destructive role in modern society. In other words, the individuals' fundamental rights - i.e. their rights to life, liberty and property - are largely trampled upon.

The individual and social life is vulnerable to moral corruptions. Immoral and lust-provoking programs spoil the morality of younger generation and poison their minds. The crime rate is reportedly frequently. Girls and women do not have peace of mind in many societies and fear falling victims to the licentious desires of individuals.

Moral values and humanity decline not in a particular society but around the globe. If we consider our own society, a number of people eat enormous food and live in luxury buildings and skyscrapers without an iota of mercy to the poor, who shiver with cold and with empty stomachs having no shelter to breathe a sigh of relief. To their unmitigated chagrin, the state pays no heed to their problems either as if they are born to suffer and die without a shoulder to cry on. Life is no more than a hell for them since there is no one to give them a hand and no heart to feel their pain and anguish. In short, neighbors are confined among tall walls and might never see one another at all.

After all, terrorism, which is the product of radical interpretation of religion, is an international scourge. The terrorist networks operate under religious terms and have spread Islamophobia in western countries.

It is believed that the fundamental groups, who spill the blood of civilians and resort to militancy, sacrifice religion for their political interests and have no true knowledge. Their violent practices bespeak that they are a big stain on

religion. Their parochial mindsets leave no room for religious tolerance and brotherhood. In another item, the pure and human teachings of prophet (PBUH) have been colored with the tastes and radical views of some individuals within the long history. It is a great tragedy for Islamic world to see that political masterminds use religious elements as a pawn.

Addressing a Seeratun Nabi conference in Lahore on Monday, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urged religious scholars to play their role for the elimination of the root causes of extremism in society. He regretted that "certain elements" had distorted Islam's image as a religion of peace by spreading anarchy and bloodshed. According to him, it is the responsibility of religious scholars to reestablish a link between Islam and peace, taking guidance from the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). "Respect for humanity became an integral part of Islamic teachings through the many examples of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life.

He said that the respect for every human life should be equal to the respect of Kaaba," the Pakistani Prime minister is cited as saying and stressed upon the importance of humanity and equality in Islam. He said Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) last sermon taught us that civilized societies are formed on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

In every walk of life and in every role which he played, he was the best example. He treated his enemies with great patience, showed them mercy and ensured that prisoners of war were taken care of. He instructed people to be kind to all living beings and use resources wisely. His wisdom was second to none.

Now, the Islamic Ummah, who celebrates the Prophet's birth anniversary, will have to follow his footsteps and nurture the spirit of brotherhood. He is a paragon of virtue and humanity not only for a certain group or party but for the entire human societies.

His message of peace and humanity is global and transcends geographical and historical barriers. The Prophet's real followers are those who practice upon his acts and words (Sunnah), respect the rights and dignity of mankind regardless of their racial and religious backgrounds and play a constructive role in the society.

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