

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



December 18, 2016

## International Migrants Day

December 18 is celebrated as World Migrants Day around the world. The objective of the day is to highlight the issues that compel the people to opt for migration and then the problems that they face during their endeavors. The Day was proclaimed by United Nations General Assembly in December, 2000 after taking into account the large and increasing number of migrants in the world. Later in September 2006, the 132 Member States participated in a High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, conducted by the UN General Assembly, wherein they reaffirmed a number of key commitments. First, they highlighted that international migration was a growing phenomenon and that it could make a positive contribution to development in countries of origin and countries of destination only if there are proper policies to administer the situation. Secondly, they emphasized that it was also essential to keep in consideration the human rights of the migrants as it would prove helpful in controlling the situation. Thirdly, they recognized the importance of strengthening international cooperation on international migration bilaterally, regionally and globally.

Since the 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, intergovernmental cooperation in the area of migration has increased markedly. Various regional intergovernmental groups and consultative processes have been focusing increasingly on the development dimensions of international migration, although they have done so in different ways and with different perspectives.

On September 19, 2016 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of commitments during its first ever summit on large movements of refugees and migrants to enhance the protection of refugees and migrants. These commitments are known as the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (NY Declaration). The NY Declaration reaffirms the importance of the international protection regime and represents a commitment by Member States to strengthen and enhance mechanisms to protect people on the move. It paves the way for the adoption of two new global compacts in 2018: the global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Migration is an international phenomenon and needs proper attention and administration from international community. The migrants who leave their homelands in search of better life, in most of the cases undergo different sorts of hardships before they reach somewhere safe. Most of them even do not reach to the destination they set for and end up in detention center, refugee camps and even death. On most of the occasions they fall prey to the ill intentions of human-smugglers, who discriminate them as much as they can.

Furthermore, they have to go through severe kind of psychological depression and strain as they go through the worst sort of experiences. The migrants and asylum seekers are mostly from the third world countries that suffer from wars, conflicts and political and economic crisis. Finding no guarantee of secure life, they move towards the developed countries of the world in search of contentment and bliss but unfortunately, there are many who do not earn the fortunate end. The growing discontent in different parts of the world has made the number of migrants and asylum seekers rise considerably. Currently, the crisis in Middle East and North African countries has compelled so many migrants to leave their countries and find refuge in European countries.

Apart from that there are many who have travelled from Asian countries that suffer from conflicts, clashes and discriminations. Afghanistan is one of the most dominant countries in this regard. Decades of wars and terrorism along with droughts and shortage of basic requirements have compelled millions of people to leave the country.

Though there has been remarkable decrease in this regard, millions of Afghan migrants are still living their lives in neighboring countries (like Pakistan and Iran), European countries, Australia and America; while, there are thousand others who are still in different sorts of camps and detention centers around the world waiting for some sort of sympathy and attention.

As the movement of the migrants turns into a problem for the refugees and the countries from where they move, in the same way it becomes an issue for the countries to which they move. It is not always an easy task to control the flow of refugees by any government.

It has to keep in consideration its own people and policies and at the same time has to respect the international policies and regulations regarding the rights of the refugees. Furthermore, it has to adjust for the compensation of the migrants who move in, and have to deal with the issues like multiculturalism, terrorism and racism, appropriately.

Though, the problems are great in this regard, the developed nations of the world do have the potential to absorb the shocks of refugee influx. Most of the European countries, America, Canada and Australia in this regard have been playing dominant role in compensating for the migrants and asylum seekers from different countries of the world. Definitely there are political and diplomatic concerns for all the governments of the world to consider, but the issue of migrants is more important than such concerns, as it involves the precious human lives and the lives of human beings stand more sacred than any other concern, belief or ideology.



## Peace Talks – The Unbreakable Deadlock

By Hujjatullah Zia

The hotly debated issues and serious rhetoric about negotiation of peace in national and international media have not mitigated militancy or persuaded the Taliban elements to come to peace table. On the contrary, warring factions have mushroomed and widened their realm of influence. Afghanistan is, particularly, left at the mercy of terrorism and a large number of soldiers and civilians were killed within the last two years as a result of the Taliban's heavy offensives. Addressing a conference titled "Common approaches to future and preparation for peace in Afghanistan" organized by EU mission in Kabul, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah said that working for peace in Afghanistan "is harder than fighting" but the government would pursue the path for peace and stability.

In fact, militancy is a chronic problem and has turned into an incurable wound which bleeds incessantly. In other words, this unbreakable deadlock challenges not only the National Unity Government (NUG) but also the international community. The Kabul administration put all the egg in the same basket for more than a decade without a palpable result.

Following the 2014 presidential election, the controversy over its result and its postponement, due to nontransparent election, shattered the hope of the public and created a sense of mistrust between the state and nation. But the establishment of the NUG as a political agreement instilled a fresh hope in nation and people dreamed of a violence-free government where they could exercise their rights and liberty without barrier. President Ghani's symbolic acts – as he did improvised check on hospitals and police stations for being sure of their sincere services – compounded the nation's hope and trust.

To one's unmitigated chagrin, violence and bloodshed did not come to an end and Afghan nation, mainly women and children, fell victim to terrorism. Omar's both successors, the late Mullah Mansour and Mullah Haibatullah refused to hold talks and orchestrated heavy attacks against Afghan government. Haibatullah is publicly known as a radical clergy with parochial mindsets who refuses to present in media. Fearing to be introduced negatively, the Afghan Taliban on Wednesday released a profile of Haibatullah months after he was named the group's chief. The profile detailed Haibatullah's role during Afghanistan's invasion in 2001 and after the deaths of Mullah Omar and Mullah Mansour. The new chief is a strong advocate of Islamic unity, disavowing differences of ideology between Shiites and Sunnis, the profile added. "All key figures and field commanders unanimously supported the new emir while pledges of allegiance and oath of fighting against the invaders and their foreign allied and internal mercenary forces were received from all 34 provinces," the profile read.

Meanwhile, when asked as to why the Taliban released the profile nearly seven month of his nomination, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said that it had been done to counter any move to disseminate erroneous information about the leader. "We prepared an informative piece to share correct information and stop the spread of false information," Mujahid is cited as saying.

Haibatullah was named chief by members of the group's leading council following Mullah Akhtar Mansour's death in a US drone strike on May 21. Sirajuddin Haqqani, alias Khalifa and Maulvi Yaqoob Mujahid, late Mullah Omar's son, were appointed his deputies on the occasion.

With Sirajuddin's appointment as Haibatullah's deputy, it is most likely that the Taliban fighters organize common attacks along with Haqqani network. Hence, Afghanistan is particularly exposed to the trilateral threat of the Taliban, al-Qaeda and the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The ISIL group practices upon more radical ideology and will never succumb to the peace offering of the Kabul administration. They performed more violent acts, mainly in Iraq and Syria, and sought to stoke sectarian violence in Afghanistan too through beheading men and women in the worst possible way. The radical practices of warring parties leave no room for peace and deny the frequent calls of Afghan government for peace and stability. In spite of political barriers before peace talks, EU ambassador to Afghanistan Franz Michael Melbin said, "There is a chance for peace in Afghanistan which should be used effectively. Peace is possible in Afghanistan and the ground for it has been paved. The agreement with Hizb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) shows Afghan people's and leaders' strong will for peace, we believe this process will succeed." According to him, the peace process with the HIA increased people's trust in peace, but efforts being made in this regard should not remain on paper only.

Expressing optimism over peace talks without a positive answer from warring parties seems naïve of one. The trust between the Taliban and Afghan government is at a low ebb after the Taliban's repeated foul play in this political game which involved many influential countries including the US and Russia. Neither national and international conferences nor military acts regarding counter insurgency have given the desired fruit. The "war on terror" launched by the US-led NATO soldiers following the 9/11 incident was also proved abortive. So, since seeking peace is harder than fighting, based on Dr. Abdullah's words, the easier option (fighting) will be the right choice and give more tangible result, don't you think so? Considering the futility of seeking peace which lasted more than a decade, it is the readers to pass judgment over the issue.

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## Role of Universities in Modern Societies

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

The institutions we know today as 'university' have played a significant role in societal development for at least 500 years. The term 'university' originates from the Latin word 'universitas': simply meaning 'a whole', thereby signifying that the role of universities is to pursue balanced knowledge about virtually everything. Since the expansion of (natural and technical) sciences starting in the 19th century, the role of furthering economic and public development has become an additional and increasingly important function of universities in our modern day societies. It means that the higher education worldwide not only moved from the periphery to the centre of governmental agendas but also Universities are seen as crucial national assets in addressing many policy priorities, and as: sources of new knowledge and innovative thinking; providers of skilled personnel and credible credentials; contributors to innovation; attractors of international talent and business investment; agents of social justice and mobility; contributors to social and cultural vitality; and determinants of health and well-being.

Generally, modern universities pursue five major goals: firstly, as a repository of the Knowledge, universities must act as 'knowledge vaults', maintaining and securing crucial knowledge for present and future generations. Secondly, as a producer of new Knowledge, undertake the activity that we call research. Thirdly, as transferor of Knowledge to the Next Generation, i.e. what we call education. Fourthly, as transferor of Knowledge to society, i.e. what we call dissemination. Fifthly, as generator economic development, play an integral role in furthering economic growth and thereby pursuing socio-economic goals.

So, the higher education should Analyze the course of a country's development through the elements of higher education namely, the number of higher education institutions, standard of education, aptitude of teachers, number of students in higher education, number of theses being produced every year and the number of research journals published by the higher education institutes makes it easier to gauge the pace of progress. Higher education is also considered a yardstick because the graduates of colleges and universities provide the future leadership in ideological, educational, political and national life.

They also play a key role in determining the characteristics of a society, driving it towards rise or fall, or steering it towards right or wrong directions.

But the higher education in Afghanistan neither is goal oriented nor received due attention while the institutions started taking roots in second half of the 20th century; their progress was frequently hampered by long-lasting conflicts. In recent years, there have been some efforts for improvement but Afghan universities are among the least productive in the world due to poor educational policies, meager resources and lack of merit. Importantly, the system of higher education being

promoted is not in conformity with the cultural, economic and political need of the country. As a result, it is not surprising if sometimes students raise the flag of terrorist in universities.

Majority of the university and Institute teachers have so-called bachelor degree or so-called Master who were the products of the institutions where the standard of education needs a lot of improvement. This problem is getting worse because older people are resisting the induction of younger and better-qualified individuals. In this context, a study of evolution of higher education in Afghanistan would be highly significant at this crucial juncture of history when putting Afghan society on the right track of development is in the interest of world community at large. The initiatives in higher education in Afghanistan, their merits and demerits and the current trends that would implicate the future direction of development in Afghanistan critically need to be studied and analyzed.

Beside the shortage of competent teachers, there is a moral dimension to the problem also. There are incidents of some teachers sexually harassing female students. It is said that some teachers make illegal demands on some of their students in return for high grades. It is also reported that some teachers are also involved in corruption by giving good grades to students for monetary benefits. Many students reported that they were asked to pay one hundred dollars for getting passing marks.

Undoubtedly, developing institutions in a country like Afghanistan where war has been a continuous way of life for years on end is an uphill task, yet the importance of education in general and higher education in particular demands complete mobilization of government machinery as it is an investment that the future generations will be able to build on.

Therefore, the Afghan scholars, think tanks, educationists and academicians need to deliberate upon the overall dynamics of today's Afghanistan, current system and status of education in general and higher education in particular to devise a comprehensive education policy. Keeping in mind the contours of this policy, they need to develop a pragmatic and concrete action plan so that the people working for the cause of education reach a clear understanding of educational goals and steps to be taken. This exercise will give the whole nation a sense of direction. The policy should also guide the government towards taking revolutionary steps, allocate most of its resources for this department, and utilize the available resources wisely.

Last but not least, nothing constructive can be fully realized as long as Afghanistan is in a state of war and education is no exception. Therefore, it is necessary to bring the war to an end and establish peace on a solid foundation so that growth and development of the educational system can be focused. Histories of modern nations reveal the fact that development of any sector, let alone the education sector, is not possible without lasting peace.

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