

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



December 20, 2017

## Afghanistan the Third Deadliest Country for Journalists

Journalists are one of the most important members of the society as they perform the vital responsibility of providing timely and useful information and, in certain cases, the true face of truth to the people. However, in order to perform their responsibility, they have to be ready to perform certain sacrifices as well. The most important one of them is their commitment to perform their duties even the most unfavorable conditions. Whether it is a usual situation, a natural calamity or conflicts and wars, they have to be at every place so that they are able to gather information and disseminate it to others. Particularly, at the places that are insecurity, they face myriads of challenges, and in certain cases, even lose their valuable lives.

Every year, journalists lose their lives, in certain ways in different parts of the country. According to a report by Reporters Without Borders – Reporters Sans Frontier (RSF), released on Tuesday, December 19, a total of 65 journalists and media workers were killed in 2017. The report highlighted, “26 people were killed in the course of their work, the collateral victims of a deadly situation such as an air strike, an artillery bombardment, or a suicide bombing. While, the 39 others were murdered, and deliberately targeted because their reporting threatened political, economic, or criminal interests.” The report also mentioned that 326 people working in the media – including 202 professional journalists – are also being detained.

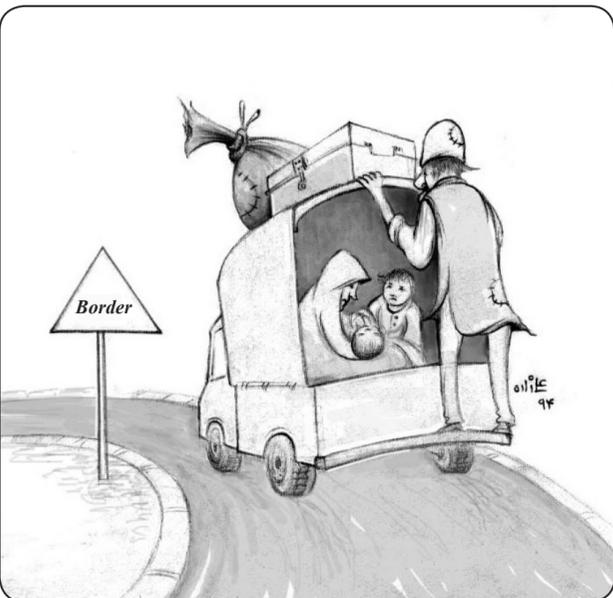
However, even more unfortunate for Afghanistan is that it was the third deadliest country for journalists during the period that covered RSF report. Syria was declared as the deadliest country for journalists, with 12 killed, one more than in Mexico where many journalists have “either fled abroad or abandoned journalism.” Behind Syria and Mexico, the report revealed that the deadliest country for reporters were Afghanistan, where nine journalists were killed in 2017. The situation for Afghan journalists does not seem to be getting any better. The rising insecurity and the lack of attention to the plight of the journalists has led to some very difficult circumstances that the journalists have to go through so as to perform their duties. Even the foreign journalists are facing serious difficulties in fulfilling their responsibilities. The Afghan law-enforcement agencies instead of arranging to provide for their security, warn them to limit their movement. It demoralizes the spirits of the journalists in the country and would bar them from collecting information.

It can be observed that the societies that are well developed and have great respect for knowledge and information, make sure that the rights of the journalists are guarded properly and they are provided with such circumstances wherein they are able to perform their responsibilities with full dedication and devotion. On the other hand, the societies that suffer from political instability and experience wars, and disturbances and do not recognize the worth of true knowledge and information tend to forget the vital responsibility of guarding the rights of the journalists. The journalists in such societies tend to suffer from different sorts of discriminations and, unfortunately, even lose their lives.

Mostly conflict zones are dangerous for the journalists. In order to provide true and timely information, the journalists have to move into or close to the places where wars and conflicts happen. They, therefore, put their lives at risk and try to fulfill their responsibilities. Different groups, organizations or countries in such zones have to be very careful about the rights of journalists and make sure they are not targeted. However, that does not seem to happen and many journalists lose their valuable lives every year. Moreover, because of the influence and approach of different extremist networks, the number of journalists losing their lives in the peaceful countries is also alarming.

Apart from the right to life, according to International law, journalists are entitled for certain other rights as well which all the governments and organizations around the world must respect. Journalists, according to the Declaration of Rights and Duties of the Journalists, must have free access to all information sources, and the right to freely inquire on all events conditioning public life. Therefore, secret of public or private affairs may be opposed only to journalists in exceptional cases and for clearly expressed motives. Therefore, any factor hindering the journalists from having access to all information sources must be considered illegal and should be eliminated.

Moreover, the journalists have the right to refuse subordination to anything contrary to the general policy of the information organ to which they collaborate such as it has been laid down by writing and incorporated in their contract of employment, as well as any subordination not clearly implicated by this general policy. And, the journalists cannot be compelled to perform a professional act or to express an opinion contrary to their convictions or his conscience. Ill-fatedly, Afghanistan is one of the countries that have not been giving enough heed to the rights of the journalists. The war and conflicts and the negligence of the relevant authorities have resulted in different sorts of discrimination against the journalists in the county. Afghan government and different other organizations and groups must make sure that they strive to protect the rights of the journalists as they are not a party to the conflict and do not serve anyone's purpose.



## Growing Distrust

By Dilawar Sherzai

After Bonn one agreements, President Hamid Karzai was brought to the front to assume the Herculean task of leading Afghanistan, which was emerging out of three decades of warfare and conflict. It was an extremely difficult task to take on. This role required a prudence to bring the country together. But President Karzai appears not to have been the kind of leader to play that role. After the fall of the brutal regime of the Taliban, there was a trust deficit due to the conflict and infighting that had lingered on.

The concerns of Afghanistan's opposition parties and civil society members are increasing about the current political situation, reconciliation with Taliban, future of the political system and the issue of peace and tranquility. One of the basic problems with these processes is that they are not being made very much transparent and participatory.

The ambiguities give rise to concerns and distrust. So the same is happening with all such crucial processes. Afghanistan's Presidential office has in fact kept on striving to limit the power and authority to itself and on certain occasions has used the same irresponsibly. The need of time is to make sure that all the important processes should not end in more disturbance and disorder in Afghan society which rather needs peace and tranquility.

The Afghan government has been very much confident that Taliban would be galvanized by the slogans of peace and harmony.

So far he has not been true in his belief as Taliban have responded with a boycott of peace talks and continuity of insurgency in different parts of country. And now they have turned their concentration towards the northern areas. The government, instead of calling them for peace talks, must for the moment carry out measures to tackle the growing terrorist networks.

First Vice-President Gen. Dostum also time to time ensured that Taliban would not be allowed to gain ground through terrorism. Already he urged the Afghans to support their army and police against these fighters, saying if the rebels did not accept peace, they would rise in arms against the guerillas in support of the security forces. He also said that they were against peace talks with the Taliban because Afghans did not want their schools closed, schoolgirls poisoned and innocent people killed anymore.

It would be really a very pathetic situation if even after the withdrawal of the international troops, Afghan government and US are not able to have successful peace negotiations with Taliban.

With the continuity of terrorism by Daesh, Taliban and like minded groups, there would be every chances of a civil war because people would not wait and see their beloved ones being killed by the Taliban fighters. Afghan government and US have to come up with some concrete policies regarding negotiation with Taliban. The secret and non-participatory talks would never yield the desired result. It is necessary that the parties to the conflict should be present in the peace talks; otherwise, it would be very difficult to address the root of the issue.

Showing his disappointment from the current government, Speaking to his supporters in reaction to the government's announcement, chief executive of Jamiat-e-Islami Ata Mohammad Noor has said that he has not resigned and has no intention to step down from his post as the governor of Balkh.

He has asked his supporters to stand against the decision of President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani as the Presidential Palace on Monday announced that the president has approved the resignation of Balkh governor.

Afghanistan has been dominated by various threats and challenges in the past decades due to unbroken war, and other evils. As a result, thousands of families left the country and immigrated to neighboring countries for their survival. As, Afghanistan is steeped in bold challenges, there is another growing threat to both its political and social stability.

Apart from the concerns regarding corruption and ill-governance, many political leaders has been very much critical of the present form of government. On various occasions, they have mentioned that the present form of government is highly centralized and revolves around the Presidential office.

Analysts and observers are of the view that if the district chiefs and provincial governors are elected by the people, there would be better accountability and people would consider themselves more involved in the affairs of the country. Moreover, they would have more chances of political awareness and there will be a development towards a better democracy in Afghanistan.

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## The Meaty Side of Climate Change

By Shefali Sharma

Last year, three of the world's largest meat companies – JBS, Cargill, and Tyson Foods – emitted more greenhouse gases than France, and nearly as much as some big oil companies. And yet, while energy giants like Exxon and Shell have drawn fire for their role in fueling climate change, the corporate meat and dairy industries have largely avoided scrutiny. If we are to avert environmental disaster, this double standard must change.

To bring attention to this issue, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, GRAIN, and Germany's Heinrich Böll Foundation recently teamed up to study the “supersized climate footprint” of the global livestock trade. What we found was shocking. In 2016, the world's 20 largest meat and dairy companies emitted more greenhouse gases than Germany. If these companies were a country, they would be the world's seventh-largest emitter.

Obviously, mitigating climate change will require tackling emissions from the meat and dairy industries. The question is how.

Around the world, meat and dairy companies have become politically powerful entities. The recent corruption-related arrests of two JBS executives, the brothers Joesley and Wesley Batista, pulled back the curtain on corruption in the industry. JBS is the largest meat processor in the world, earning nearly \$20 billion more in 2016 than its closest rival, Tyson Foods. But JBS achieved its position with assistance from the Brazilian Development Bank, and apparently, by bribing more than 1,800 politicians. It is no wonder, then, that greenhouse-gas emissions are low on the company's list of priorities. In 2016, JBS, Tyson and Cargill emitted 484 million tons of climate-changing gases, 46 million tons more than BP, the British energy giant.

Meat and dairy industry insiders push hard for pro-production policies, often at the expense of environmental and public health. From seeking to block reductions in nitrous oxide and methane emissions, to circumventing obligations to reduce air, water, and soil pollution, they have managed to increase profits while dumping pollution costs on the public.

One consequence, among many, is that livestock production now accounts for nearly 15% of global greenhouse-gas emissions. That is a bigger share than the world's entire transportation sector. Moreover, much of the growth in meat and dairy production in the coming decades is expected to come from the industrial model. If this growth conforms to the pace projected by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, our ability to keep temperatures from rising to apocalyptic levels will be severely undermined.

At the United Nations Climate Change Conference

(COP23) in Bonn, Germany, last month, several UN agencies were directed, for the first time ever, to cooperate on issues related to agriculture, including livestock management. This move is welcome for many reasons, but especially because it will begin to expose the conflicts of interest that are endemic in the global agribusiness trade.

To skirt climate responsibility, the meat and dairy industries have long argued that expanding production is necessary for food security. Corporate firms, they insist, can produce meat or milk more efficiently than a pastoralist in the Horn of Africa or a small-scale producer in India. Unfortunately, current climate policies do not refute this narrative, and some even encourage increased production and intensification.

Rather than setting targets for the reduction of total industry-related emissions, many current policies create incentives for firms to squeeze more milk from each dairy cow and bring beef cattle to slaughter faster. This necessitates equating animals to machinery that can be tweaked to produce more with less through technological fixes, and ignoring all of this model other negative effects. California's experience is instructive.

Pursuing one of the world's first efforts to regulate agricultural methane, the state government has set ambitious targets to reduce emissions in cattle processing. But California is currently addressing the issue by financing programs that support mega-dairies, rather than small, sustainable operators. Such “solutions” have only worsened the industry's already-poor record on worker and animal welfare, and exacerbated adverse environmental and health-related effects.

Solutions do exist. For starters, governments could redirect public money from factory farming and large-scale agribusiness to smaller, ecologically focused family farms. Governments could also use procurement policies to help build markets for local products and encourage cleaner, more vibrant farm economies.

Many cities around the world are already basing their energy choices on a desire to tackle climate change. Similar criteria could shape municipalities' food policies, too. For example, higher investment in farm-to-hospital and farm-to-school programs would ensure healthier diets for residents, strengthen local economies, and reduce the climate impact of the meat and dairy industries.

Dairy and meat giants have operated with climate impunity for far too long.

If we are to halt global temperature spikes and avert an ecological crisis, consumers and governments must do more to create, support, and strengthen environmentally conscious producers.

That would be good for our health – and for the health of our planet. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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