

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

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## Gross Violation of Rights

Human rights violations are rife in our society. For instance, a woman suffers from domestic violence, her daughter is harassed sexually on the street, her son loses his life in suicide bombing on the way to school and her graduate son cannot gain a job due to serious nepotism. Women are considered inferior, children are abused and extremism victimizes the soldiers and the innocent civilians here, there and everywhere. These challenges are experienced bitterly in our society, despite the piercing slogans and big claims of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

In the preamble of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, big and mouth-watering claims are stated as: The General Assembly recognizes that the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, human rights should be protected by the rule of law, friendly relations between nations must be fostered, the peoples of the UN have affirmed their faith in human rights, the dignity and the worth of the human person, the equal rights of men and women and are determined to promote social progress, better standards of life and larger freedom and have promised to promote human rights and a common understanding of these rights.

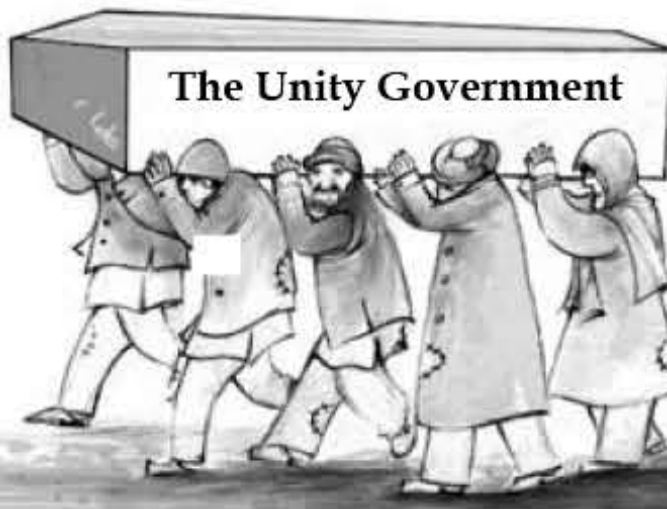
Even though, Afghanistan is a member of the Human Rights' Declaration, "the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights" of the citizens are under questions. Moreover, freedom, peace and justice are the citizens' dream come true to be achieved. As previously mentioned, citizens are killed in cold blood by Taliban insurgents, women still lose their bread-winners, children are orphaned, and the challenges increase with each passing day.

Seemingly, the mouth-watering slogans of the presidential candidates were only a flash on the pan and the citizens' hopes are on the wane. In other words, the candidates paid lip service to democracy and the president has failed to determine his cabinet members - despite the high insecurity across the country. So, the political upheaval remains a serious issue for the citizens without an effective reaction from the officials. This is a major factor which leaves the way open to the violation of inalienable rights of citizens - especially the rights to life and liberty. Human rights' violation does not necessarily mean to use violence, to injure one physically or to take one's life; however it also includes discrimination in an office, mocking one on the street, hurting one's feelings by your sharp tongue, etc. To answer the question that where human rights begin, Chair of the United Nations Commission Eleanor Roosevelt said, "In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

The equal rights of man and woman is also stressed upon and the discrimination is forbidden in the Constitutional law of Afghanistan. As a result, it is mentioned in article 22, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law." Additionally, the natural rights, which is bestowed by the Creator, is also referred to in article 23 of this Law as, "Life is the gift of God as well as the natural right of human beings. No one shall be deprived of this except by legal provision."

Article 23 is very similar to the aphorism of the US Declaration of Independence, adopted in 1776, which declares, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Considering this fact, the validity and rationality of Afghanistan's law is beyond doubt, but the law is not enforced as it must be. For instance, it is said that everyone is equal in the eye of the law, however the opposite is practiced. The rich and the influential commit crime and violate others' rights with impunity, whereas the law is enforced severely on the poor. In such a case, discrimination appears and equality disappears. Likewise, one is deprived of his/her natural rights, particularly rights to life, without any reaction from the officials. The terrorist victims are the worst example for this fact. In spite of the heavy attacks carried out by the Taliban insurgents, no mechanism is thought up by the officials to curb this challenge.

Hence, the officials are urged by the Afghan citizens not to turn blind eyes to their challenges. The Afghan National Unity Government is supposed to end this issue without further waste of time. Hope, the Afghan officials feel the pain of the victims' families and heal the wounded hearts of the mothers, who has lost their children, through planning an effective mechanism to curb the country's issues and prevent from the violation of rights.



## Are Madrasas Necessary?

By Muhammad Rasool Shahsool Shah

Mullah of our mosque usually keeps a calm and humble tone on his Friday speeches and especially avoids hate-provoking remarks. It is the reason why, he hardly ever speaks about politics and when he does so, he keeps a good control on his emotions. But that Friday, the tone and words were both different when I was slowly walking to the Friday congregation. I soon realized that he may be one of the guest speakers who sometimes grace the community with their words of wisdom. I silently sat in a corner. Almost 15 minutes were remaining to the congregational prayers and people were slowly coming into the mosque. Usually I remain busy with my own thoughts or repetition of some verses as our mullah usually talks about the often-repeated things. But this man was different; he was absolutely on fire. He was talking in such anger as if he had come out of a serious fight with someone. He was criticizing the government and foreign forces and their governments for their efforts to steal the wealth of faith and Islam from the people. It is quite normal and is the often trademark pattern of speech of almost all the scholars. But I was startled when he directly started cursing and criticizing the general public. He was shouting, 'Oh people, you are busy in your own luxurious lives and your most important asset is being silently stolen. Your laziness has so much encouraged the enemies of our religion that they are up against any small thing that can save your religion'. Now it was getting interesting for me as usually such fiery speeches end with a petty request. As expected, he slowly came to his point, 'Your religion is in danger but madrasas are there to protect this religion. I also have a madrasa where hundreds of students are given free education. But they are all suffering badly; they have very less to eat, they don't have books to read and I have come to my brothers with a hope that they would put their share in this good work and save this madrasa and preserve the future of students and enlighten the name of Islam forever and ever. With this, he concluded his speech and two of his men opened a big piece of cloth and started moving through the lines of worshippers and people started putting some money in it. This is not a rare story. There are thousands of madrasas in our country and a number of other Muslim countries of region like Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. Outside the country, these madrasas have been portrayed in a negative way and shown as breeding places of extremism and terrorism.

Inside the country, there are differing views about these madrasas. Before giving any kind of positive or negative opinion, it would be the most appropriate if a proper study of these madrasas is conducted. However, majority of the urban population regards them to be poorly managed, congested and inappropriate places of religious education from where students of very low caliber and skills enter the society. On the other hand, people in rural areas see them from the eye of obedient religious devotees and consider them the most important part of religion and hence, give them extraordinary respect, usually entering the levels of reverence. People who like and dislike madrasa system have their own points and logic. Following are the points given against and in favor of madrasas by general public:

The biggest problem is the poor conditions in which these institutes of religious education are run and managed. As they don't have any evident source of income so they try to cover their expenses in their meager resources and thus make compromises on a number of occasions. There are badly-lit, overcrowded rooms where at times students sleep and also learn their lessons. Majority of them don't have proper system of water and sewerage and they are found to be stinking with smell of dumped water and other wastes. Majority of them have the 'zeerah' system for collection of food for the students. As they cannot afford to cook their own food so some students are assigned with duties to go to the neighboring houses and collect the cooked food.

Usually they use a big bucket in which they keep adding the variety of dishes from different houses and in the end, students are served with a mix of these dishes in which there can be vegetables, meat, pulses and many other things. In the same way, twice a day, these boys also go from door to door to collect bread (and of course, to the bread-selling shops). Unfortunately, with increasing terrorism and such events, majority of people in cities are against such collection and look at them with dislike. The mental and physical condition of boys receiving this food is also not so difficult to be imagined.

As majority of them are run like dormitory schools so large number of boys are given a small room to sleep. It is due to this reason that there were large complaints of sexual abuse of minors by their elder roommates or in some cases, their teachers. In general as well, parents mostly remain concerned about the sexual abuse of their children. As mentioned, these madrasas mostly serve the educational requirements of boys and there is hardly any for girls. This is, in fact a grave ignorance of the half of the population of a society and against the sayings of our Prophet (PBUH) that seeking knowledge is compulsory both for men and women.

Another major complaint is the lack of well-trained teachers. As they don't have enough resources, so they hire teachers on meager salaries who are both academically and methodically weak and ineffective. In the same way, the books taught are centuries old and no effort has been made to revise them. Except for a couple of them, most of them ignore modern sciences like mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry and others, terming them to be unnecessary for their students.

And the biggest accusation against them is to be the breeding places of terrorism and extremism. Personally, I have not noticed any madrasa to be training students for any war or terror activity. There are reports that many madrasas are given international funding for making a set-up of recruiting and training young boys for terror activities but these reports are yet to be confirmed. As far as extremism is concerned, this is in fact a part of their existence. Their owners and administrators acquire public fund only by making people afraid of infidels and for this reason, they have to keep a constant air of talking against infidels. It is the reason why, there would be hardly any student of madrasa that should talk in favor of friendship with a Non-Muslim, should be willing to wear out of routine modern clothes and similar things.

Madrasas do exist because of a simple fact. They are free and are the only source for poor families (who are much abundant in the above mentioned countries) to educate their children. Majority of the families send their children as they cannot afford the expenses of private schools and they have become much disappointed of the poor performance of public schools. In most cases, poor families remain happy that their children are busy in getting education and they never come to know about the actual condition of their children. Then these children become absolutely vulnerable for any kind of utilization by their administrators and media reported many cases when a child admitted to a madrasa by his parents was later found to be a suicide bomber.

So until and unless government or private sectors fills this gap of good schools, these institutes will exist, in whatever form or condition may be. We should also not forget a number of very good madrasas that have become an example for others by bringing change with the time. In these madrasas, students are given all the good facilities, they also study computer, English and other contemporary subjects and later on, succeed in becoming an important part of their society. The above points may be difficult for some to digest but unless we don't remove our weaknesses, we would never be able to best utilize this important organ of our lives and society.

(Muhammad Rasool Shah works as Academic Coordinator at Barakat Int'l School, Kabul. He can be reached at muhammadrasoolshah@gmail.com)

## Elections to The Oliy Majlis Of The Republic Of Uzbekistan And Local Kengashes Of People's Deputies

Preliminary results of the elections

On December 21, 2014, the elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan, regional, district and city Kengashes (Councils) of people's deputies were held in Uzbekistan.

There is good reason to believe that the elections to the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan became an important stage in the deepening of reforms on further democratization, renewal and modernization of the country.

In order to conduct the elections of 2014 in full compliance with the requirements of the law, on the high democratic level the Central Election Commission adopted a Program of preparation and holding of elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, regional, district and city Kengashes (Councils) of people's deputies. Standards and requirements defined by laws and the concept that are compulsory and equal for all, during the election campaign have been fully complied.

In the elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, regional, district and city councils of people's deputies participate more than 18.4 million voters, it's equal to 89% of the total number of voters included in the lists. 8311 voters used their right to early voting. According to the preliminary results of the deputies elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis were elected in 113 electoral districts. From the Movement of Entrepreneurs and Businessmen - Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan were elected 47 deputies, the Democratic Party of Uzbekistan «Milliy Tiklanish» - 28, the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan - 21, the Social Democratic Party «Adolat» - 17 deputies.

In 22 electoral districts, none of the candidates receives half of the votes. In accordance with the legislation in these districts in the period specified by law will be held revote on the two candidates who received a large number of votes. According to Article 45 of the Law «On elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan» if the electoral district more than two candidates for deputies and none of them has been elected, the district election commission decides to hold a revote in the district between two candidates who received a large number of votes. On December 21, 2014 was also held the Conference of the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, where 15 members of Ecological Movement were elected to the Legislative Chamber of the Parliament by secret ballot from the number of nominated candidates at the conference, who are represented each administrative-territorial unit

of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Executive Committee of the Central Council of the Ecological Movement.

Elections to the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan were held in compliance with all democratic norms and principles fixed in the Constitution and the electoral legislation.

The work of domestic and foreign observers has contributed to transparency, openness of the electoral process. Monitoring of elections to the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan was carried out by more than 300 observers from 50 countries and five international organizations missions - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Commonwealth of Independent States, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Associations of World Electoral Bodies and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as more than 70,000 observers and authorized representatives of political parties that nominated candidates for deputies. In addition, more than 340 representatives of domestic and foreign mass media covered the election. In an effort to help journalists' activities were functioned Republican Press Center on Coverage of the Elections, where were created all conditions for them. There were conducted press conferences, briefings and seminars.

Currently, the Central Election Commission is considering protocols and other documents provided by the district election commissions and the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan.

In accordance with the Law «On elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan» all of them, and if necessary - the documents of separate precinct election commissions, would be once again carefully checked by the Central Election Commission. Only after that, the Central Election Commission would make a decision on the election results.

In accordance with national electoral legislation information about the results of the elections and the list of the elected deputies of the Legislative Chamber will be published by the Central Election Commission in the press no later than 10 days after the election, i.e., until 31 December. Elections to the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis and local representative bodies of state power, passed on December 21 demonstrated solidarity of the people of Uzbekistan on the path of building a democratic Law-governed state and a strong civil society, with the deepening of economic reforms aimed to improve the welfare and prosperity of the country.

(Source: Republican Press Center on Coverage of the Elections of 2014)

Chairman / Editor in Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa  
Vice Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Phone: +93 799 005 019/799 408 271/777 005 019

E-mail: mail@outlookafghanistan.com, outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Address: V-137, Street 6, Phase 4, Shahrak Omeed Sabz, Kabul, Afghanistan