

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

Daily Outlook

AFGHANISTAN

The Leading Independent Newspaper

February 14, 2015

Working Ground for Journalists: Afghanistan Six Degree Ahead of Former Year

Journalists across the globe enjoy great degree of freedom, financial safeguards and are guaranteed defense from politically, religiously and racially aroused extremists groups. This facade let the democratic countries blossom on the moderate principles of democracy where freedom of expression beyond any prejudices, find indiscriminate application. Conversely, press encounters enormous censure, great degree of restraint and severe and callous treatment from both state and non-state actors. Such cold hearted attitudes are occasionally witnessed in states passing through totalitarian, despotic and dysfunctional or paralyzed democratic regimes. Afghanistan is no better in the list of ill-governed democratic state, where democracy is talked not practiced. It is an irrefutable notion; democracy encompassing all its core values lay to implementation only when customary cultures are substituted with democratic culture. This renders achievable when ground turns richer for such adoption. Nonetheless, the case is otherwise in this piece of land where biases seek sectarian, racial, religious and regional support. Everybody is discriminated on flawed aforesaid grounds. Truth lies off and falsehood dominates; the list goes on. Formerly, an unknown gunman killed an Afghan journalist, Aqil Mohammad Wiqar who was working with Speen Ghar Radio in eastern Afghanistan. Negating the chance of personal enmity the professional life certainly accounts for his early demise. The previous year scores of journalists rendered prey to butchers. Last year 60 journalists were killed worldwide. Eight of them lost lives in Afghanistan, making it the deadliest year for journalists in Afghanistan.

According to Reporters without Borders press freedom index in the 2014, Afghanistan is ranked 128th out of 180 countries. But this period has also seen the continuation of a wave of violence against journalists than was unleashed when election coverage began last October. The Taliban stepped up attacks on the civilian population more than a year ago, and their targets have included journalists and media.

Another case that earned prominence was the death of 27-year-old local radio host Kaled Aghah Yaghubi who was gunned down in front of his children in his home in Mazar-e-Sharif, the capital of the northern province of Balkh, the previous year. The continuing wave of killing against journalists showed marked increase in violence. This was confirmed by the report released late 2014 by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), it noted a 24 per cent increase in the number of civilians killed or wounded in attacks or other acts of violence. Before assuming the office of presidency, President and CEO made promises to support the freedom of press. Some measures favoring freedom of information have also been begun which include modifying the access to information law, eliminating the Media Offences Commission and the planned creation of a media regulatory body under a new media law. This won't suffice unless regulatory bodies to oversee its implementation are onset. At the same time, there have been two key decisions favoring freedom of information in Afghanistan. The parliament adopted a law on access to information. And the Council of State advised against a proposal by certain politicians for censoring the Internet and social networks to prevent the political crisis getting out of control. It's to be remembered that any development hindering the smooth-running of media should be discouraged.

With exception to intimidation by non-state actors, state actors are equally found intimidating the journalists to gain an unrightfully favor else indescribable consequences await their fates. In that pursuit many cases are registered against some of journalists, few were imprisoned and still other fled to other countries. Over the past few years, a number of cases have been pending against different media outlets in AGO and courts on strong accusation of violating sickening professional ethics that finds only application to hapless journalists. The other public departments found of serious misappropriations are granted exemption, are devoid of consideration of professional ethics. It's worth asking, how many public officials are interrogated for violating the so called professional ethics and how many are fired subsequent to substantial evidences found against? Without an intention to unanimously defend media, even for their ill-deeds, unarguably saying an impartial media regulatory body should be constituted, entitled to form media regulatory laws, given all stake holders are taken on board. The media faced increased financial challenges and growing restrictions with regards to access to information. Earlier a France based independent group Reporter without Borders released Press Freedom Index 2015 that underlined grave violation of press freedom. The index stated that there were 3,719 violations of freedom of information in 180 countries in 2014 - eight per cent more than a year earlier. The criminalization of blasphemy endangers freedom of information in around half of the world's countries," the report said, noting that religious extremists sometimes also go after journalists or bloggers they believe do not sufficiently respect follow religion. The Index puts Afghanistan 122 out of 180 countries with score of 37.44, just 6 degree ahead of former year. The aforesaid appreciable moves might have served the reason to bring it forth. Seeing at dismal performance of the rest of countries, we are refreshed to do a bit of good to dwindle the status quo. Conversely, the RSF's ranking put Iran, China, Syria and North Korea among the countries with the very worst levels of press freedom out of the 180 evaluated. The United States ranked 49, three spots lower than in the previous report, in part because of what RSF said was the US government's "war on information" against WikiLeaks and others. The best-rated nations were northern European states such as Finland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, with New Zealand, Canada and Jamaica also making the top 10. The functioning of media bodies, foreign or local, becoming targets for reprisal for their work as journalists might get worsened. The governments must come forth sincerely, addressing the boundless challenges Afghan media faces and must not let this very functional organ of society bealeguer.

Ministry of Public Health Advisors 450



The Mendacious Jihad of Religious Extremists

By Hujjatullah Zia

Religious fanaticism had triggered bloody wars throughout the history. The war and violence under the aegis of religion and faith wrecked catastrophic havoc on human societies. The great human loss, indescribable cruelty and barbarity and mammoth destructions outraged human conscience to a large extent. Religion and war were juxtaposed within long centuries. As a result, The Thirty Years' War (1618 - 1648), which involved most countries in Europe, was one of the most destructive conflicts in European history, and it was the worst example of war of religion. The war was fought largely as a religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire which lasted, unceasing, for three decades making it the longest continuous war in modern history. Gradually, it developed into a more general conflict involving most of the great powers of Europe.

So great was the devastation brought about by the war that estimates put the reduction of population in the German states at about 25% to 40%. Some regions were affected much more than others. For example, Wurtemberg, an area in south-west Germany, lost three-quarters of its population during the war. In the territory of Brandenburg, an area in northeastern Germany, the losses had amounted to half, while in some areas an estimated two-thirds of the population died. The male population of the German states was reduced by almost half. The population of the Czech lands declined by a third due to war, disease, famine and the expulsion of Protestant Czech. Much of the destruction of civilian lives and property was caused by the cruelty and greed of mercenary soldiers. Villages were especially easy prey to the marauding armies. Those states survived would take almost a century to recover. The Swedish armies alone may have destroyed up to 2,000 castles, 18,000 villages and 1,500 towns in Germany, one-third of all German towns.

History shows that violence and bloodshed on the basis of religious beliefs will only lead to casualties and ravages. Shedding one's blood for a particular ideology will foment trouble in a community rather than ending the issue. Crusading against one's religious convictions has shown its ugliest face throughout the history. Historical blood-bath over religious beliefs left heavy casualties behind without a positive change. No doubt, the more a conflict continues the more it will lead to destructions. During the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the 16th century, historians saw the Crusades through the prism of their own religious beliefs. Protestants saw them as a manifestation of the evils of the Papacy, while Catholics viewed the movement as a force for good. During the Enlightenment, historians tended to view both the Crusades and the entire Middle Ages as the efforts of barbarian cultures driven by fanaticism. By the 19th century,

with the dawning of Romanticism, this harsh view of the crusades and its time period was mitigated somewhat, with later 19th-century crusade scholarship focusing on increasing specialization of study and more detailed works on subjects.

Enlightenment scholars in the 18th century and modern historians in the West have expressed moral outrage at the conduct of the crusaders. In the 1950s, Sir Steven Runciman wrote that "High ideals were besmirched by cruelty and greed ... the Holy War was nothing more than a long act of intolerance in the name of God".

It seems that the history repeats itself in Islamic world. People suffer from war and violence launched by religious extremists under the aegis of faith and beliefs. The church dogma for crusade has been replaced by Islamic fatwa issued by fundamentalists to launch jihad against their own brethren - who deny joining fundamentalist groups.

The maudlin religionists smolder with religious fanaticism turning their backs on real Islamic law and the sacred texts of Holy Qur'an. The blind indoctrination in the subterranean rooms of Madrasahs has closed the way to rational and analytical discussions for them. The radicals break religious and moral taboos under the appellation of Islam. In another item, their bizarre acts of violence and barbarity are the antithesis of Islamic guidelines. Isn't stabbing religion in the back? The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which has blackened the name of religion, is the outgrowth of extremism. The flagrant violation of religious taboos such as slaughtering and burning alive mankind, dishonoring women forcefully, mutilating, etc. are highly nauseating for one who has an iota of morality and humanity.

Based on historical experiences of human societies, religious wars have left heavy casualties and led to large destructions around the globe. The religious fanatics murdered millions of people with the intention of imposing their beliefs on them. They could remove their bodies, however, failed to cultivate their fundamental beliefs in their minds and hearts. Moreover, they spread Islamophobia around the globe - which is against the soul and teaching of Islam and the Prophet of mercy.

"We often think of peace as the absence of war; that if the powerful countries would reduce their arsenals, we could have peace. But if we look deeply into the weapons, we see our own minds - our prejudices, fears, and ignorance. Even if we transported all the bombs to the moon, the roots of war and the reasons for bombs would still be here, in our hearts and minds, and sooner or later we would make new bombs. Seek to become more aware of what causes anger and separation, and what overcomes them. Root out the violence in your life, and learn to live compassionately and mindfully."

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Unheard Voices from Inside Israel!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

The thoughts of new Israeli President, Reuven Rivlin may be somewhat different from the majority of his countrymen but of course, he is not the only one in his country. In present day Israel and from 1948, when the Jewish state of Israel was established, there have been numerous people who thought differently from the typical leaders and public of Israel.

On the occasion of the Jewish New Year, Rivlin made a video in which he sat next to an eleven-year-old Palestinian Israeli boy who had been bullied, to show solidarity with and support for the bullied boy. A couple of weeks ago, Rivlin visited the Arab town of Kafr Qasim to apologize for the massacre, in 1956, of forty-eight Palestinian workers and children by Israeli border guards. His statement on the occasion sparked great anger all across Israel when he said, 'I hereby swear, in my name and that of all our descendants that we will never act against the principal of equal rights and we will never try and force someone from our land.' Right from the beginning of the establishment of Israel, anti-Arab or anti-Palestinian sentiments had prime role in the lives of every citizen of Israel for a number of reasons. The first and foremost was to provide them with a reason to live with and to satisfy the acts of their government.

This reason becomes increasingly important for the settlers who come from different countries of the world and are provided with newly-built houses built on lands being snatched from Palestinians by force and they see this happening in front of their eyes. Secondly, this reason has also been the prime source of empathy and support for Israel by the rest of the world. Israel is shown as a country got trapped under the Arab states that are looking for any small opportunity to wipe away the mere existence of Israel and this propaganda or strategy has kept the steady inflow of billions of dollars of foreign aid for the existence of Israel. Next, there has not been a year when there was not present conflict between Israel and its neighboring Palestinians.

Now that most part of the Palestinian land has been occupied by Israel and they have been squeezed to live in densely populated areas inside Palestine and they are on the absolute mercy of Israelis for their commerce, movement and every small need, it is not surprising if they see that military resistance remains the only way to end this Israeli occupation. They have got disappointed from all the international powers and their peaceful efforts as they have been driven out of their lands and killed and tortured when they try to resist this. This has resulted in a situation when both the states feel themselves in the state of permanent war and the fuel for this war is provided by the hatred.

On the other hand, right from the day of inception of Israel, there has been numerous leaders who have been talking of showing respect to humanity and giving the rights of Palestinians being humans. This is especially the case with more than a million Arabs who are living inside Israel and have tried their best to be loyal to this country. But it is also a fact that they are living in an environment of constant hatred, humiliation and rage and anger. This fact became evident during the last Palestine-Israel conflict when they were sacked from their jobs and a number of government members talked of driving them out of Israel by force. In the same way,

many are of the view that the present strategy of hatred and destruction would never let Israel to be sustainable and would never let this state to be accepted by its neighbors, no matter how strong it grows. According to some political experts in Israel, such acts were harming the mere existence of Israel. Israel was established for providing a home for the scattered Jews around Europe and US where they were the victims of anti-Semitic hatred but now they are doing exactly the same thing against Palestinians. With this viewpoint, every Palestinian is considered to be an enemy of Israel while hundreds and thousands of Israeli Arabs are also taken to be suspicious. Almost all the neighboring countries of Israel are considered its enemy while ISIS and Iran are also considered to be potential threats for the state of Israel. With this mindset, Israel has almost no friends in the region and it has turned everyone into its enemy.

This public mindset became clear when many demonstrated in Israel against the inactiveness of the Prime Minister Netanyahu to carry out decisive attacks against Palestinians during the attack of Israel in 2014, calling him to be 'non-decisive' and 'hesitant.' They were demanding an absolute military operation against Palestinians so that no Palestinian should be left behind and this was regarded the most feasible solution for the problems of the region. However, there were also present some unheard voices demanding rights for Palestinians as human beings. While sitting inside Israel, it was not easy to get the true picture when only the rocket attacks, tunnels and support for IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) were shown but the increasing casualties of Palestinians, mostly including of children and women, and majority of non-militant citizens, shown on international media was making it difficult for those who always supported Israel. At that time, there were numerous voices resounding as why the existence of a state should be supported by US and its Western allies when its existence is snatching the lives of thousands of Palestinians on the occupied territory.

The supporters of a less-extremist Israel blame the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud party for using this hate-promotion to safeguard their rule in the country. Every passing year has witnessed the increasing trend of extremism in the lines of Israelis, not only in their politicians but also in the general public. It is due to the increasing dependence of everyone to safeguard their own aims and objectives. Be it the political parties or religious rabbis, all play the same card for different uses.

But the situation is painful for those who are actually able to see this manipulation of public anger for different heinous and hidden purposes. It is the reason why, they continually talk in favor of peace in the region that is mostly in the hands of Israeli government to control, equal rights for the Arab citizens of Israel, and the least human rights for the Palestinians living on their occupied and sieged lands. They believe that life of a Jewish state will be decided not by its military power or political or military tactics and cleverness but by the fact as how much they believe and practice justice, peace and other noble qualities. History has witnessed that without these qualities, many strong nations gradually grew weak and disappeared from the surface of the earth and laws of nature are not going to change for any specific nation or time.

Muhammad Rasool Shah is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. he can be reached at muhammadrasoolshah@gmail.com

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

Sub Office: Shora Road, Street 10, District 6, Kartey 3, Kabul, Afghanistan