

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



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Curbing Crimes and Criminals

Crime and delinquency are the forms of non-conformity of human behavior. Criminals are the product of society and are caused by the disorganization of the social structure. Keeping in view the law and order system, it is important that the crimes must be brought to light - they should be reported to the relevant authorities or institutions so that they should be identified as crimes. Thus reporting of crime to a specialized government agency is of great importance in today's societies.

Even after reporting if the court of law does not find sufficient proof against the defaulter then he is not a criminal. If an individual is given punishment which may be in the form of a warning or a fine or imprisonment, then the individual becomes a criminal. Further, the extent of punishment is based upon the rigidity of the code of morality and the mores which have been violated. From Afghanistan's point of view, for example, if the religious values are very much adversely affected, the intensity of the punishment will be greater. There is no clear cut dividing line between crime and non-conformity and every non-conformity is not a crime.

In our country the reporting of crime is not so efficient due to various socio-cultural and security reasons. For instance, the delinquent children and deviant women are mostly ignored and their crimes are not reported to the police. Moreover, when women are even the victims in certain sorts of crimes, such crimes are also not reported because women are thought to be the honor of the families and their names are not revealed to the police or in such cases.

In the same way, due to homogeneity of the rural society, having an informal social control, most of the cases are decided by the village elders and are not reported to the police. There is no proper record of these crimes. Influential persons also hush up minor criminal cases. Due to these reasons, the true presentation of the crime statistics is not possible. Crime is one of the major social problems of the country which needs attention of the government and the social actors.

The increase of crime in a society enhances the economic, social and psychological sufferings of the masses. For instance, the murder of the head of the family brings myriads of problems and difficulties for the wife, children and other dependents. The increasing rate of crime in the country disorganizes and disintegrates the whole society and affects all social institutions adversely.

There are different causes of crimes within our society but poverty and illiteracy are the most dominant ones. When the economic position of an individual is not sound and satisfactory he develops hatred against the other prosperous members of society. This state of economic instability and psychological frustration lead an individual to commit grave type of crimes, which cannot be expected under normal circumstances.

Mass illiteracy and ignorance of the people is a major cause for a large number of crimes. Most of the illiterate and ignorant persons commit major crimes without realizing the social, economic and psychological implications upon themselves and their families.

Keeping in view the negative and devastating impacts of crimes in our society, it is really vital to follow a comprehensive strategy to control the situation. The education of masses would decrease the nature and rate of crime in the country. Education inculcates respect for law among the people and promotes among them a sense of understanding of the environment in a better way. An educated person proves to be a better citizen in comparison to an illiterate and an ignorant person. Adult education centers should also be encouraged side by side with the educational program for the coming generations on a country level. Normally, an educated person thinks about the after effects before he intend to commit a crime.

Moreover, every efforts should be made to improve the living standard of the masses, as improvement in the living standard would bring about better housing and sanitation facilities for the masses. Good and enough food and clothing with better environment of the family are correlated with a higher living standard which will lead to a better and healthy socialization of an individual. Frustration due to poverty and economic insecurity would be no more a dominating factor among the masses, which may help in decreasing the rate of crime in the country. The number of cottage industries should also be increased to keep the villagers busy in slack seasons and also to enable them to raise their living standards.

Though the total prevention of the crimes is something impossible, there should be efforts to adopt preventive measures on the one hand, strive to amend the criminals on the other by providing them better chances for their readjustment in society as normal and useful member. It is not a matter of more police, more courts and jails which can decrease the rate of crime, but the creation of healthy brotherhood, better social environment and healthy society, culture and personality that can be remedy in the long run.



Unending Controversy over Peace Talks

By Hujjatullah Zia

The peace negotiation has been a highly controversial issue within the last decade. Afghanistan and its allies have invariably urged the Taliban outfit to stop violence and bloodshed, which will benefit no parties. However, violence continued and took immense casualties in thousands of lives. The protracted war lingered with a lull and surge.

To view the relentless insurgency carried out by the Taliban guerrilla fighters, the stance of Afghan and Pakistani governments and the Taliban toward peace talks should be considered.

Afghan government established the High Peace Council (HPC) in 2010 with a view to bringing the Taliban to negotiating table. Kabul government urged Pakistan to use her leverage to nudge the Taliban to peace table. Islamabad hosted a face-to-face talks between the Taliban and Afghan government and intended to host it for second time in Murree, which was known as Murree talks. However, the talks came to unbreakable stalemate after the revelation of Mullah Omar's death. With Mullah Akhtar Mansour at the helm, the Taliban militants intensified their attacks against Afghan government without intention to hold talks. To break the stalemate, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) comprising of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and the US was established. Notwithstanding this issue, the Taliban did not decrease their attacks. Subsequently, the US drone targeted Omar's successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour in Baluchistan so as to facilitate talks. Mansour's death aroused a mistrust between US and Pakistani officials, who said that it was violation of Pakistan's territorial integrity. Although QCG held a meeting in Muscat in late 2017, it did not have a palpable result, either.

The Taliban showed a sense of hesitation about peace process but they never stopped violence and bloodshed. For example, the former No. 2 of the Taliban, Aga Jan Motasim, who still counts the radical religious movement's leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhonzada among his friends, supported the peace process. Nonetheless, he was wounded severely by anonymous figures and a few of his friends were killed simply for advocating peace talks. It showed the Taliban's lukewarm response to peace talks. To cut it short, the Taliban militants continued their militancy and intensified their offensives against Afghan nation and state in recent weeks. The series of deadly attacks carried out by the Taliban, which claimed the lives of hundreds of people, was received with a strong sense of anger. As a result, the determination for talks was undermined to a great extent and Afghan soldiers and their US counterparts have intensified their attacks against the Taliban fighters.

This week, Kabul hosted a two-day conference which was at-

tended by the top US commander in Afghanistan Gen John Nicholson, Commander US Central Command (Centcom) Gen Joseph Votel and the army chiefs of Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Addressing the conference focusing on how to deal with escalating terrorism in the region, Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa said the path to regional peace and stability "passes through Afghanistan". He added that Pakistan had eliminated all terrorist sanctuaries from its soil, however, "residual signatures of terrorists" who take advantage of the presence of Afghan refugees and lack of effective border security coordination, "are also being traced and targeted through ongoing operation Raddul Fasaad".

The conference concluded with the agreement to continue cooperation for regional peace and stability.

The high-level conference comes less than a month after a series of deadly attacks rattled Kabul, following which a high-level delegation from the country comprising the interior minister and spy chief had visited Islamabad with a "personal message" from President Ashraf Ghani. The delegation held talks with Pakistani leadership on security cooperation amid the highly volatile security situation in the country.

According to Afghan officials, the delegation handed over to Islamabad "undeniable" evidence which claimed that the spate of deadly attacks in Afghanistan were allegedly planned in Pakistan. Despite Pak-Afghan delegations meeting for talks both in Kabul and Islamabad, little headway has been made in the peace talks.

Despite the fact that the Taliban played a foul game in the past and carried out large-scale attacks, Kabul government still leaves the door to negotiation open. The Taliban are most unlikely to reduce insurgency and join peace process, which will be a pyrrhic victory for Afghanistan.

It is time for regional agreement to combat terrorism with strong force. Both diplomatic and military ways have to be pursued but if the Taliban persist on their insurgency, no chance for talks should be given to them anymore. Although the Taliban showed reaction towards Donald Trump's recent statement as he said "We don't want to talk with the Taliban" saying that they will continue their attacks and suicide bombings, they never answered positively to peace offerings. Perhaps the open door for talks will be the last option for the Taliban or else military action should be adopted.

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Poor: Because of Being Rich

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Afghanistan is one of richest countries in terms of having strategic business location, huge mineral resources and young workforce, but ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world. More than one-third of the Afghan population live below the national poverty line and an estimated 9.3 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian assistance. The situation has been exacerbated by staggering levels of insecurity and unprecedented levels of unemployment. Despite some indications for improving unbalanced fiscal growth in the country, poverty levels remain the same and in some cases have continued to rise.

Subsequently, poverty has caused many social and cultural crises in the country which include the spread of armed violence, rise of addictions, upsurge of brain drain, dramatic increase in acute malnutrition, over crowdedness in large cities and the vacancy of the countryside. The numbers of poverty criminals have terribly increased while the government has not been able to take sufficient preventive measures to show that imprisonment of poverty criminals is not a real solution to address the problem of rising crime in the country. It is a cruel and useless substitute for the elimination of those conditions—poverty, unemployment, homelessness, desperation, racism, greed—which are at the root of most punished crime, while the crimes of tycoons and professional criminals go mostly unpunished.

Furthermore, wide spread corruption has paralyzed the government system and most of the revenues go to the pockets of the civil servants due to weak control systems and corrupt practices in collecting taxes from small business, property owners, and manufacturers. Based on a last year's report released by Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), an estimate of \$3b bribes paid during a single year in this country. This indicates that nepotism, bribery, embezzlement, and racial discrimination are among the bureaucratic ills that severely affect the ability of the state to provide basic social and economic services to the public, and particularly to the poor.

Nonetheless, Afghanistan has not witnessed any successful poverty reduction strategy to create genuine hopes for the future. Poverty in Afghanistan is concentrated in rural areas as four out of five poor people live in rural areas. The East, Northeast, and West-Central regions—where almost half of the inhabitants are poor—have the lowest per capita consumption and highest likelihood of poverty. Hence, any poverty reduction initiatives would not successful unless it ensures a balanced economic growth and really follow the human rights perspective and national constitutions to help meet the objective of assisting those who are most marginalized and lying at the core of a bad life while unable to enjoy the essentials for a

dignified life, such as the right to food, health, access to justice, shelter and education.

It should be notified that international aid, somewhat, helped to grow the economy, but it has not equally benefited all sectors or the poorer groups. International aids created jobs in the public health sector and education services sectors and benefited high-conflict areas the most. It did not bring any sustainable changes in productivities especially in the agriculture sector, which employs most of Afghanistan's poor people. In short, international aid often supported short terms projects which helped to improve human development outcomes but it did not bring any maintainable changes in economic infrastructures in Afghanistan.

Although Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) has paid some more attention in developing national economic infrastructure comparing to Karzai's government, it does not have enough resources to fund all its necessary development projects. Therefore, NUG needs to peruse a strategic funding diplomacy to satisfy the international community to fund poverty reduction policies of Afghanistan while considering mutual legitimate interests for maintaining longer term of friendships. Finally, we must focus on strengthening the agriculture sector, water infrastructures, mines, investing in human development and managing and mitigating risks that increase poor people's vulnerability. For example, women and children—the "unseen victims" of the Afghan conflict—bear a huge burden when a family loses its chief breadwinner leaving their children orphans and their wives widows.

Meanwhile, we need to take several steps in order to make a comprehensive and balanced poverty reduction strategy; firstly, the government should pay higher wages to its employees, while taking more disciplinary actions against those who do not abide by the law. Secondly, the government has to make policies and strategies focused on stabilization of the macro-economic conditions and structural reforms, both in civil and security sectors. Thirdly, we must strengthen the institutional framework conducive to investment and elimination of barriers to development of the private sector; Fourthly, there is need to invest in development of infrastructures while accelerating the optimal use of the Afghan human resources and urban rural development and finally improve political, economic, finance and local governance, in order to enhance the government's planning and management capacities, and to modernize its systems to ensure provision of good quality services to all the Afghan citizens.

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