

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



February 21, 2015

“Unremitting War Earns Countless Miseries for Masses”

Violence has been a dominant phenomenon browbeating every fabric of Afghan society. The fight between insurgents and government backed international allies seems unending. The proverb “Grass suffers in the battle of bulls” accurately justifies the worsened state of civilians left on the brunt of attack ongoing between government, terrorists and insurgents. The state of affairs furthers until a congenial solution is sought out. Political solution and ground battles are the two courses that end up the bloody battle. When the armed forces are carrying out clean up operation or insurgents are retaliating, the innocent civilians are left to pay the price. In the ongoing tit-for-tat between armed forces and insurgents, unarmed civilians are left to render endless and futile sacrifices that never lead to fruition and bring them aversion of ill-fates. With exception to fallacy of government displaying ineligibility reversing the attack, Taliban are equally responsible for civilian casualties. Taliban seeking refuge in nearest village endangers the lives of unarmed civilians who cannot restrict them doing this, is unjustifiable disposition worthy of loud condemnation. Significantly, the pursuit of tit-for-tat that made Taliban launch attacks on innocent local or foreign nationals is equally condemnable act.

Formerly, a report released by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan stating last year the deadliest year for civilians since the United Nations began keeping records in 2009. Civilian casualties, including both deaths and injuries, were up 22 percent from the previous record set in 2013, and they surpassed 10,000 for the first time since the United Nations’ record-keeping began. In the wake of raging Taliban insurgency the number of civilians killed and wounded in Afghanistan jumped 22 percent in 2014, the report says. The total number of civilian casualties since 2009 now stands at 17,774 killed and 29,971 injured. UNAMA had previously noted a leap in civilian casualties linked to the intensification in ground fighting between government and insurgent forces, in its last report published in July 2014. The report said the increasing use of explosive weapons systems such as mortars, rockets and grenades in civilian-populated areas had resulted in “devastating consequences”. The number of civilian deaths rose 25 percent to 3,699 while the number of injured was up 21 percent to 6,849. The total casualty figure is the highest recorded in a single year since the UN began compiling its reports in 2009. The query who should be blamed for soaring casualties; government or terrorist organizations is clued in the report, holding anti-government elements for 72 percent of casualties and government forces for 14 percent; the rest of percent of all casualties could not be clearly attributed to either side. It is said, “The motivating factor behind escalating death toll is ground operation which accounts for 34 percent civilian casualties in the former year”. Of the 3,605 Afghans killed or wounded during ground operations last year, it was unclear in nearly 30 percent of the cases which side was responsible. However, based on general assessment the insurgents were deemed to be responsible for the largest share of ground-related 43 percent casualties and the government and its allies were responsible for 26 percent; a massive increase from previous years. Another area of concern is the rising number of women and children affected by unremitting futile battle and the grave impact inflicted on socio-economical condition of the people. The report also documented a 40 percent increase in casualties among children (714 killed, 1,760 injured) compared with the previous year and a 21 percent rise in casualties among women (298 killed, 611 injured). It’s therefore urged in the report “the Parties to the conflict should understand the impact of their actions and take responsibility for them, uphold the values they claim to defend, and make protecting civilians their first priority.”

The report also entails the casualties caused by cross border shelling. Previously, when Pakistan and Afghanistan were passing through battered relation, many incidents of shells being fired Pakistan into Afghanistan was reported that led to casualties. The report hold such incidents, 41 in all, accounted for 1 percent of civilian casualties last year, with 71 people injured and 11 killed. Subsequent to successive drawdown of international forces, they are less proportionally held responsible for increasing casualties. Accordingly to the report registered 43 percent decline in civilian casualties by the international military forces. Seeing the war-torn mother land Afghanistan, passing several phases of formation and reformation entailing tales of bloody civil war and war of succession, militias turned out to be an integral part of every tribal elder. This practice till date couldn’t effectively be undermined and disbanded. Militias that fight on behalf of the government, meanwhile, were deemed responsible for 102 casualties, an 85 percent increase from 2013.

The premier had vowed to ban private militias who are found involved violating civil liberties and abuses. The United Nations reported a significant increase in human rights abuses perpetrated by these groups, especially in the country’s north, northeast and southeast, where they often operate in areas with little government presence and hold the government accountable for not restraining the armed militias. Undeniably, the unending war carries multiplied miseries with the only bread earner snatched away leaving the family hapless and ruined financially and segregated socially. The number of women and children injured or killed also hit new highs. The UNAMA head Nicholas Haysom stated “Rising civilian deaths and injuries in 2014 attests to a failure to fulfill commitments to protect Afghan civilians from harm”.

concerns about misuse of Power



Peace Platititude – A Sporadic Flash on the Pan

By Hujjatullah Zia

The peace negotiation which reached its nadir after the abortive attempts of Afghan politicians within the last decade comes to light. Reports say that in the recent meetings in Kabul, the Pakistani delegation, led by the nation’s army chief of staff, told Afghan leaders that the Taliban appeared willing to meet for negotiations in the coming month. The renewed push for negotiations appeared to be driven by evolving relationships between Afghanistan, Pakistan and China, which recently offered to help broker talks. Although Pakistani officials have told the Afghan president, Muhammad Ashraf Ghani, that the movement’s central organization, the Quetta Shura, is amenable to negotiations, many Afghans remain doubtful of their neighbor’s sincerity. The relationship between the two countries has been marked by distrust and intrigue for years. But Afghan and Western officials insist that both sides are willing to shed their historical baggage. To Afghans’ unmitigated chagrin, this topic has piqued our politicians’ interest and will galvanize them into shaking hands with the sworn enemies of our nation. It is believed that the green light given by the “political opponents” is no more than a flash on the pan and will turn red as usual. Most probably, they aim to alleviate the government’s adamantly harsh policy towards them via posing as peace negotiators. A big reason behind the failure of peace negotiation is that the militants have split into different factions since their former regime’s leadership went into hiding after the Taliban were toppled by US-backed Afghan forces in 2001, as part of a US effort to hunt down Al-Qaeda leaders behind the September 11 attacks on the US. Therefore, any militant groups, who proclaim readiness for peace talk without Mullah Omer’s aegis, will be exposed to danger – the same as Mulavi Abdul Raqib, etc.

The Afghan-Taliban peace platititude has constantly led to great sacrifices in the country. As a result, the release of Taliban prisoners to catalyze the peace process bore bitter fruit. The released militants rejoined the armed-groups to organize more deadly attacks against Afghan police and civilians. For instance, Mulavi Abdul Rahman, who was freed from Bagram prison, was killed last year in a fight in Ghorband between Afghan and US soldiers on one side and Taliban militants on the other side.

Moreover, the head of Afghan High Peace Council, Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, was assassinated at his home in Kabul on 20 September 2011, by two men posing as Taliban representatives. The suicide bomber claimed to be a Taliban commander and said he wanted to “discuss peace” with Professor Rabbani. Four other members of HPC were also killed in the blast. The Quetta Shura, which is the leadership of the Afghan Taliban hiding in the affluent Satellite Town of Quetta in Pakistan, was blamed for the incident

by Afghan officials. In retrospect, the civilians’ sacrifices will never fade into oblivion and Afghans still grimace and wince at the painful memory of the cruel regime. The increasing casualties caused by ongoing explosions reflect Taliban’s adamant animosity towards our nation.

Attempts to get talks going in Qatar in 2013 came to nothing after the Afghan government objected to fanfare surrounding the opening of a Taliban office in the Gulf state, complete with flag and official plaques. Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has historically close links with the Taliban, have been marred by mistrust and suspicion but Ghani, who came to power last year, has reached out to Pakistan and sought to improve ties. Based on a report, Pakistan, for its part, is pushing for the Taliban to agree to talk in exchange for an Afghan promise to capture and hand over the leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Mullah Fazlullah, who is believed to be hiding in Afghanistan. The Kabul diplomat warned that any talks might hinge on the Taliban’s reclusive leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, who has not been seen in public since 2001. The diplomat said, “The final decision is still upon Mullah Omar, according to (Pakistani army chief) Raheel. The Taliban leadership is consulting him.”

The gist of the story is that the Afghan High Peace Council was established in 2010 and tasked with contacting the Taliban and convincing them to join the peace process. The members of High Peace Council (HPC) were making efforts days and nights in pursuit of brining Taliban’s leaders on the table of negotiation. However, all the efforts met failure repeatedly. In spite of the government’s efforts focused on re-integrating Taliban fighters, they did not have a reconciliation strategy. So, what would be the solution?

The 2007 bomb blasts in the UK prompted the International Association of Chiefs of Police to come up with techniques to prevent the suicide bomber from reaching his target. The solution recommended was shooting the suspected bomber in the head. The technique holds out hope for those countries where absolutely no mechanism is in place to stop the living bomb from creating mayhem. Our standing operating procedures to combat suicide bombers are archaic and based on a response strategy. Although, emergency repose agencies must be prepared to respond effectively to suicide bombing, the greatest payoffs lie in preventing such attacks. And it goes without saying that for a smart mechanism a mentoring and threat assessment programme should precede the proactive preventive measures to detect and prevent suicide bombing attempts. Hence, since Afghan officials’ long-term attempts for peace talk failed to convince Taliban militants, it seems the only mechanism for our officials to prevent terrorism. For this we need a highly efficient intelligence and information gathering network.

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So-Called Policemen of Society

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

A combination of illiteracy, lack of proper religious knowledge and a sense of living in a society with appreciation of external purity and piety are putting so many people in great confusion and frustration. Some people may call this the stupidity or sheer intentional effort of people to earn social respect and badly criticize them but I don’t see it from this angle for every individual. Rather I feel a kind of pity for them. But with this pity feeling, we cannot help feeling sad, disappointed and angry as their deeds are harming so many who listen to them or get inspired from them.

There are many examples in this regard. The most recent is the issue of Valentine’s Day. It is relieving that the situation in our country is not as bad as it is in some other Muslim countries where people talk of killing those who want to celebrate this Western event. It is partly because of a fact that not so many people are aware of this Day and many more don’t give much importance to it. Even then, there are also present those who want to celebrate this day and also those who want to stop them by force. If we look at some of these Muslim countries, we would find the bleak picture of societal conflict. Our neighboring Pakistan is a good example in this regard. With the increasing number of suicide attacks and extremism in almost every city and town of the country, it is feared that soon there would be attacks on those who talk in favor of Valentine’s Day or criticize those who are talking openly against it.

In this regard, I would like to quote some lines from one of the most influential Pakistani scholars and political expert, Hassan Nisar. Hassan Nisar is famous for his bold remarks and sarcastic criticism of hypocrisy and dualism associated with religion and social behaviors. He writes in a couple of Pakistani newspapers and appears in a program on the most famous Pakistani news channel, GEO News. He is also invited from time to time in programs for his expert opinion regarding politics and a number of social issues. On the occasion of recent Valentine’s Day, he wrote in a newspaper that, “This is totally a useless debate as Valentine’s Day should be celebrated or not. It is a personal issue of people and it should be left on the discretion of individuals as if they want to celebrate it or not. Here, the most distressing is the attitude of those who try to become self-assigned policemen of society and interfere unnecessarily and awkwardly in the issues of others. They will keep a check on who is wearing what, who is having a romantic affair with whom and things like these. They think that they have a special permission to interfere in the private issues of others and make corrections. On the other hand, they never interfere in issues like corruption, bribery, stealing electricity and others. It would be in best benefit of society if they take interest in social evils instead of personal issues as large number of people are affected by the social evils. Intentionally or unintentionally, there are also present similar self-assigned saviors and policemen in our society who feel it their responsibility in interfering in personal issues of others and not giving due respect to personal freedom. But then two questions arise here; first, are they themselves good enough to suggest corrections for others and are they aware of the sensitivity needed for interfering in other’s issues. In our

mosque, on every Friday prayers, an old man of a small stature shouts and asks the people to move to the forward lines and not to keep any space between them. This is a good message but his tone, style and selection of words is so rude and careless that many are angry of him and they keep silent due to his old age, otherwise, they could have given a good answer to this man. Similarly, he pushes the children and even teenage boys below the age of 15 to the lines at the back and becomes a reason for making them feel bad about mosque, the prayers and people present in the mosque.

In the same way, we also see in our workplaces a number of people who offer prayers but with this, they acquire the status of a policeman to keep a check as if who is offering the prayers and who is not. He is found to be continually disturbing others for offering prayers and in cases of his inferiors, he even shouts and uses insulting language. In majority of such cases, people are tired of this person and because of him, their good feelings towards prayers have slightly changed.

The same behavior of some so-called social policemen was noticed on the occasion of Valentine’s Day on a number of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and others. They were asking people to stand against this event and had used offensive language against those who talked in favor of Valentine’s Day. Without having a look at the comments in favor of and against this day, it is again unfortunate that number of people in our society are still high who try to intervene in personal issues of others on the name of religion. In a society like ours, where majority of people are dishonest to their jobs and country, it is like making a fun of religion when people of similar characters should try to implement it on others without proper knowledge. In almost all the comments and posts given on internet, a single fact was badly felt that these posts and comments needed more maturity, compassion and better word selection. On the other hand, it is also a helpless situation that trend of imposing good qualities of religion by a bad strategy not only persists but thrives with every passing day. It is a fact that religion and similar gentle thoughts are related with the internal desire of people and none of it can be imposed by force. If we have to make people realize the importance of religion, it is never going to happen by force. We will have to look for better ideas in this regard.

The present shape of Valentine’s Day is not acceptable to our society and religion. Our religion strictly prohibits the open interaction of young couples. But it is also unwise to conceal this issue by force and taking an extreme path to tackle it. If young minds are getting attracted to this Western celebration, a proper and well-planned strategy is needed so that they should realize all the evils associated with this celebration. They should realize that it is for their own good if they keep themselves away from this. With this strategy, we would be sure that no one’s feelings would be hurt and there will not be any need of shouting or scolding others. Such mature strategy of mutual respect and understanding would bring a lasting and wise solution to this problem.

Be it the problem of Valentine’s Day or other, the society should not be left on the mercy of those who think themselves to be so-called protectors of religion. They need to be replaced with wise, educated, mature and well-behaving people.

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