

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



February 21, 2016

The Misery of Afghan Migrants Continues

Different sorts of problems in Afghanistan have forced the people to leave their homeland and find refuge in other countries where they can find better living conditions. This solution could be simple if the ones leaving the country would reach some place safe without any major problem, but the fact is that migrants have to go through a very tough time before they are able to find their ultimate destination. On most of the occasions they have even to fight against death and sometimes they are defeated in the fight.

Migration has always been an issue for Afghanistan. Decades of instability have forced millions of people to leave their homeland and move to the neighboring countries and even to Europe, USA, Canada and Australia. After the downfall of Taliban, there were some expectations that the situation may improve and the conditions in the country may get better and people may ultimately return to their country. Unfortunately, recently, with the rise in insecurity people do not seem very much confident about the future and many people who have already migrated hesitate to come back and many of those who are in the country are planning to leave for better future.

Those who opt to migrate fall prey to different sorts of problems, yet they are ready to take the risks and leave their homes. They face problem on the way to their destinations as most of the times they have to follow illegal means. They have to face human smugglers, cross borders illegally, face different weather conditions and travel across mountains, rivers and even sea. There have been different incidents when the migrants have lost their lives on these routes.

Recently, a dozen Afghan migrants lost their lives in the waters of Greece on their route to Europe. On Saturday, their bodies were received in Afghanistan and then shifted to Amir Hamza mosque in Wazirabad area of Kabul. Most of the deceased belonged to the same family and they included Khalil, an employee of Ministry of Economy, his wife who had been teaching in Chahar Qala school, his two children and two brother-in-laws.

This shows that the people are not always taking the decision to migrate because of economic conditions; rather, they do so mostly because of the security conditions. Recently, the migrants include many individuals from media and different offices, who having observed the situation in the country closely have opted to flee. So, it is no more the issue of ignorance or tough economic conditions as the decisions are taken by well-educated individuals who have jobs.

Unfortunately, the ones who reach other countries after myriads of problems are not guaranteed secure future. As the issue of refugees has become very serious many countries are not sure about allowing refugees in their countries. Particularly, European countries, after facing a flux of refugees are planning to deport many Afghan refugees. Germany that initially welcomed refugees is now desperately trying to deport many of Afghan refugees to their country. Same is the case with other European countries.

The Afghan government on the other hand seems worried about the deportation of the Afghan refugees. The Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation had said earlier that Afghanistan would not accept the deported asylum seekers without a mutual agreement between the government of Afghanistan and the European Union.

Moreover, the policies and procedures regarding the cases of different refugee in European countries have also changed to a great extent. There are many Afghan refugees in European countries who have been waiting for the final decision about their cases and in the meanwhile are not in a condition to move freely, earn livelihood and travel to different places and or meet their family members.

Even in the neighboring countries, Afghan refugees have not always been welcomed with warm hugs; every now and then they have been the victims of discrimination and ill-treatment. Most of the Afghan refugees in the neighboring countries, especially in Iran and Pakistan have suffered the consequences of fluctuations in the way they are treated. Definitely, it has been generous of both the countries to compensate the Afghan refugees, who because of wars and instability left their dear homeland, but on certain occasions they have also displayed the attitude that have violated the rights of the refugees to a great extent. Definitely, these countries have their own problems; they are developing countries and they have their own economic issues to face; however, they have been supported by international community and United Nations to assist the refugees and guarantee their rights under international law.

Both the European and neighboring countries at this crucial juncture must make sure that they design a clear strategy regarding the fate of Afghan refugees.

Definitely, there are political and diplomatic concerns for all the governments of the world to consider, but the issue of refugees is more important than such concerns, as it involves the precious human lives and the lives of human beings stand more sacred than any other concern.



Taliban's Child Recruits

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

Recruiting children as war soldiers by the militant groups has been on the rise, a Human Rights Watch report suggests. According to the HRW report, the Taliban recruit children to the militants' ranks mostly from religious schools where they are supposed to get religious studies. Based on the report, most of the Afghan children fighting for the Taliban age between 13 and 17; however, their training starts even from the age of 6. Echoing the HRW report, Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commissions says that the Taliban used children soldiers in their offensives in the northern provinces of Kunduz and Badakhshan last year. While using children as war soldiers is prohibited under international laws, the report reflects how the Afghan conflict continues to take tolls from children as one of the most vulnerable segments of the society.

The report comes at a time while the Afghan government has long been trying to have Afghanistan removed from the UN list of countries where children are used as war soldiers. Despite that the Afghan government has been committed to tackle the problem of recruitment of children as war soldiers by pro-government and militant groups, both the militant groups and pro-government militias have been reportedly using children as soldiers. Most recently, a 10-year Afghan boy, serving as a local police, was killed by the Taliban about two weeks ago in southern Uruzgan province.

Most of the children recruited by the Taliban come from religious madrassas in northwestern Pakistan or in rural areas in Afghanistan where Taliban have considerable influence. Those madrassas are playing a dominant role in driving Afghan children into being used in the conflicts. The madrassas have long played the role of supplying manpower for the Taliban's war machine both during their regime before 2001 and after their overthrow by the US-led invasion. Hundreds of such madrassas operate out of control of the Afghan government, mostly beyond the border in neighboring Pakistan's tribal areas. The children are received at the madrassas by promises of receiving religious education with free boarding and no tuitions. The Taliban remains huge influence over the madrassas as most of them are operated by well-known pro-Taliban religious figures, some of whom played vital roles in founding and mentoring the foundation of the Taliban movement in 1990s. Almost all of those madrassas are known for their approach in radicalizing their young students.

Poverty and religious imperatives are main motives behind those families sending their children to the religious madrassas. The religious madrassas operating provide free boarding and living expenses for their students, who are mainly from both sides of the shared border.

This plays as a huge incentive for the families who want their children receive religious education with no financial burden on their shoulders. Many of the poor but religious families even don't think of any other option as the madrassas seem desirable for them.

Due to the pull factors of the madrassas with extremism leniencies, the Afghan government has been planning to promote religious education at home and substitute with what the madrassas offer. However, the government's efforts to provide the alternative religious education inside the country have failed to prove effective as they have been facing financial, social and structural challenges. The government desires to promote the more official school education through the ministry of education while, in the meantime, support and oversee mosques and centers of religious studies as well. However, the initiative of supporting provision of religious schooling has been largely ineffective as it has been unable to compete with what the religious madrassas in northwestern Pakistan offer. On other hand, even the official schooling has been facing challenges due to insecurity and violence across the country particularly in the southern and western provinces. The Taliban have continued to burn schools and threaten education department and schools' staffs.

In the long run, promoting social awareness and boosting level of literacy across the most conservative areas in the country would be a key factor for reversing the trend of Afghan children attending religious madrassas in Pakistan and then being recruited by the militant groups. The government needs to start and plan for tackling the root causes of children being attracted to extremist religious madrassas and then becoming foot soldiers of the extremist groups. Boosting welfare of the citizens as well as promoting public knowledge through the media would play a key role in persuading them to consider formal school education for their children. Only a sustainable improvement in boosting financial status and level of literacy and education of the people would help overcoming poverty and the conservative culture as the main driving forces of children and youths being recruited by the militant groups.

The issue of child soldiers in Afghanistan highlights the plight of Afghan children as there is no sight for the end of the conflict in the country. The government needs to redouble efforts and take immediate actions to prevent recruitment of children as war soldiers both by pro-government militias and the insurgent groups. The government needs to do more to stop the current worrying trend of children being used as soldiers.

What the government can do now is to start making laws aimed at preventing use of children as child soldiers and lead systematic campaigns for providing awareness to the public. There are the civil organizations and the mass media to play a role in promoting children's rights and public awareness over the issue. The government must take immediate actions to prevent private and pro-government militias such as the Afghan Local Police use children as soldiers in the war against the militant groups. It also can seek the UN and other international agencies' assistance to persuade the Taliban and other militant groups to respect international laws and basic human values and not use children in their war efforts against the government.

Abdul Ahad Bahrami is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at ahad.bahrami@gmail.com

Strive to Find Out Ways of Getting Out of Quagmire

By Dilawar Sherzai

Since mankind is considered to be the supreme creature, we all know it perfectly that he, from the very first day had the quest to search for cryptic and mysterious aspects of the universe, to elaborate the un-explained, to approach the un-reached, to see into the unseen, to depict the hidden, to discover the un-found, to hear the un-spoken, to speak up the unsaid and to practice the un-experienced. As doing them is his duty, the reason for his being and the desire of his unique nature. Thus, man's nature is the basic unit of all his actions; so we can say that it provokes a man to get up and act.

Life is a complicated phenomenon; it is full of loses and victories. When we are born, we have to live the life in any condition; mostly we find losses in this complicated life. Whatever! We are here to look at the positive aspects of life so as to make our life worthy to live and better for other fellow beings.

With the modernization of the world, anticipation of technology and creation of different kinds of ideologies and intellects; life has become too much difficult and complicated. In every step of life we find hurdles; we have to be careful while moving our footsteps. It is on the strength of our efforts whether we crash the hurdles or we jump over the hurdles or we just give up in front of them. Unfortunately, failure has the capacity to dominate us on certain occasions. We fail whether we don't strive ourselves or we are defeated by our opponents. Suppose, there is a student and he applies for a job and he is much better option for the post but another person comes with strong recommendation and takes the seat; here it is not his fault, but that does not change the result. So in both cases failure has deep impacts on human minds and hopes. It can be easily observed that when we fail we get frustrated and depressed. Then the grief attacks and engulfs our psychology. Now the question is, "How to prevent our frustration, depression or grief?"... By partying, by listening music, by keeping our minds away from the current depression or by realizing, understanding and finding the way for the solution of the problem? This is what we all are searching for. We need to understand the real meaning of our lives. We need to understand what our lives are? Does it mean 'getting up early in the morning, finding breakfast, going to work, earning money, betraying people in order to earn more profit, returning home, having dinner and sleeping. If we analyze deeply we come to know that all these activities are just a part of our instinct and most of the animals also perform some of these tasks. Now we need to find out that what we need to do in order to be differentiated; the only easy way is taking part in social activities and being optimistic. Keeping in view today's practical world and the competitive mood of state of affairs in the world one must be quite active and energetic to

bring his ideas into life by taking suitable and favorable actions/steps against the customary problems so that he could promise his survival through the tough and rapid pace of political and economic struggle. Currently, we are suffering the worst form of terrorism and yet again we lack the unity of thought and clear vision to overcome the prevailing pathetic condition of our society and its members. We are scattered into many ethnic groups and different schools of thought. We are contaminated with the differences existing among us and on the other hand we wish to beat the present miseries. Every single person chants the slogan of coming together, joining hands with one another and thinking with broader perspective, removing all personal clashes and differences in order to bring about constructive remedies to the tribulations. But one has to bear in mind that these are only miraculous ideas which have never been acted upon.

It is really important not to be disappointed while facing the difficulties and problems and act appropriately to solve the issues. Everybody must take care not to become the victim of inaction and strive to find out ways of getting out of quagmire as all the human beings are gifted with the unique quality of sanity and capability to think and ponder. This the only way we can call ourselves the true human beings - distinct from other creatures in the world.

In fact, there are different ways of dealing with the problems and different people act differently. If a person is not appointed for a job because the second person has strong recommendation; he may get fully disappointed and never again strive to find job and will instead fall into more grief and tragedies. Or, he may become more committed to face the challenges and keep on striving so as to be able to prove his capabilities even in the presence of unjust circumstances. And, in my view the second action is a better option as it demands active role of human beings and it is how beings should live in human society. If we find something wrong in social, political and economic systems, we must strive to penetrate within them and try to make things right, but we have to change ourselves first. If we find our people dump, we need to make them realize the importance of their active participation in society. It is really vital that we must not lose hope because of depression and frustration. We need to make ourselves wall in front of the problems and always fight for our rights. In the current circumstances when there is great hustle and bustle and much confusion and misunderstandings, it is necessary that we must understand ourselves, our role and status in the society and our responsibilities. If we want to change things all around us, it is really vital that we must start from ourselves; as it is the only way to bring about changes in the systems.

Dilawar Sherzai is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at email.urya@gmail.com

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.