

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



January 08, 2017

## Insecurity Haunting Innocent Civilians

Insecurity continues in Afghanistan and keeps on haunting people in different ways. Though all the people suffer as a result of insecurity, the weaker strata within the society are the ones who undergo most of the consequences. Poor civilians and the women in this regard are the most prominent ones. And when these civilians belong to the groups that are marginalized, the situation becomes even more serious. The poor Hazara civilians form one of such groups. They have been victimized in so many ways in the prevailing insecurity and unfortunately the security arrangements to stop all these incidents are not satisfactory.

In a recent incident, 8 coalmine workers, who were Hazaras, were shot dead, and 3 others were wounded by a group of fighters affiliated to Daesh insurgents in Tala wa Barfak district of Baghlan province on Friday, January 06, 2017. According to a statement by district governor Faiz Mohammad Amiri the workers were on the way to their homes when they were attacked by the fighters in Anarak village in the district.

One of the survivors of the shooting, Mohammad Hussain, disclosed on Saturday that they had been targeted due to their religious beliefs as the shooters had called their killings just as they belonged to Shia sect and considered by them to be non-Muslims. Daesh has been active in Afghanistan recently and has carried out some dangerous attacks against Hazaras whom they consider to be non-Muslims. Moreover, as most of ISIS fighters have left Syria and Iraq where the war seems to have calmed a bit or some of them were expelled during the war, there are possibilities that they may get stronger in Afghanistan where they seem to have formed their strongholds.

Just a couple of months ago 27 Hazaras were killed and more than dozens wounded through a suicide attack at the Baqir-ul-uloom mosque in District 6 of capital Kabul, where the people were commemorating 'Arbaeen'. That had in fact followed the tragic attack on the Sakhi Shrine in the capital which was carried out during Ashura procession and had killed 18 people. A similar type of attack was carried out in Balkh province that had also targeted Shia Hazaras who were worshipping during Ashura and had resulted in deaths of 14 innocent people.

In July this year, three attackers with suicide vests attacked the Hazara protestors who were raising their voice for changing Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TUTAP) power project route through Bamyan. Two of the attackers blasted themselves among the protestors while the third one was killed by the security forces. The attack resulted in death of more than 85 people and injury to over 400 others and thus marked one of the most tragic incidents in Afghanistan's history. The attack was also claimed by Daesh. Last year as well seven innocent civilians belonging to Zabul province were kidnapped on a highway and later killed brutally, which included the 9-year old girl Shukria, whose throat was slashed by the kidnapers.

Just few months earlier to that incident, at least 13 Hazaras were killed by gunmen in Zari district of Balkh province, while they were travelling in a minibus. And in February same year, 31 Hazara passengers were abducted from Zabul province while they were travelling from Herat to Kabul, most of whom were later released. Most of these incidents have been linked to Daesh, in some they have even claimed the responsibility but unfortunately, there have not been tangible measures to stop the situation. The government authorities have kept on insisting that the threats of Daesh are not serious and Afghan forces have control over them; however, the claims have not proved to be right until now. And if the security arrangements remain as they are, Hazaras will keep on suffering such brutal attacks.

As the government authorities are not able to secure different parts of the country and important highways, the insurgents create their own check-posts, stop the vehicles, search the passengers and even loot them on various occasions. On some occasions Hazara passengers have been selectively segregated from others and then taken away or later killed. With such a situation prevailing, it is really tragic to find the government authorities unconcerned. They mostly claim that they make efforts to ensure the security of the civilians without any distinction but different incidents, every now and then, show that they either do not have the capability to do so or they lack the motivation. Their efforts are mostly observed after the incidents take place and the poor civilians are killed.

Thus, the government requires taking practical and tangible measures to control the security situation and ensure the security of everyone without any distinction of ethnicity or race. There are fears that if the security situation remains fragile another civil war may erupt in the country and may once again push Afghanistan towards a quagmire of instability and chaos.

## The Power of Unity

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

There is nothing the enemies fear more than Unity in Afghanistan; their number one tactic is to keep the fire of discord burning in this country. They know the power of a nation if they are united. Therefore, the religion, race, location, language and mass-ignorance have been frequently used by them as basic tools.

Many times, they applied their wicked strategies through a series of deadly attacks on Shia and Sunni peaceful mosques but luckily failed to reach their sinister goals. With attacking on the mosques and killing dozens of innocents, they also proved that neither they are committed to Islamic teaching and nor to national or international values.

However, there has been no significant action taken place to ensure institutionalization of solidarity in this country. There are many factors like discrimination, injustice and corruptions which expand the social gaps. Sometimes, discriminations are intentionally created by power competitors between the ethnic groups to reach the power and control the country. One of the main reasons of civil wars in Afghanistan was the involvement of external factors in interior affairs. It is widely believed by citizens that essentially Afghan people do not have any problems among them from the point of view of ethnicity and they have proved many times that they are united and they have defended their country and combated against the great powers.

During the civil wars, Afghan people from different nations were helping each other to stay alive and they have given shelters to the other ones (from different ethnic groups), in order to save their lives. It means that, they were not ethnic groups fighting with each other; they were leaders who collected and abused the illiterate and poor people as an army to fight against each other. No nation has ever reached the blessing of unity without social justice. It is highly important that new generation of Afghanistan deeply believe that social justice and meritocracy are an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote rights of minority groups, gender equality, children and other vulnerable people. Genuinely, we cannot become one unless we remove all barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability. Also, the government should advance social justice to remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, disability and replacing traditional with legal justice system. The noteworthy is that only legal justice saves a person from arbitrariness of course and ensures provision of justice to anyone, anywhere.

The leaders should realize that unity is beyond slogans or paternal advices! It is not achieved unless we truly believe in it and know that there is a common Law that one should love his neighbor as himself. Promotion of this feeling is

crucial to lead the nation or the world towards its progress, prosperity and sincere brotherhood. It is the only way that can increase trust, sympathy and collaboration against vices like corruption, discrimination and violence.

It gives people sense of security so as to know each other better and understand each other's sensitivity. It can unite and promotes co-operation and opens opportunity to excellence. People residing in Afghanistan, somewhat, belong to different castes, religion and ethnic origins.

This diversity of caste, colors, religions, languages and cultures is our own identity. They are like different flowers in a garden. The beauty of the garden lies in the varieties of its flowers and fragrance.

This is the unique feature of Afghanistan. Whatever caste, creed, culture and customs we follow, we are all Afghani the beautiful flowers of the same garden. We should think that the progress of the country is our own progress, the pain of our neighbor is our own pain and if somebody is victimized by act of terror tomorrow will be our turn.

Also we need to learn that it was the power of unity that changed the destiny many super powers like: United Nations, European Union, NATO and so on. No nation can be supper power or dignified alone; In Africa, When the Apartheid of Republic of South Africa celebrated 20 years of independence on May 31, 1981, the theme of the celebrations was "unity in diversity" as a cynical attempt to explain away the inequalities in South African life but Anti-apartheid campaigners opposed these celebrations and called on runners of the Comrades Marathon to protest at the co-option of the event by wearing a black armband.

The winner of the race, Bruce Fordyce, was one of those wearing a black armband. This term has since been incorporated into the preamble of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa as a central tenet of the new South Africa. In short, we should believe if there is no unity, no rescue.

Unity and national integration must be the main agenda of the country government, especially the country's leaders. Various genuine mottos and programs need to be organized for the purpose of fostering unity and relationship among races by means of various policies.

In addition, it is the responsibility of religious scholar, ministry of culture and education to aware new generation differentiates between general peaceful spirit of holy Quran and hatred interpretations imposed by extremists.

We must accept unity in diversity as one of unbreakable principle in our social and political platforms.

We must be cautious that religious fathwa (degree) is only issued by credible addresses under certain terms and conditions. Finally, we should understand that we are as powerful as we are united, as powerless as we are divided!

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## The Carnage and Sufferings in Syria

By: Hujjatullah Zia

The flagrant violation of human rights and unmitigated violence and bloodshed in Syria will outrage the human conscience. The civilian casualties mushroomed on a large scale as a result of indiscriminate killings. Since the conflict began with anti-government protests in March 2011, more than five years old has caused the migration of some three million people in addition to tens of thousands having been internally displaced. In terms of human suffering and misery, it has been and remains one of the most horrendous conflicts of modern times as more than 310,000 people have been killed.

Aleppo, one of the Syrian's highly vulnerable cities, has been devastated in a relentless conflict. Its heritage and civilization have been wiped out. Thousands have been killed while countless others have been maimed, crippled for life in one of the most brutal and senseless factional fighting that recognized no rules and was constrained by no regard to lives of innocent civilians. The self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group have attacked, killed, destroyed with impunity every object; building, houses, mosques, temples, schools, hospitals and whatever came their way with impunity.

Many rebels and civilians who were pushed out of Aleppo city during a massive government offensive late last year resettled in Azaz. At least 43 people have been reportedly killed after a car bomb struck Syria's northwestern city of Azaz. Dozens were also wounded in Saturday's attack, which took place near a busy market and in front of a courthouse in the rebel-held town along Turkey's border, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The attack was the latest in a string of bombings to hit Azaz, 16km south of the Turkish city of Kilis. The area is a stronghold of the Turkish-backed Syrian rebels involved in a major operation aimed at clearing the ISIL group from the border region.

To the west of Azaz, Syrian Kurdish forces have control of a swath of land, and they have often tried to advance towards the town, causing friction with Turkish troops and allied Syrian opposition fighters.

To the east, opposition fighters backed by Turkey have been pushing back ISIL, gaining territory and advancing on the ISIL-stronghold of al-Bab further east. ISIL has frequently targeted rebel factions with bombings, including an attack in November that killed 25 civilians and opposition fighters in a car bomb on a rebel headquarters.

Saturday's blast comes as a fragile ceasefire is being observed across much of Syria. The truce negotiated by Syria's ally Russia and rebel backer Turkey does not include ISIL or the former al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Fateh al-Sham.

The fall of Aleppo is not the end of the war in Syria.

The forces that have been unleashed would not be subdued so soon. The question is what caused this war that inflicted heavy casualties?

History bears witness to the fact that whenever an established order, no matter how despicable that is - is destroyed with ulterior motives, a vacuum is created and to fill that vacuum many factions, forces driven by myriad considerations of lust, greed, tyranny, power, ideology, ethnicity move in to assert control and authority. This is what has been happening across North Africa and the wider Middle East in the wake of the so-called Arab spring. But the war in Syria and Iraq has more to do with another crucial - either deliberate or inadvertent miscalculation - the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The invasion was predicated on the wholly erroneous assumption that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction that posed danger to peace and stability of the region. There was no concrete evidence of such imaginary weapons of mass destruction. Indeed none were found subsequently. The terrorist networks fished in the troubled waters and stoked ideological and sectarian wars - the ISIL stemmed from the same background to fuel militancy and widen the gap between Sunni and Shiite sects - which is a highly menacing project against the Islamic society being run by a mysterious hand.

The sufferings and carnage of civilians, including women and children, fill one with a strong sense of guilt and hatred. Life has turned too cheap and people are killed wholesale. Syria has been bleeding for years and will continue so if the ISIL group and the remnants of al-Qaeda are not eliminated.

In other words, we witness the streams of blood being spilt and oozing from sliced-throats of men, women and children in the world where democracy, human rights and humanitarian law are debated hotly.

The bombastic rhetoric about democracy makes one lose his/her trust in democracy - which has remained elusive for Syrian freedom fighters. The venom spew forth by the ISIL fighters around the globe reveals the fact that the entire world is left at the mercy of terrorism. Therefore, the superpowers are involved in Syria's war to adopt defensive mechanism. The world will have to combat terrorism - mainly the ISIL group, to stop violence and bloodshed and protect the rights and liberty of mankind since "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" and "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts.

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