

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



January 11, 2017

Insecurity Haunts Afghanistan Persistently

It is really unfortunate for Afghanistan that even after so many sacrifices that are given by the country, the prospects of peace and tranquility are not very optimistic. The insecurity seems to be on the rise in different parts of the country and the response of the government authorities are not truly effective. It seems the government authorities do not have any clear idea about how to tackle the situation and help the country go through this crucial period with triumph.

Taliban and Daesh have spread their networks in different provinces and everyday show their presence in some way or the other. Sometimes they target the innocent civilians and at others they target the security personnel. Afghan security forces, on most of the occasions, take actions only after such incidents and calm down the situation temporarily.

When the situation seems to be normalized, the insurgents again move forward and make their attacks.

In fact, the security forces do not seem to have a proactive approach, which may be because of lack of any clear strategy in the top rankings of the government officials, who, themselves, are involved in their own differences instead of standing united to counter the growing threats of Taliban and Daesh.

If the authorities do not get really serious and determined to solve the security issues, it may start haunting Afghanistan to a great extent and may even undo the achievements that have been acquired in the last 13 years or so.

The insurgents will keep on carrying out their activities and terrorize the people of Afghanistan like they are doing now. An example was experienced yesterday in Kabul, when a twin-bombing carried out by Taliban killed about 30 people and wounded more than 78 others. The coordinated attack was carried out on Darulaman Road near parliament as a convoy of parliament staff was leaving the office. Some reports said that among the victims was the head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) zone in the PD7 area who was reportedly killed while a female MP from Herat was among the wounded. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack soon after the incident.

It is not the first time that Taliban have been able to hit high profile target in Kabul city but every time the same question re-sounds in the atmosphere that how the insurgents could carry out such coordinated attacks at the heart of Capital where there are different security check-points. Again in the attack a vehicle was used that was full of explosive material. It is again a question that how the insurgents can transport such vehicles under the nose of the security forces. Definitely, these are the questions that the government authorities must ponder upon and then carry out necessary measures so that such incidents can be avoided from happening again.

It was not only Kabul that echoed with the noise of the bomb blasts and ambulances, Lashkargah city of Helmand experienced a sad day as well. Seven people lost their lives after a suicide bomber detonated his explosive outside the NDS office in PD2.

According to the provincial police chief Aqa Noor Kentoz the incident took place at about mid-day in the provincial capital. Kentoz said the explosion took place while a meeting was underway at the NDS office between security officials and insurgents who wanted to join the peace process. He said some of the peace-seeking insurgents were among the dead.

This shows that the insurgents are not even inclined towards peace process and those among them who wish to join any sort of peace process would be abhorred by others. This also points towards the existence of different factions within the rank of insurgents that may make the peace process even more difficult. Even on the larger scale these factions exist in some form or the other and the facts show that they mostly have differing ideas.

If there is a peace process that is carried out between the Afghan government and the Taliban, it would be very difficult to conclude that the Taliban representatives would represent all the factions and the peace talks would, thus, result in peace and tranquility.

For true peace it is vital that the representatives of Taliban should be true representatives so that they are able to make their followers follow the points that might be agreed upon; otherwise, peace negotiations and agreements would be nothing more than a waste of time.

However, before any hopes of peace process can be turned into reality, the security forces and government authorities must make sure that they fulfill their responsibilities with determination and untiring efforts. Definitely, Afghan forces have given many sacrifices and after so many sacrifices it is important that Afghanistan should see a future full of peace and tranquility; however, for that to happen it is imperative that Afghan leadership must prove itself capable of designing and following a workable strategy to counter terrorism in true sense.



Violence against women

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

In spite of copious legal achievements, the violence against women is broadly increasing. According to recent reports, 80% of women are faced with various types of violence. According to Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the suicide rate for women has been enlarging within last years. Now, more than 2000 women commit suicide in a year which form the 90% suicides committed in Afghanistan. The enlarging figure is a sign of a silent crisis in the country that require multilateral studies and deeper attention.

Likewise, a large number of women are isolated at homes due to excessive street harassment in the country. It is said that nine out of ten women and girls in urban communities face harassment in Afghanistan. Every woman's experiences differ depending on the distance she travels or her time on the streets, but she can face up to 20 incidents of verbal or physical harassment or inappropriate stares and disturbances from male pedestrians.

According to Women and Children Legal Research Foundation conducted research with 364 women and girls about sexual harassment in public spaces, workplaces, and educational institutions in seven provinces of Afghanistan. 93% said they were harassed in public spaces, 87% said workplaces, and 89% said educational institutions. Additionally, 90% had observed sexual harassment in public places, 79% in educational settings, and 72% in workplaces. However, it is recognized as the least spoken-about form of violence, which is rife in workplaces, at educational institutions, and on the streets. The women empowerment programs have been of the most frequently debated issues in last 15 years but there is no fundamental changes occurred in their lives yet.

According to experts, the main factors of suicides consist of forced marriage, depression and family conflicts despite the fact that the marriage issue has recognized as a rampant factor. In addition, Most of the girls and women are isolated at homes while the T.V and New media have become their daily hobbies. As the main targets of these programs are youths and young girls who are getting familiar with the new culture and new life style.

After the young women compare their lives to them, find a huge contrast which can lead to crisis. On the hand, some of scholars believe that these types crises are inevitable and call ordinary in transition society such as Afghanistan. But we should not forget that smoothly crossing from these issues and without managing the sociological consequences may take centuries to reach an ideal condition. On the subject of Street harassment, there are several factors such as psychological, social, economic, moral, lawlessness and sexual deprivations due to fiscal or traditional barriers for timely marriage. The Expenses of wedding is the most costly in Afghanistan comparing to other countries whilst the couples are

not chosen on the basis of logical criteria rather than preferences of parents or other family members. Therefore, they are not satisfied from each other and try to satiate their thirst on the street. Moreover, many women and girls who are subjected to street violence or family violence do not come forward to register complaints due to their lack of knowledge of the law or lack of trust to the justice system; fear of reprisal from the perpetrators and family members; financial and other constraints, including the lack of freedom of movement; and fear of being treated as criminals instead of victims, when reporting crimes committed against them. Women and girls who try to escape from situations of violence or abuse are often condemned and shunned by their families, communities and the authorities, and are threatened with death, should they return home.

However, there are rarely cases who dare to stand against violence and injustice traditions. For Example, in 2015, An Afghan girl surprised the whole nation through a symbolic demonstration by wearing a strange outfit which is apparently made of metal. The photos went viral on social media websites which purportedly shows a young girl walking in the streets of Kabul and is surrounded by dozens of men.

Though many Afghan women experience various forms of street harassment every day in their life but due to the predominant culture of "shame" and "honor" and high social stigma attached to issues of sexual harassment often they do not talk about their experiences of street harassment. The scar remains invisible and women continue to suffer, generation after generation. As a result, women can't walk, talk, work, teach, eat, and visit freely. They are simply limited to their home places and this caused them to take less part in decision making at their community and country levels. Teenage girls are mostly the victims. Girls aged 19 are 90% experiencing street harassment in Kabul streets. This must be stopped at any cost. The government and other responsible authorities must act responsibly to the problem. Finally, Afghanistan has international legal obligations to meet the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The State has a responsibility to act with due diligence to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. This responsibility includes the protection, prevention, investigation, punishment, and provision of effective remedies, including compensation measures. Furthermore, the State has a responsibility to hold accountable not only the perpetrators of violence, but also state authorities who fail to protect and prevent the violations of women and girls human rights, due to a lack of response or because of ineffective responses.

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Quest for Economic Freedom

By Dr. Faisal Ali

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

On September 19, 2016, The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in Pakistan unanimously passed the Prohibition of Interest on Private Loans Bill. The event marked an addition to the similar chain of events that had occurred in the history of mankind. The initial pages of "An Essay on the Law of Usury" by Mark Ord exhibit that usury was banned by Common Law. The laws of Charlemagne categorically prohibited usury in 806 CE. In 1275, Edward 1 of England passed the Statute of Jewry which made usury illegal. The Communist Party of China proscribed usury in its revolutionary base areas in 1920 and replaced it with credit cooperatives. The criminal code of North Korea (2009) in the chapter 5 titled "Criminal Violations of The Socialist Economic System" forbids usury under Article 118. The article prescribes a punishment of less than 2 years of Labor training for practitioners of usury and stipulates the same punishment for up to 5 years in case of large profits gained through usury.

Aristotle berated interest on the principle that it is a yield arising out of money itself, not a product of that for which money was provided. The Scholastics championed the complete abolition of usury during their era. John Whipple, a Rhode Island lawyer arithmetically proved the impossibility of long term interest in "The Importance of Usury Laws- An Answer to Jeremy Bentham" "If 5 English pennies.... had been.....at 5% compound interest from the beginning of the Christian era until the present time (say 1850), it would amount in gold of standard fineness to 32,366,648,157 spheres of gold each eight thousand miles in diameter, or as large as the earth." (P-48)

The father of modern economics, John Maynard Keynes contended that without the abolition of interest, unemployment cannot be eradicated. Silvio Gesell castigated interest on the basis that his sales were more often related to the price of money (i-e interest) than people's needs or the quality of his products. Gesell also launched "Stamp Script Movement" to make money a public service for a use fee but all his efforts went in vain. In 1919, Gottfried Feder wrote a book "Breaking the Shackles of Interest (Brechung der Zinsknechtschaft)" about the implications of interest and wealthy bankers. His endeavors led Adolf Hitler to proclaim that the kernel of National Socialism is breaking the thralldom of interest. Margrit Kennedy, the ink-slinger about the negative consequences of interest is considered as the mother of anti-usury movement in modern times. Thomas Greco in his book "Money: Understanding and Creating Alternatives to Legal Tender" says...

"The banks are continually making new loans and retiring old ones as they are repaid. In the aggregate, the debts owed to banks are increasing with the mere passage of time, because interest accrues over time. The money available to repay those debts, however, can be created only by the banks as they make additional loans."

The major religions of the world deplore, condemn and prohibit interest in all its forms.

The Manu Smriti of Hinduism categorically expresses sentiments for contempt of usury in chapter 11: verse 62. The Buddhist Jatakas refers to the practitioners of interest as hypocritical ascetics. The Holy Bible speaks about the proscription of interest in the books of Deuteronomy 23: 19, Leviticus 25: 36, Exodus 22: 25, Ezekiel 18: 13, Ezekiel 22: 12, Psalms 15: 5 and Luke 6: 35. Jesus (Peace be Upon Him) says in the 95th verse of the Gospel of Thomas that if you have money, do not lend it at interest, but give (it) to one from whom you will not get it back. The forbidding of interest in Holy Koran is

mentioned in the Chapter of The Romans: verse 39, Chapter of The Family of Imran: verse 130, Chapter of The Women: verse 161 and Chapter of The Heifer: verses 275-281. The prohibition of interest is also mentioned in the Sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him). The Apostle (PBUH) said.....

"No matter how much is the increment accrued through interest, the eventual outcome is scarcity."

The usury based Fractional Reserve Banking became a legalized form of economic sacerdotalism at national and international level after the establishment of Bank of England and the foundation of International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The era of this banking has affected the countries and humanity in form of interest payments on debts, business cycles, buying power, global imbalance of payments, increased taxation and positively skewed distribution of wealth. In 2015, the United States of America (USA) paid \$223 billion of interest on the debt which amounted to 6 percent of the federal budget. In Germany, the poor 80% pay one billion Euros in interest to the wealthy 10% per day which amounts to one seventh of German GDP according to Anthony Mighchels of Real Currencies.

Economists must keep on questing for an alternative of fractional reserve banking and a system of interest free credit. The Chicago Plan and Chicago Plan Revisited are the masterpieces for abolition of fractional reserve banking and imposition of Full Reserve Banking. The other variants of Full Reserve Banking include Kay's Narrow Banking, Kotlikoff's Limited Purpose Banking, Positive Money and New Economics Foundation's plans for monetary reform. The substitutes also comprise Islamic Banking, Mutual Credit, Constitutional Monetary System of Lincoln and Bradbury Pound initiative of His Majesty's Treasury in 1914.

The best example of interest-free Full Reserve Banking is Jord Arbete Kapital (JAK) bank in Sweden while in the arena of Islamic finance, Akhuwat Model of interest free loans in Pakistan is considered to be more pragmatic than JAK model. The Peasant Land Bank of Russia in 1880 that provided interest-free loans to the liberated peasantry can also be utilized as an interest free model. The system of Rural Cooperative Foundations (RCFs) of Peoples Republic of China which played a pivotal role in the curtailment of rural usury during 1980s can also be employed in usury free arena. Stephen Zarlenga in his book "The Lost Science of Money" shows that the monetary reform is more a matter of morality and law than of economics. He also advocates the evolution of monetary department into a fourth branch of government that should work for the common good and nationalization of money creation process which is a precondition for solving the usury problem and its wealth concentration effect.

Therefore, it is imperative to the leaders and legislators of various nations to initiate interest write off movement for their respective countries domestically and internationally and promulgate the acts for complete abolition of debt service because it is the interest which is feasting on the flesh and bones of developing world especially those nations that are dependent on others and in which corruption and embezzlement are rampant. Furthermore, the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) should initiate interest write off programs for developing countries under special initiatives. As far as the recovery of loans from governments is concerned, it can be dwarfed by galvanizing the debt-equity swap method. Hence, it is concluded that the economic salvation depends on the total elimination of usury based fractional reserve banking.

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