

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



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No Real Improvement in Afghanistan

In the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, one of the most tragic facts has been that the support and assistance provided to Afghanistan have not been sufficiently utilized for the purposes they were allocated. Therefore, both in development and security, Afghanistan has not been able to achieve as much as it received the funds for. The current security situation does not seem to be satisfactory and the development projects have not been driven to their desired destinations.

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan's (SIGAR) recent quarterly security report shows that around 56.8 percent of the country is under the control of influence of the Afghan government, which depicts only a marginal decline of one-point over the last six months, some of which include winter months wherein the security situation gets better.

As per the report out of the 407 districts in Afghanistan's 34 provinces, only 231 were under government's control or influence in late August. It also highlighted that 54 districts were either under insurgent control or influence. This means that 13.3 percent of all the districts in the country are under insurgent control or influence. It also means that there has been an increase of nine districts in the past six months under insurgent control or influence, a more than two percent increase over the previous six months.

The number of contested districts - 122 - however remained largely unchanged. According to SIGAR, the majority of people, (20.7 million) still live in areas controlled or influenced by government while another 8.1 million (24.9 percent) live in areas that are contested. And, the provinces with the largest percentage of insurgent-controlled or influenced districts are Uruzgan, Kunduz and Helmand provinces. At the same time, the efforts for development and economic opportunities have not been successful as well. SIGAR's report - DOD Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) - also says that a program by the Defense Department of the United States (DOD) has spent \$675 million USD to revive the Afghan economy, but it could not provide reliable data on where the money went.

TFBSO's purpose was to fund business-related projects to reduce violence by encouraging Afghans to focus on economic activity rather than fighting. However, the SIGAR report, showed the program to be inept and beyond the Defense Department's capabilities. The report highlighted that "because important documents and data were not consistently collected or retained, we could not fully assess the extent to which the \$675 million obligated by TFBSO was spent effectively". Same was the case with many other projects that were meant for development and economic stability. SIGAR's previous reports on security and development also showed that most of the funds, resources and efforts were wasted in various manners.

Afghanistan has, as a matter of fact, failed to deliver maximum at the time when the development has been required the most and, in the process, has also lost some golden opportunities. Corruption has been lethal enough to annihilate the efforts or the plans to reconstruct the country and the different systems that may set it on the way to development. It should be noted that billions of dollars poured in the country for both military support and development projects. But if we analyze the socio-political and socio-economic scenario in the country the development does not seem as great as it should have been. Most of these aids were devoured by corruption instead of being spent for the intended purposes.

Either the money that was to be spent through government or the NGO sector, both the ways corruption had the largest share. Currently, Afghanistan is ranked among the ten most corrupt countries in the world. This is really tragic and shows that no considerable work has been done against corruption though it has been highlighted as a major problem throughout the last decade. And, it has had negative influences as well; particularly in the top governmental institutions. Corruption not only dominated the political sphere but also brought bad name to the nation and at the same time financial loss; however, it has been left to dominate with vigor and strength. It has, in fact, victimized our society more than terrorism and insecurity and today if Afghanistan is not able to stand on its own, it is also because of the corruption. National Unity Government (NUG) has not been able to deliver on its promises to fight corruption in the country.

With the change in government, there were some hopes that the situation would get better as National Unity Government (NUG), in its early days promised to handle corruption with iron fists; however, that does not seem to be happening even after several years have passed. It is a real challenge now for the Afghan government to stand against corruption. However, a solid and dedicated effort against it can make a difference. It is not altogether impossible to defeat it. Definitely, strict measures are required, temperaments would be tested, institutions would be questioned, the powerful would have to be threatened, and more responsible attitude would be expected from all the people; in short, the whole mechanism would be shaken if there are real and honest efforts. And, it should be noted that there is no alternative for Afghanistan. The way it is going on leads to chaos and instability. If it has to change its route it must decide now and act accordingly.



The Endless Sufferings of Human Family

By Hujjatullah Zia

One's right to life, which is a fundamental right, has been violated widely mainly as a result of war and violence. People suffer severely across the world. Militant fighters show no respect to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and spill the blood of civilians, including women and children, indiscriminately. Violation of human rights makes international headlines.

Violence and bloodshed continue unabated around the world. A large number of people suffer in the wake of conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. Both warring sides (governments and anti-government parties) violate the rights of people during the conflicts. Annual reports about civilian casualties are highly shocking. Women and children bear the brunt of militancy in war-torn countries. They are killed in cold blood.

Following World War II - in which the masses were massacred in the worst possible way - the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was approved to alleviate the pain and anguish of human family and put an end to deadly conflicts through pointing out the rights and dignity of human beings. The UDHR aptly says, "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." Following the deadly conflicts in the history of human societies, all nations came to this conclusion that recognizing the inherent rights and dignity of human beings are the cornerstone of peace and prosperity in the world. People's life should be held in respect and no drop of blood is supposed to be shed. Similarly, the natural dignity of people should be respected by the public. To put it succinctly, all individuals and nations will have to treat one another with the spirit of brotherhood.

Meanwhile, exercising tolerance toward one another is the mainstay of a peaceful and prosperous life. In other words, the ongoing violence and bloodshed are deeply rooted in intolerance. People are killed on the grounds of their race, color, and creed. The radical militants spill the blood of people out of intolerance. Their dogmatic ideology leaves no room for tolerance or brotherhood. They are not able to accept people as they are and seek to either foist their own ideology upon them or shed their blood. Hence, there will be no peace unless all individuals exercise tolerance.

Superiority and ethnocentrism are the next reason behind the

violation of human rights. A number of individuals claim racial superiority and hold others in contempt. That is to say, they do not believe in "inherent dignity" of all mankind and consider themselves superior. Thus, if one's dignity is not respected, conflict will emerge.

Despite the fact that human rights and dignity are attached strong importance by international instruments, violation of human rights is widespread. One is discriminated on the basis of their gender, the next is treated harshly or killed simply in light of their race or belief. The historical hemorrhage was not an eye-opener for human societies. Therefore, the human rights of people are violated in one way or another. According to a recent report, the UN describes human rights situation shocking in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) raising concern over the torture of prisoners, injustice against foreign workers and discrimination of women in the Gulf state.

"UAE authorities regularly subject those that violate their restrictions to torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and unfair trial procedures," the UK-based Emirate Centre for Human Rights wrote on its Twitter page.

The report argued that the justice system in the UAE is complex and impedes migrant workers and the stateless from bringing their grievances to justice. The report added that UAE authorities have employed torture to force defendants to confess to the charges against them and deprive them of healthcare. In fact, human rights are not only violated in war-torn countries but also in peaceful and even in democratic states. People suffer in several ways. For example, one is not able to express their views openly, the next is not allowed to drive a car simply due to their gender. Similarly, one's right to life, which is the most fundamental right, is also violated on a large scale. To view Afghanistan, killing has changed into daily activities of the militant fighters and people lose their lives in terrorist attacks and suicide bombings. Due to their radical ideology, the militants show no respect to the life of civilians - who have nothing to do with the war.

To safeguard human rights, the human family will have to recognizing the inherent rights and dignity of all individuals regardless of their race, color, and creed. Moreover, all individuals and nations should treat one another with the spirit of brotherhood and accept one another as they are. They must also put an end to racial superiority and ethnocentrism.

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Glance at Challenges of Higher Educational System

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Without doubt universities play significant roles in development but we have not seen any considerable academic production in Afghan Universities since its establishment, nearly nine decades ago. None of the national universities are counted as one of the thousand recognized universities in the world and neither satisfied the demand of domestic workforce. Over the past 17 years, the government departments, including ministries, have been hiring foreign consultants, while nowadays a large number of young graduates from the country's educational institutions are suffering from unemployment.

In recent years, many countries of the region, including Iran and Pakistan appeared in the sum of 1,000 top universities in the world. The ranking of world universities based on the quality of professors, experimental facilities and research, the number of international awards, and other indicators. While the criteria in our universities are still, somehow influenced by the lingual and racial differences. The recent event of Maryam Khawari, who has committed suicide due to the unfair pressure of professor, has divulged the depth of these issues. Thus, three years ago, hundreds of students at the School of Sciences at Kabul University were striking and struggling for several days in front of the parliament building due to systematic discrimination against the Hazara students by the university's professors.

It seems that higher educational system in Afghanistan has not only worn out but also changed to a dividing place where planted seeds of inferiority and hatreds instead of teaching cohesion values and modern knowledge. It is said that some teachers make illicit demands on some of their students in return for high grades. It is also reported that some teachers are involved in corruption like giving good grades to students for monetary benefits. In addition, the textbooks and chapters that university professors have written down from their professors are the major part of the curriculum used in the universities of the country. The continuing insistence on the lecture notes make the students pay more attention to their memory rather than focus on the creativity of students. The result of this approach has reduced the role of a student from a dynamic human being to the recording device.

Currently there are more than eighty private universities along with nearly thirty-five state universities in different provinces of Afghanistan. Most private universities operate in Kabul, and these universities are located in certain areas and have more cooperation with certain people. The university founded by Pashtun people is located in the Pashtun area, and a university run by a Tajik is located in a more Tajik area. This has had a profound separating effect on the students of these universities. Students who have not been able to enter public universities prefer to study in private universities that are related to their own people.

Other problem is that majority of our university professors

are so-called masters who were products of the institutions where the standard of education needs a lot of improvement. This problem is getting worse because older people are resisting against the induction of younger and better qualified individuals. On the other hand, there is no legal permission for distant study system to play role in constant upgrade of professors and other job holders. While there are many distant learning system in the region, like Indira Gandhi in India, Danishga Azad in Iran and hundreds in other parts of the world, which promote millions in a single year.

Contrary to what's going on in our universities, modern universities pursue five major goals: firstly, as a repository of the Knowledge, universities must act as 'knowledge vaults', maintaining and securing crucial knowledge for present and future generations. Secondly, as a producer of new Knowledge, undertake the activity that we call research. Thirdly, as transferor of knowledge to the next generation, i.e. what we call education. Fourthly, as transferor of Knowledge to society, i.e. what we call dissemination. Fifthly, as generator economic development, play an integral role in furthering economic growth and thereby pursuing socio-economic goals.

Based on these, the higher education should analyze the course of a country's development through the elements of higher education namely, the number of higher education institutions, standard of education, aptitude of teachers, number of students in higher education, number of these being produced every year and the number of research journals published by the higher education institutes makes it easier to gauge the pace of progress.

Higher education is also considered a yardstick because the graduates of colleges and universities provide the future leadership in ideological, educational, political and national life. They also play a key role in determining the characteristics of a society, driving it towards rise or fall, or steering it towards right or wrong directions.

So a study of evolution of higher education in Afghanistan would be highly significant at this crucial juncture of history when putting Afghan society on the right track of development. All Afghan scholars, think tanks, educationists and academicians need to think upon the overall dynamics of current system and status of education in general and higher education in particular to devise a comprehensive education policy. Keeping in mind the contours of this policy, they need to develop a pragmatic and concrete action plan so that the people working for the cause of education reach a clear understanding of educational goals and steps to be taken. This exercise will also give the whole nation a sense of direction. The policy should also guide the government towards taking revolutionary steps, and utilize the available resources wisely.

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