

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



January 12, 2015

Maltreating Women – An Unending Issue

A report has released that a teenage girl was found dead after being kidnapped in Nahor District of Ghazni province. Her parents said that the girl, who was engaged, received threats from three men who live in their village alleging that the intimidators were involved in the crime. Her old mother, who had turned obsessive after her daughter's death, urged the judiciary board to take a serious action in this regard and do not free the murderers with impunity.

Nahor is a remote village in Ghazni district, where women work hard from dawn to dusk twenty-four/seven. Women and men work side by side on the farms. Additionally, women babysit while working on the farms and grin and bear it. Moreover, violence against women takes place every now and then. As a result, it is remembered vividly when a man shot his wife dead a few years ago and also killed his cousin claiming to be in contact with his wife – the claim which remained unsupported by documents.

Violence and violation of rights weighs heavily on women. As long as women are deemed inferior and looked down upon, human rights will lack substance. As long as outmoded ways of thinking prevent women from making a meaningful contribution to society, progress will be slow. As long as the nation refuses to acknowledge the equal role of more than half of itself, it is doomed to failure. The violence against women can occur in both public and private spheres of life and at any time of their life span. Many women are terrified by these threats of violence and this essentially has an impact on their lives that they are impeded to exercise their human rights, for instance, the fear for contribution to the development of their communities socially, economically and politically.

On 13 November 2014 – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Rashida Manjoo, has called on the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to adopt sustainable measures to address the causes and consequences of gender-based violence in the country.

Wrapping up a nine-day official visit to the country, Ms. Manjoo warned in a statement that violence against women in Afghanistan continues to be a source of deep concern, despite positive legislative and institutional developments brought forward amid a situation of insecurity throughout the country.

“Accountability for all crimes committed against women and girls, the empowerment of women, and the transformation of society, need to remain a focus for the Government of Afghanistan, independent State institutions, civil society organizations and also the international community,” she stressed.

Moreover, Manjoo noted with concern that many women and girls continue to lack access to the formal justice system. Her investigation also found problems with corruption within the justice system as well as distrust concerning the ability of the courts to appropriately adjudicate matters related to women's rights. These factors combine with societal pressure to push women and girls outside of the formal justice system to resolve disputes.

Afghan women and girls are reluctant to report crimes of violence. Manjoo reported several reasons, including “lack of knowledge of the law and its protective remedial provisions; 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.”

Elzira Sagynbaeva, the representative of UN Women in Afghanistan, said violence against women and girls remains endemic. “It constitutes a serious violation of human rights impeding women's full realization of their civil, political, social, cultural and economic and development rights,” she said in a statement on November 25. Despite the situation of insecurity throughout the country, it is clear that there have been legislative and institutional developments. This is a reflection of political will in addressing the promotion and protection of women's rights which is further reflected in the appointments of women in high level positions. However, such developments should not detract from the fact that violence against women continues to be a source of deep concern in Afghanistan. Currently, there is no comprehensive and coherent data collection mechanism to enable either government or the public at large to fully grasp the magnitude of the phenomenon in the country. Despite government agencies and civil society organizations collecting statistics, these estimates are disputed, depending on whom one speaks to or receives information from. The lack of effective interpretation and implementation of laws and policies requires attention by the government of Afghanistan, as does the issue of the allocation of appropriate resources to enable sustainable solutions. It is rightly said, “For every woman and girl violently attacked, we reduce our humanity. For every woman forced into unprotected sex because men demand this, we destroy dignity and pride. Every woman who has to sell her life for sex we condemn to a lifetime in prison. For every moment we remain silent, we conspire against our women. For every woman infected by HIV, we destroy a generation.” The National Unity Government has to end the political and social challenges of the Afghan people. Insecurity and sufferings are disheartening our people with each passing day. Yet, the government has turned a blind eye to the social problems. Hope the new government breaks the deadlock and put their electoral agenda in practice as soon as possible and prioritize the elimination of violence against women.



A Shift in Taliban's Resolve Might Crystallize Peace Talks

■ By: Asmatyari

Afghans have been longing eternal peace for decades. After years of in-fightings that have claimed awful toll, most Afghans appear to be supportive of a peace process. Formerly, a poll conducted by State Department confirmed this stance. The poll found that 66 percent of Afghans would be acquiescent to amnesty for insurgents if it paved the way for a peace deal. The newly installed government in Kabul affirms security the top most precedence. Nonetheless, the peace dream of Afghans can't materialize; given multiple factors hinder the way to this triumph. The in-depth trust deficit found between disgruntled factions, served a dominant factor restraining this settlement. Taliban never considered Kabul government to be the sole authority whom should be talked with to chart out the future course of action.

Purposeful negotiations render the sole political solution to put an end to this predicament, pleading a trustworthy guarantor. Pakistan can play a significant role, narrowing down the understanding gap by mediating talks between the two factions; government and Taliban. Reportedly, Pakistan enjoys good ties with Afghan Taliban, who disbanded their ties with Pakistani faction of Taliban. Formerly, the spokesman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs disclosed a knot between Afghan government and Taliban negotiating to arrive at a common strategy to end the conflict. He added the government was ready to sit across negotiating table with the militants who were interested in a political solution to the problem, respect for the country's constitution and preservation of the achievements made since 2001; else the government would continue to pursue military action against its armed opponents, who opposed peace parley, till they were completely vanquished. The development to achieve the former goal is hastened, with China coming forth to mediate the peace talks. Previously newly-elected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani paid a four-day official trip to China. The Afghan president, while addressing the 'Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference' in Beijing, termed China as the key country which can help restore peace in Afghanistan and urged the Taliban to take part in the intra-Afghan dialogues. Since then China demonstrates in-depth interest in pushing forth the Afghan peace process after US president's announcement of ending the war in Afghanistan. China is eager to fill up the security vacuum subsequent to US's partial or complete draw down. Significantly, what draws China close to Afghanistan is its deep lying interest in the aforesaid country. China, the most developed country in Asia with heavy investments in Afghanistan wants its investments secured.

To reach its objectives, it has to build friendly ties with conflicting factions in Afghanistan. To streamline this ground making development, Pakistan's imperative role can't be ruled out. Pakistan's vital interests are buried deep in the heart of this piece of land. Pakistan can't withstand troubled western border. Consequently, Pakistan plays foundational part in making all the development crystallize. She brings forth China, considered to be the true friend of Pakistan, provided China makes multiple investments in the soil of Pakistan, too. With exception to China many other countries too played a role to bring about the talks. Earlier, the Taliban delegations from its Qatar office also visited Japan, France and Iran in the past. Previously, a report confirmed, China facilitated talks between the insurgent group and the Afghan government, given the delegation representing Taliban included Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, a min-

ister of planning in the Taliban regime. It further said that Beijing had informed Afghan officials about the details of the ongoing talks. A senior Afghan official familiar with the matter told The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) the Taliban representatives presented negotiation positions, including amending the Afghan constitution, giving them control of government ministries and removing them from international sanctions list.

The aforesaid report strengthens the credibility of the former report that stated the Government of National Unity has offered posts to senior former Taliban leaders in the new cabinet which has not been formally announced. The source was very close accomplice to President Ashraf Ghani who told the international newspaper that Taliban leaders who were considered in the new government are Mullah Zaeef, the former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Wakil Muttawakil, the former Taliban foreign minister, and Ghairat Baheer, a close relative of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose forces are allied to the Taliban. It is said that the Government of National Unity has considered offering posts of the Ministry of Rural Affairs, the borders and Hajj and Religious Affairs, besides appointing Taliban governors to three southern provinces – Nimruz, Kandahar and Helmand. It's a good omen that broad based reconciliation between Afghan government and Taliban could turn the “peace” dream of ordinary masses of this piece of land true. Reconciliation leading to installment of peace is the ultimate necessity every Afghan has been longing for over decades. In order to look at the feasibility of restoration of the stalled peace process, and its durability we have to consider some ground realities in consideration. Taliban and Afghan government have been in state of war for over decade that have resulted in devastative casualties and irreparable harms to war torn country.

Putting a glance at the political outlook of Afghanistan, chaotic state of delusion is reflected. The incumbent government tries to push for peace talks whilst insurgents resorted to parallel bloodletting must be kept in consideration. Kabul witnessed several explosions and suicide attacks in the wake of winter security setbacks that have worried many as the foreign troops continue to pack up ahead of the deadline of withdrawal. We are peace seekers. We negotiate peace, even with the assassins of humanity, peace and tranquility. This very stance is stressed by both head of government and political leadership of Afghanistan with variant degree of assertion. Awfully peace is talked to those who have killed over hundred thousands of innocents and physically impaired even a multiplied number since the beginning of war launched against terror. The extremists' pretend to respect negotiations but they have no respect for sanctity of humanity and peace and strongly believe in division of human being of variant grounds, be that ethnic, sectarian and religious. There are hundreds of such clues that manifest the persecution of guiltless civilians at the hands of Taliban. Even if talks were to be used as a last resort to install peace then some serious breakthrough must have worked out that could soothe the insurgents to an agreeable demand prior to sitting. The most significant are the demonstration of shift instilled in Taliban's resolve to disband militancy, dissociate Al-Qaida and surrender to constitution of the country. This move practically is unachievable given that Taliban deem to having upper hand in the fight, never surrender to government's demands instead dreams of ousting Kabul government.

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ISIS; Another Dark Chapter!

■ By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Just like the dubious and to some extent shameful endeavors of US and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan, ISIS seems to be the most dubious at all. In today's world, when almost a dozen of European nations are struggling hard to come out of their economic sufferings and there are millions in Asia and Africa who are suffering hard to find bread and potable water, the emergence of such a big organization without any support from someone is really surprising. It is possible that people living fifty years from today might come to know about the truths about this organization when the related secret documents would be made public but till then, we are left with speculations only. It is a general thinking that the organization is funded and supported by Saudi Arabia and a number of other rich Arab states but this is yet to be confirmed by these nations. It is such a painful and frustrating paradox when we compare it to the events of 80s and 90s. There were many incidents when a number of people were arrested, they were declared to be terrorists, a nation was blamed for their support and the nation was crippled by the economic sanctions. In a number of such cases, the victimized nation made great hue and cry for being innocent but its words were not given importance.

In case of ISIS, it is absolutely the opposite. A menace emerges which leaves behind its signs of destruction and cruelty wherever it goes. There is not present any second thought if ISIS is a terrorist organization or not. In its initial time, Taliban also tried their best to appear as a group that believes in good practices so that they should not be labeled as terrorists but ISIS is completely indifferent to any kind of label or title. They openly do whatever they do and are not ashamed or defend of being called terrorists.

Those nations that were fast enough to take action against a nation on the bases of speculations or theories remained reluctant to initiate any action against this barbarous group until it occupied a massive piece of land in Iraq and Syria and is now so strong that it cannot be held by any regional power. Thanks to the strategic and armed support of US and its allies that its fierce expansion has been controlled otherwise, the organization was going to turn its dream of making a great so-called Islamic Caliphate reality by conquering all the Islamic countries of the region. CIA is considered to be the most active and professional spying agency with its network in almost every corner of the world. Is this a kind of conspiracy or criminal ignorance that it failed to notice the emergence of such a big infrastructure until it became visible to all when it was not easy to be controlled?

Keeping in view all these paradoxes, political experts come up with so many theories about ISIS. First of all, it is a sad story of the dual behavior of world nations in dealing the similar situations. If a nation not liked by them had done so, the requirements of justice could have been completed. The nation could have been declared a terrorist nation or supporter of terrorists, its funds frozen, it would have been crippled by economic sanctions and the nation could have been completely alienated from the world, leaving it as an example for the rest of the nations.

It is not hidden and also not difficult as which nations had hand in finding this power and funding and supporting it. But here comes another satirical fact that the nations that are in position and authority to punish a nation for terrorism might be behind this whole game and a thief can never be the judge of its own crime.

Out of many viewpoints, one of the most popular describes the emergence of ISIS as a conspiracy of West to destabilize the Muslim countries of the region. We are not much sure as how much it is true but it is a fact that ISIS has worked wonderfully to destabilize almost all the countries of the region but the most affected are Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and we are not sure where else the after-shocks of this Tsunami will be felt. The nation that is going to be most benefitted from this is Israel that will then be having almost no resistance from its neighbors in its plans of expansion on the lands of its neighbors. Some think it as an effort to defame Islam. Right from the beginning of this organization, Islamic scholars from different corners of the world have repeatedly condemned the acts of ISIS and termed them to be Non-Islamic. Not only Islam, that claims itself to be a religion of peace and respect for humanity, the heinous and cruel acts of ISIS cannot be tolerated by any faith or school of thought. Of course, we should not forget to mention here the international policy of arm-sellers to ignite the flames of war in more and more areas so that they should be able to find new markets for their arms. There are large numbers of political experts who still believe that it was the major motive behind the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq by the Western powers because no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq and terrorism in Afghanistan is still as threatening as it was in 2001. At times, all the discussions and political or other viewpoints seem to be meaningless to me.

It is like once efforts to deceive not only others but also one's own. However, the ISIS is going to leave behind its dangerous and long-lasting imprints in the history. In some countries of the world like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and others, the fierce style of ISIS is getting more popularity and it may be followed by those terrorist organizations that are under pressure to keep their existence. A sad incident in Ghazni province of our country where more than 70 civilians were killed in the brutal way of ISIS gave rise to fears of emergence of ISIS in our country as well. It is also going to push many countries many years backward and countries like Syria, Iraq and other affected may take many decades to recover the losses. But most importantly, it shows another example when international powers resorted to a destructive or negative way when they chose to weaken the enemy by destruction. The money spent for finding and funding ISIS could have been used to bring change in the region that could have changed the fate of the countries of the region but also of the whole world. But I think we still lack international leaders who should think above their limited gains and give preference to overall gain of the humanity.

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