

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



January 12, 2017

## Bourgeoning Security Concerns

On Tuesday, some heinous attacks were carried out in different parts of the country. There were four major attacks – two were carried out in Kabul, one in Helmand and another one in Kandahar. The twin blasts in Kabul were carried out near parliament building, which particularly targeted the parliament staff. The blasts also killed four police force members and a number of staff from the Interior Ministry's Crime Investigation Department (CID) as well as National Directorate of Security (NDS) forces.

Meanwhile, the attack in Kandahar left 11 officials dead and 16 wounded. Among those killed were five United Arab Emirates (UAE) diplomats. The deputy governor of Kandahar Abdul Ali Shamsi, Faryab senator Sarajuddin Safari, Afghan diplomat in Washington Yama Quraishi and Shah Ahmad Saeed head of Kandahar foreign affairs department were other high ranking officials who lost their lives in the attack.

The attack was also aimed at Kandahar police Chief General Abdul Raziq; however, he was unhurt in the attack.

The blast took place inside the guesthouse at the governor's house at about 8pm and the bombs were fixed inside the sofas that were placed for the guests. UAE Ambassador Juma Mohammed Abdullah al-Kabi was also in the guesthouse when the explosion happened. He was on a visit to Kandahar to participate the inauguration ceremony for an orphanage in the southern city, and he was injured in the blast.

The facts and figures clearly show the magnitude of losses that the attacks have brought to Afghanistan. Some very important officials who had dedicated long periods of their lives for the country and could further play dominant roles in fighting insecurity and insurgency were killed mercilessly. The Kandahar attack also killed UAE officials, which shows that the attack was also aimed at influencing Afghanistan and UAE relations.

Definitely, it is a great loss for UAE and even for Afghanistan itself as the officials were there for a positive cause aimed at helping the Afghan orphan children. If such initiatives are sabotaged by insurgents so easily, it would be very difficult for others to pursue such initiatives.

Moreover, the attack in Helmand targeted a peace effort, which was a positive initiative as well. However, such attacks clearly give the signal that peace efforts would not be favored by insurgents. It, at the same time, may also discourage those insurgents who have some willingness to come to negotiation table.

It is really imperative for Afghan government and security officials that the efforts that are aimed to target the positive development and valuable human resource must be dispirited properly as it would raise the moral of the security forces and the people of Afghanistan as a whole.

It is also important to note that there were many civilians as well who lost their lives in the attacks. In fact, the civilians in Afghanistan are the ones who have been influenced by insecurity the most. They have been used by Taliban insurgents as means to further their ambitions though they reject that they are involved in civilian killings. Unfortunately, the arrangements to protect the lives of the civilians are almost non-existent, which has made them easy targets by the terrorists.

Afghan government has to keep in consideration that as a result of decades of instability and socio-economic and political problems, the Afghan people have already been suffering from myriads of problems. Though there have been certain important improvements made in the last decade or so, some very concerning issues still exist that threaten the lives of the common people of Afghanistan. There are claims that changes have been brought within Afghan society; however, it should be noted that if the effectiveness of the changes have to be felt or observed, they should be observed by the changes in the lives of the common people. If there is any change in the condition of living of the common people as the outcome of the change; the change should be guarded for and even backed and supported vehemently.

If not, either the claim must be discarded as wrong or the efforts should be improved to make the changes effective. And that is what Afghanistan needs to do – it has to improve its efforts to bring about necessary changes in the lives of the common people that have been jeopardized both by insecurity and lack of rudimentary requirements of life.

Afghan government must therefore get serious in tackling the issue of the insecurity not only to protect valuable human resource but also to build its legitimacy and gain support among the people, who otherwise seem to have lost their hopes about a tranquil and prosperous future. If the people are sure that the present government can strive honestly to provide them security and peace they will definitely join hands together along with the security forces to fight terrorists and terrorism successfully.

## Successive Attacks in Afghanistan

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

On contrary to the white hopes, 2017 is commencing with multiple terror attacks in Afghanistan. The day before, Afghan large cities were shocked by successive deadly attacks thereby dozens of people were killed and injured. The first event rocked Kabul with twin blasts near the Afghan Parliament in a crowded area in which at least 50 people killed and more than 100 wounded including Rahima Jami, a member of parliament from Herat province. According to reports a suicide bomber blew him up first at the entrance to parliament's offices and then a second car bomber detonated his explosives. The number of victims increased when the second bomb, which was planted in a car, exploded minutes later after security forces had rushed to help the victims.

The second attack in southern Afghanistan, at a guesthouse belonging to the governor of Kandahar province killed 11 people and wounded 18. According to reports, the ambassador from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other UAE diplomats were among the wounded including the governor of Kandahar province. The UAE foreign ministry said envoy Juma Mohammed Abdullah Al Kaabi and other UAE diplomats were wounded in the 'terrorist attack'. Governor of Kandahar province was also injured in the attack, who is said to be in a critical condition reportedly.

The Taliban, who have been waging a 15-year war against the U.S.-backed Afghan government, claimed the attack in the capital. Following the June 2015, it seems that the parliament complex has been the prime target for Taliban. In June 2015, the group attacked the old parliament building, sending politicians running for cover in chaotic scenes relayed live on television. However, they (Taliban) said the attack targeted a minibus carrying staff from Afghanistan's main intelligence agency, killing or wounding as many as 70 people.

Another two attacks, in two succeeding days, occurred in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital of Helmand province. The earlier one had claimed by Taliban leaving behind dozens of victims. Among various terrorist groups in Afghanistan Daesh and Taliban are more active in Afghanistan. Taliban militants lost their grip over Afghanistan in a 2001 US-led invasion, but security has never taken hold in the country despite the presence of foreign troops. They are conducting constant bomb attacks across the country, with several international efforts to hold peace talks with the group ending in failure. The Daesh group is competing with the Taliban in acts of terror. Daesh has claimed responsibility for several earlier attacks in Kabul, Balkh and recently in Baghlan on minority group aiming to ignite sectarian conflicts. The latest attacks in Kabul, appeared to be the deadliest attack in Kabul since July, when two suicide bombers struck during a demonstration, killing more than 80 people. That attack was

claimed by a local affiliate of the Daesh group. On the other hand, the attack inside the heavily guarded compound would represent a major breach of security. President Ashraf Ghani strongly condemned the bombings in a serious statement from the presidential palace. He emphasized that the killers of Afghans would not be allowed to have tranquility and will be pursued to any parts of the country.

Many countries like US, UK, India, Pakistan and Iran strongly condemned the terror attacks. The White House said bombings in the capital: "An attack on parliamentary buildings and lawmakers is clearly an assault on Afghanistan's efforts to build democratic institutions." Indian Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, said India stands with Afghanistan in its fight against terrorism. Also the Iranian Foreign Ministry has decried the recent deadly twin terror attacks in Kabul, reiterating Tehran's negative stance against any manner of violence for any cause. The Iranian official went on to call on all nations in the region to come together to help eradicate the scourge of terror and violence.

Pakistan reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all forms and manifestations and reaffirms its commitment for continued efforts and cooperation for eliminating this menace. Likewise, Amnesty International said the bombings indicate that "the Taliban are pressing ahead with a gruesome campaign of violence that makes no effort to spare civilian lives." "Targeting first responders in a car bomb that killed many people that were on the street shows a chilling contempt for human life," said Champa Patel, Amnesty International's South Asia director.

The successive attack comes just two weeks before Donald Trump is sworn in as US president. Considering the new stances and critical situation, it seems that Afghanistan need to be an urgent agenda for the new US president, even though Afghanistan issues' got scarcely a passing mention in the bitterly contested presidential election. President-elect Trump has given few details on his expected foreign policy, with even fewer specifics on how he will tackle the war in Afghanistan. Repeated bids to launch peace negotiations with the Taliban have failed and a fierce new fighting season is expected to kick off in the spring.

Afghanistan last week welcomed the Pentagon's decision to deploy some 300 Marines to Helmand, where American forces engaged in heated combat until their mission ended in 2014. It is said that The Marines will head to the poppy-growing province this spring to assist a NATO-led mission to train Afghan forces, in the latest sign that foreign forces are increasingly being drawn back into the worsening conflict.

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## Observing the Law, Respecting the Law

By Asif Ghaznawi

Constitution of Afghanistan is one the best constitutions in the region; it is modern, advanced and a democratic law. Political and civil rights of people of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society of Afghanistan, have been recognized in the constitution. Sovereignty belongs to people, citizens from all walks of life, irrespective of their ethnicity and religious background are equal under the law. This constitution is the first and the most democratic constitution of Afghanistan." These and some other appreciative words in praise of the constitution were said in ceremonies on the occasion of 14th anniversary of approving the constitution. President Ashraf Ghani in a gathering at presidential palace said: "this constitution has specified our political system, defined our national identity and religious identity and no one can rule the country by force."

But executive chief of national unity government: Dr. Abdullah Abdullah spoke about needs and urgency to amend the constitution. He protested presidential system and what he called 'centralization of power' which has led to monopoly of power and despotism. Mr. Abdullah emphasized on execution of national unity government's commitment about changing the political system and amending the constitution.

Head of Wolesi Jirga; Abdul Rauf Ibrahim also praised novelties and modern values of the constitution; but he warned that powerful men are exempt of punishment and breaking law is turning to culture in Afghanistan.

Despite the fact that our constitution is the best one; but situation in respect of 'rule of law' is not satisfactory. Once a local research institution (House of Freedom) conducted a survey on enforcement of constitution and the result showed that 92% the law has been violated.

This is while that Afghanistan is in list of most corrupt nations of the world. Another research carried out in 2016, indicated that Afghans have paid about three billion dollars bribe to individuals in government in one year.

In fact, breaking law in our country is the biggest problem; people in all ranks have broken the law and most unfortunately, major violators are high officials in government. Each year we have celebration on the occasion of approval of the constitution. It is good to remind people about this great achievement of our history; but enforcement of the constitution is the biggest appreciation and homage to this mother law.

Our constitution is indeed the best one throughout our history. Despite our traditional and national values have been enshrined in the constitution, international, modern and democratic values are also respected in the law and the state is obliged to abide by them. But why chief executive of government Mr. Abdullah and some others talk to amend the constitution and change the political system from presidential to parliamentary. People who support parliamentary system, assert that all power and authorities are concentrated in presidential palace and this is why the system does not function properly, corruption and nepotism is increasing day by day, government has been changed to an autocratic and despotic system and monopoly of power has crippled machine of the state.

According to the constitution, president at the same time is head of the state and leader of the government; he makes the policies while enjoys widespread executive power too. President has major role in appointing high judges and mem-

bers of Supreme Court. Ministers are chosen by president; though approval of Wolesi Jirga is required. Governors of the provinces are appointed by president and it has been seen in the country that he even expanded his role for selecting assistant of governors, deputies of ministries and other positions like commanders of police and security chiefs in the provinces too. Mr. Abdullah Abdullah speaking at presidential palace, added that in accordance with the constitution, Mayors should be elected by people; but government is not ready so far to hold election for that. "Political and geographical situation of the country and diversity in ethnicity in Afghanistan require devolution of power to local government." Abdullah said.

People who struggle for change of the political system to parliamentary, believe that wide authorities of president given by constitution, prepared ways for misuse of power; therefore there should prime minister and government should be made by political parties, so that power is distributed and leaders of government should be accountable to their parties and as well to both houses of parliament.

"Leaders of the national unity government at the beginning agreed on creation of a joint commission to study amendment of the constitution and making premiership post through holding Loya Jirga (grand assembly)." Abdullah said this and added that there should be check and balance in power and nobody should have concern about decentralization; yet it guarantees more role and participation of people in government.

Nevertheless, there is not seen any serious step and effort in government and among political leaders of the country for change of political system.

President Ghani though said, constitution permits us to bring changes in it; but he pointed out: "to enforce the constitution thoroughly, supplementary law should be passed." Some political opposition accuse president and some other leaders inside government of not acting upon agreement between two groups that have made the government.

According to them, president and his allies in government do not want to share the power with others; that's why they have violated the agreement and the group led by Dr. Abdullah has not been given due share in power and even the chief executive of government has not any significant authority in government. Notwithstanding the good points and some weakness and imperfection of the constitution and political system of Afghanistan, what seems to be the most urgent need of the country, is to stabilize the political situation; because change of the system and amending the constitution is one of the most important national issues and that should not take place hastily.

Decision on great national issues like constitution and political system should be taken after nationwide and long deliberations and consultations. The political situation should be normal and stable so that we do not repeat mistakes of the past and what was done at the time of approval of the constitution.

For now, the situation is not favorable to adapt parliamentary system; we have not nationally accepted political parties and the change of rule might lead to tragedies and the situation might get worsen. We are at war with militant oppositions who reject the system from base.

We should not do what weakens the state and create opportunities for further militancy and insurgency in the country.

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