

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



January 19, 2016

Violence against Women Continues

Even after consistent insistence, the level of violence against women in Afghan society does not seem to be lowering. Every day, there are incidents which show clear discrimination, and brutal violence against Afghan women. These are only the incidents that become public and the people come to know about them. Surely, there are many other incidents that are never reported and that never make to the media and the people never come to know about them. They are the stories born in dark alleys of ignorance and injustice and they die at in the same darkness.

It was not long ago when stoning of a young woman in one of Afghan districts was revealed through media. The shrieks of the woman, victimized in the act, could still be heard that another story has started making the headlines. A woman's nose was chopped off by her husband in Faryab province, a couple of days ago. The woman, Reza Gul, who is only 20 years old, was subjected to the barbarian treatment after six years of marriage. Reza Gul has disclosed to the reporters that her husband looked for flimsy excuses for beating and insulting her. He had even tried to shoot her with a pistol but the weapon misfired; so he opted for cutting off her nose with a knife.

This incident shows the height of brutality. Unfortunately, this is not the first of its kind. There have been many such incidents wherein men have cut the noses of women because of different reasons. This, they do, in order to punish them for some deeds which they consider as mistake or sin.

Most of the men, in any social position, whether a brother, father, or husband, have discriminated women in some way or the other. They have used their unjustly heightened position in patriarchal Afghan society to show their dominance and strength. They have even used their physical strength so as to subjugate women and tyrannize them in any possible way.

The family is structured in such a way that men possess most of the authority and they make most of the decisions. Women are not allowed to make decisions of their own. Even the imperative decisions like marriages are made by the men. And, unfortunately, while grooms are searched for women, many important aspects are neglected. Though the choice of women is made very thorough, the same is ignored in the choice for men and this gives rise to many problems after marriage. Mostly, the men are not capable of running their families properly but they are having wives and many children. This gives birth to a situation where the men have no other option to face the problems in the family except to opt for violence and women become the victim of their violence.

It can be easily observed in Afghan society that women become the victim of domestic violence and whenever their husbands are unemployed and drug addicts the situation gets worse. The drug addicted men do not only spoil their own lives but also make the lives of their wives and children miserable, if they are married. Men can be husbands as soon as they are young; youth is the only requirement for them. And, after marriage they are not required to be responsible enough.

Women are required to be docile and obedient. They are required to be able to work hard along with having beauty and chastity. Moreover, after marriage women are asked to compromise with men in every situation and condition. They are required to sacrifice their entire lives for the betterment of their husbands' houses and lives. They do not have any other way of living except for fulfilling the demands of their in-laws and particularly their husbands.

This situation has given rise to every sort of discrimination and violence against women. The unjust and ill-treatment of women in our society has given rise to every sort of trouble the women face. The whole social structure and behavior are designed in such a way that supports discrimination against them and they are expected to tolerate all these without even raising their voice.

It is necessary that Afghan government should take serious notice of the discrimination and violence against women. It should now be understood that unless law enforcement agencies carry out concrete measures to enact the law so as to control violence against women, it would be very difficult to control the situation within a society where women are not considered even human beings. However, at the same time it is necessary to address the root causes of the problem. It is important to bring about changes in the way the women are perceived within our society. Unless, they are considered human beings and important part of the society it is very difficult to control discrimination and violence against them.



Importance of Iran's Nuclear Deal!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Despite all the difficulties and conspiracies, the nuclear deal between Iran and West sailed successfully through and the economic sanctions were lifted from Iran. The news was welcomed around the world and UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, and US president Obama congratulated all the stakeholders for this success. The leaders in Iran also warmly welcomed the news and it was taken as a moment of celebration for the Iranian public as they were badly suffering due to economic sanctions. With this announcement, the oil prices fell to the lowest in last 13 years as now, Iran would also be able to sell its oil in the global market and it would definitely worsen the faltering oil prices around the world. However, this is good news for the Iranian public that now, they will be able to have a sigh of relief after the strict economic sanctions that had crippled the Iranian economy and put much pressure on the economy of Iranian masses.

This agreement is also considered an important achievement for Obama in his final year in the office. It is the continuation of the policy of Obama that he adopted in his second term in office in which he insisted to resolve the outstanding issues with diplomacy and negotiations. The resumption of ties with Cuba, the efforts to initiate peace talks between different factions in Syria and the efforts to resolve the problem of Iran's nuclear program were the parts of this strategy. US foreign secretary John Kerry has earned worldwide respect and admiration for his continuous efforts throughout the world to meet different leaders to avoid conflicts and resolve the disagreements.

President Obama defended this agreement and warned the congress that he would veto any legislation against this by the congress. According to him, 'this is the solution acceptable for 99% of people and leaders of the world. I invite all those to come up with alternate solutions who are against this agreement. I am sure they will not be able to give an alternate for this'.

The biggest reason given by the supporters of this agreement is the fact that this was the only way to avoid any military conflict in the Middle East. It remains a fact that economic sanctions did weaken the Iran but there were also some politicians inside Iran insisting that nuclear enrichment was the right of Iran just like other nuclear states. Further sanctions could have forced Iranian government and especially the hardliners to go forward in making nuclear weapon. Then, the West could have done only one thing to stop this; to bomb and destroy the nuclear facilities of Iran and it could have endangered the whole region with the possibility of a new war in the war-torn Middle East. In past as well, Israel had warned Iran that it would bomb its nuclear sites if Iran did not stop working for the achievement of nuclear weapon. On the other hand, Iran also has a strong military power in the region and it could have given good response against any such attack, dragging the region on the edge of a full-fledged war. The recent agreement has thwarted any such possibility of war in the region and according to Obama

and many other leaders of the world, the deal has made the world a safer place to live.

The deal also shows the importance of continuous diplomacy and willingness from both the sides to resolve the issues with negotiations. The talks were being held since 2005 and at many times, the talks were suspended due to differences between the two sides. The recent series of talks were initiated after Hassan Rouhani was elected the president of Iran in 2013 and it took many months and continuous efforts to come up with a deal agreed upon and accepted by all the sides. Both the sides had felt that there was no option left for them except to come up with a mutually agreed upon agreement. This shows the spirit of democracy and blessings of negotiations and gives a message to all the leaders of the world to resolve the problems and conflicts with peace and dialogue.

However, there were and there are politicians and countries who are strongly opposed to any such deal. Obama fears that congress might come with legislation against this deal, as there are many congressional representatives who are against this. In fact, the Israeli lobby is very strong inside the congress and they are opposing this deal just like the Israeli government. Israeli Prime Minister has called this deal disastrous for the region and warned the world that it would give enough time for Iran to emerge as the nuclear power, threatening the peace and stability of the whole region. On the other hand, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is also not happy with this deal as they are in direct conflict with Iran on the issues of Syria and Yemen and very recently, there has been a sharp rise of tensions between the two big powers of the region.

It has long been the policy of Israel to destroy the nuclear program of Iran by whatever way possible. Israel is afraid that Iran with a nuclear capability would pose more threats to its existence. On the other hand, it is also feared that after the sanctions are lifted, Iran will emerge as stronger country in the region and will pose threat to its neighbors especially Saudi Arabia and Israel.

It is also feared that economically strong Iran will be able to harbor more funds to support the groups like Hezbollah who are fighting in Syria in support of President Assad and Hamas who are regarded as hardliner enemies of Israel in Palestine.

However, all the fears and reasons against this nuclear deal do not carry much weight. The biggest problem with Israel is its double-standard politics in the world. Although Israel has neither accepted nor denied of having nuclear weapons but it is internationally accepted that Israel is a nuclear power.

The nuclear agreement is the fruit of the efforts of all the big powers of the world. It lies as the moral obligation for all the nations of the world to honor this agreement as it has been brought into existence for the broader good of the world and countries like Israel need to ignore their mean policies and diplomacy for the well-being of the world.

Muhammad Rasool Shah is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at muhammadrasool-shah@gmail.com

ISIL-K - A New Challenge

By Hujjatullah Zia

According to reports, the US formally designated the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group's affiliate in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a terrorist organization. The US State Department has said the order concerned the Islamic State group's "Khorasan Province" - which US officials refer to as "ISIL-K." It said, "The group is based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and is composed primarily of former members of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban." Based on the statement, the group pledged loyalty to the head of the Islamic State's self-proclaimed "caliphate", Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in January 2015. "ISIL-K has carried out suicide bombings, small arms attacks and kidnappings in eastern Afghanistan against civilians and Afghan National Security and Defense Forces, and claimed responsibility for May 2015 attacks on civilians in Karachi, Pakistan." The group also recently carried out terrorist attacks at Pakistani diplomatic missions in Afghanistan.

"The US Department of State has announced the designation of ISIL-K as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act," which authorizes the administration to make such designations, says a statement issued in Washington.

It is said that this year, the group recruited scores of fighters from the militants who fled to Afghanistan after Pakistan launched a military operation in Pakistan's Federally Administrative Tribal Area (FATA). Among the Afghan Taliban fighters, the group targets those who are disgruntled with the current Taliban leadership. It comes as the President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani ordered the Ministry of Defense (MoD) last week to keep bombing the ISIL militant group saying that it has no room in our territory.

Not surprisingly, members of the Taliban insurgents pledged allegiance to the ISIL group with its emergence in Afghanistan. Currently, this group has changed into a political crisis and gained firm foothold in restive parts of the country, mainly in Nangarhar province. This militant group has ushered in insurgency and put its radical ideology into practice through stoking sectarian violence, beheading the civilians, terrorizing the locals, etc. It was said earlier that the ISIL militants seek to establish a connection with the Iraq's central leadership - this will multiply insecurity and civilian casualties.

Following the fall of Taliban's regime in 2001, a sense of hope was in the air for establishing a democratic government. Afghan nation breathed a sigh of relief and girls' schools were reopened. Women were released from restrictions and initiated to play their social, political, cultural and economic role in the society. Among the list of presidential candidates, women's names were also seen there. Similarly, a considerable number of women were nominated in

parliamentary and provincial council elections. Afghan men and women flocked to ballot-boxes as their eyes sparkled with hope and excitement. They believed that their ballots would root out violence and bloodshed and their rights to life, liberty and property would be protected under a democratic government. They dreamt a utopian society - where one's dignity and freedom would be respected to a great extent.

Moreover, the Afghanistan constitution also declared the state's responsibility as, "Form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights; strengthen political, social, economic as well as defense institutions; attain a prosperous life and sound living environment for all inhabitants of this land; and, eventually, regain Afghanistan's appropriate place in the international family".

However, the public dream did not come true and the insurgency resurfaced. The Taliban's ragtag militants were reorganized and staged terrorist attacks and suicide bombings across the country. Some of the voters' fingers, which were inked for voting in election, were cut by the Taliban militants - it indicated the futility of immature democracy. In other words, the Afghan's nascent democracy is unlikely to be a panacea for the bleeding wounds of the nation and failed to assuage the public sufferings. The civilians' blood was spilled, their freedom was curtailed and their rights and dignity were violated in one way or another. The militants also sprayed corrosive acid on the face of some school girls in Kandahar and razed some of girls' schools to the ground. Hence, they were terrorized and discriminated against on the grounds of their sex by the misogynist Taliban.

To alleviate the political crisis and end militancy, the Hamid Karzai's government sought to bring the Taliban - under the term of "discontented brothers" - to the negotiating table and established a High Peace Council (HPC) in 2010. On the other hand, the US-led NATO forces countered insurgency under the mission of "war on terror". In short, both conciliatory and military ways were exerted to bring in peace. However, none of them have come to fruition yet. The NATO combat mission was over and the bulk of its troops withdrew from the country. Now, the National Unity Government (NUG) seeks to resume peace talk, which will be brokered by Pakistan, US and China. Currently, the ISIL-K is a major problem ahead of the NUG and has changed into a political crisis. Besides being involved in militancy, ISIL intends to extend its realm of influence through employing the naive individuals under religious magnetism. This militant group has to be combated strongly before incubating and finding safe havens in the country.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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