

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



January 22, 2017

Hunger is one of the Basic Problems

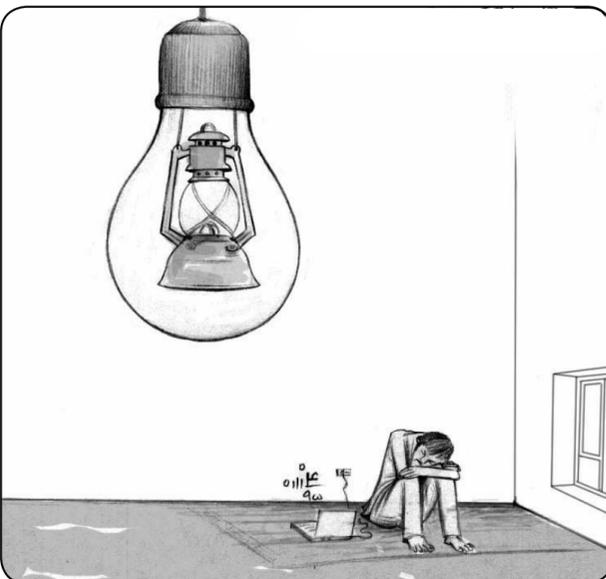
Someone had rightly said that food is more than a trade commodity; it is an essential to life. Therefore, it is important to protect nations and people from hunger in the world market system. The prevailing market system does not distribute food on the basis of nutritional need. This is one of the most troubling and complex realities of the world hunger problem.

Lack of food is basically a material poverty. This sort of poverty can hurt people in many ways, it can hurt people's self-esteem and it can also hurt their outlook on life. If one comes home from work to see his family and instead of seeing a family which is happy because it has a roof over its head, he comes home to see that his children do not have enough food to eat to keep them properly nourished; it hurts families and tears some of them apart.

It can also affect people's outlook on life and on people in a major way. People who are denied food can start to hate life and everyone around them. There is also two instincts in life that will always kick in when a person is hungry: the survival instinct which is to survive no matter what the situation is and the instinct to provide food for one's family. Parents would do anything it takes to make sure that their children have the proper nourishment. Some parents may get too much desperate that they may reach a point where they would even kill for food. This feeds the monster we call the "spiral of violence" and helps to encourage it grow. Because we have in the long run, poor people stealing and sometimes killing for no reason. They should not have to steal or kill for food, they should at least have enough food to eat to survive. In fact, there is enough food grown in the world to supply every man with thirty-six thousand calories a day, this is enough to cause weight gain. However, the issue of hunger persists and threatens different countries, mostly the third world countries. Hunger affects third world nations in many ways. There are some basic reasons why poor countries cannot provide food for their people:

- 1). Government by selfish elite: many of the world's poorest and hungriest nations are controlled by governments consisting of the nation's wealthiest members. Government policies tend to favor the interests of the wealthy rather than the poor.
- 2). Conditions on aid programs: Aid that is offered by wealthy countries to poor countries often comes with strings attached. For example, a wealthy country might give a poor country money, but require the poor country to use the money to build roads, bridges and airports. This in no way helps the poor country provide food for its people.
- 3). Debt payments and conditions: most poor countries are deeply into debt to banks. Paying interest on loans takes money from programs that could help eliminate hunger.
- 4). Discrimination: ethnic, religious, and gender discrimination within poor countries also cause poverty. Religious and ethnic minorities are likely to be more impoverished than other groups, and with no money comes no food.
- 5). Arms sales: military spending by poor countries is encouraged by rich countries that make and sell arms. Because of this, valuable money which could go to help by food is spent on weapons. The spiral of violence is also fuelled by the availability of weapons, which increases repression and adds to poverty and hunger.
- 6). Abuse of land and other resources: The abuse of a poor country's resources leads to environmental degradation. Damaged land cannot be effectively farmed for local food production.

Afghanistan is also one of the countries that is influenced by hunger to a large extent. Some of the above mentioned reasons also fit in Afghanistan context. Like, there is an elite ruling over Afghanistan that seems alien to the common problems of the common people. They cannot feel the pains of the poor and hungry and are not inclined towards solving hunger problems. Secondly, there is discrimination and corruption within national institutions that hamper the proper allocation of resources to the poor and the needy people. And above all, the government spending on security largely hinders the initiatives to defeat hunger in the country. The country is suffering from insecurity to a large extent and therefore, most of the efforts are diverted towards the same sector and therefore the issue of hunger and poverty remain neglected. It is vital that the ruling elite must feel the issues of the common people and must realize the fact that many of the poor people in the country die or get caught in several social problems because of hunger; therefore, they should fulfill their responsibilities in this regard. Moreover, no sort of discrimination and corruption should be tolerated in case of hunger and poverty as they are the issues which can influence the people directly and may even cause large-scale deaths. And, government should not limit the budgets and resources meant for hunger and poverty in the pretext of security as these are the issues that further complicate the problem of insecurity.



2016: The Deadly Year for Journalists

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

Despite significant improvement in freedom of speech in last 15 years, Afghan journalists have been facing serious threats and challenges imposed by insurgent groups while the local authorities also blamed for the climate of fear for media personnel. As a result, many of Journalists in Afghanistan abandon their jobs or continue their work under extremely difficult circumstances and routinely face violence, threats, and intimidation that prevent them from carrying out their work freely. According to the recent report released by the Afghanistan Journalist Safety Committee (AJSC), the year 2016 was the deadliest year for journalists in last 15 years. According to the report 13 journalist killed, 6 were wounded during the year, while they also documented, "30 cases of beating, 35 cases of intimidation, and 17 cases of abuse and mistreatment." With 101 cases in total, the year saw a spike of 38% in instances of violence against journalists compared to 2015, with 50.5% attributed to the government of Afghanistan, while the Taliban accounted for 22.8%. Most of the remaining cases were attributed to unknown individuals. "An increase in the level of threats and attacks against journalist and media by the Taliban has not only transformed the nature of the threat environment, but also forced extensive self-censorship on journalists who work in the insecure areas of the country," the report said.

In addition to this, Earlier a similar report had been released by Nai, an organization supporting open media in Afghanistan, 14 journalists were killed while 23 were injured, 43 were beaten and 337 received death threats in 2016.

This increase in violence against journalists has turned Afghanistan into the second most dangerous country for journalists in the world, after Syria," Najib Sharifi, the chairman of the committee, told reporters on last Thursday. The report noted that a shift in the Taliban's policy towards the media was the "main driver of the increase in the level of threats and deadly violence against journalists".

In January last year, seven employees of popular TV channel Tolo, often critical of the insurgents, were killed in a Taliban suicide bombing in Kabul in what the militant group said was revenge for "spreading propaganda" against them. It was the first major attack on an Afghan media organization since the Taliban were ousted from power in 2001 and spotlighted the dangers faced by media workers in Afghanistan as the security situation worsens amid a growing wave of militant attacks.

May of national and international actors expressed concerns over increasing violence against journalist calling 2016 the deadliest year and the second most dangerous for reporters in the world after Syria. "Freedom of the media is the key to any democracy and transparency in society and gives ordinary Afghan citizens a voice," said the European Union special representative. Ambassador Franz-Michael Mellbin urged all parties to the conflict

to do their utmost to protect journalists and provide them with a safe and secure working environment. "It is alarming that the government continues to be responsible for so many cases. The government should do its utmost to bring perpetrators of threats, attacks and killing of journalists to justice. Attacks on the media must be stopped", said Ambassador Mellbin. The Direct attacks on journalists are against national and international laws and values; they do not only limit the ability of journalists to collect accurate reports from the conflict fields but also force them to find a safer job.

The AJSC blamed the deaths of at least 10 of the 13 journalists on the Taliban, saying the group had "drastically increased" it is targeting and intimidation of journalists, leading in some cases to more self-censorship by media.

In June 2016, American journalist David Gilkey and his Afghan translator were killed in a rocket attack by the Taliban in southern Helmand province. But the report also noted that the majority of violent incidents against journalists were carried out by government forces, with the European Union criticizing the "alarming" trend. "The government should do its utmost to bring perpetrators of threats, attacks and killing of journalists to justice," the EU delegation to Afghanistan said in a statement. According to AJSC figures, 28 journalists and media workers have been killed in the past five years in Afghanistan.

These waves of violence and social outcry follow the approval of access to information law created hopes for journalists and other citizens as a great milestone towards democracy development in Afghanistan. The paradoxical increase of violence has again fuelled tension and frustration between journalists and civil society. As many governors and local officials do not respect journalistic independence. Journalists have been harassed or come under attack by local officials, their bodyguards, police officers and the Taliban in several provinces. The police and judicial authorities, who are susceptible to being influenced by governors, often interrogate and even punish journalists.

In democratic system media considered as the fourth pillar of a government; According to international conventions to which Afghanistan is a signatory and according to Article 50 of the Afghan Constitution, "Right to know" or "Right of Access to Information" is a fundamental human right for every Afghan citizen. It can play an important role in the fight against corruption and the right to access information increases transparency, accountability, public participation and democracy development. So, it is expected that human right orgs and local citizens strongly support media and journalist to monitor social, political or administrative issues or else a nation of sheep will beget a government of wolves. At least, it is possible to enhance media by new media such as mobile phone, face book and etc.

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Brexit Into Trumpland

By Philippe Legrain

British Prime Minister Theresa May is leading the United Kingdom toward a very "hard" Brexit in 2019 - and potentially off a cliff, if the UK leaves the European Union without an exit or trade deal. In her January 17 speech, May outlined her objectives for negotiating with the EU, and made it clear that she will prioritize headline Brexiteers' demands over the country's economic interests.

It isn't surprising that May would choose a Brexit variant whereby Britain leaves both the EU's single market and its customs union: she knows little, and cares even less, about economics. Her ultimate objective is to survive as Prime Minister, and she believes that controlling immigration - a longtime personal obsession - will endear her to "Leave" voters, and that ending the European Court of Justice's jurisdiction in Britain will pacify the nationalists in her Conservative Party.

This stance rules out continued membership in the single market. Until now, Brexiteers had denied the existence of any political tradeoff between rejecting free movement and maintaining free trade with the EU. As Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson fatuously claimed, Britons could have their cake and eat it. May has now belatedly admitted that this is impossible.

Economically, this is a lose-lose proposition for the UK, which will now forego the benefits of free exchange with the rest of the EU, as well as the contributions of hard-working, tax-paying EU migrants. UK-based services providers, notably financial firms, will lose the "passporting" privileges that allow them to operate freely within the EU.

May was less honest about the implications of leaving the customs union. She wants Britain to set its own tariffs and other trade commitments at the World Trade Organization, and then independently negotiate preferential arrangements - misleadingly called "free-trade agreements" - with some countries.

But this will entail customs controls on trade between Britain and the EU, including goods and services crossing the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. A new border bureaucracy will have to check customs compliance, calculate import duties depending on where goods are deemed to have originated, ensure payments, verify that goods comply with EU standards, and so forth. This will be particularly costly and disruptive for manufacturers with complex, just-in-time supply chains: cars that are "made in Britain" actually include many components that cross borders repeatedly during the manufacturing process. Rather than come clean about this, May is seeking "frictionless" trade through "associate membership" in the customs union, even though this directly contradicts her assertion that Britain does not want to be "half-in, half-out" of the EU. Either way, such an arrangement is politically implausible, logistically impossible, and illegal under WTO rules.

May's promise to pursue an exit deal and a trade deal simultaneously - and both within two years of the formal start of the withdrawal process (which she aims to initiate by the end of March)

- is similarly unrealistic. For starters, the EU insists on settling the divorce terms before discussing any future relationship. This is no mere formality: While both sides could agree that EU citizens already in the UK, and Britons in the EU, can remain, an attempt by either side to use these people's status as a bargaining chip could backfire. What's more, the EU is seeking up to €60 billion (\$64 billion) from the UK to settle outstanding liabilities.

May's threat to walk away from a bad deal may be credible, because she could blame the EU for the resulting chaos. But the same cannot be said for her threat to hit back at the EU by slashing UK taxes and regulations.

There is little political support for such a move, and stripping away financial regulations would breach Britain's international commitments. Moreover, May has pledged to help the working class, strengthen labor rights, and ensure that global businesses pay their fair share of UK taxes.

Even if May can strike an exit deal, it is impossible to negotiate and ratify a sector-by-sector trade agreement in under two years. The EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, for example, took seven years to hash out - and was almost scotched by the parliament of Belgium's Wallonia region. There can be no "phased implementation" of a trade deal that has not been finalized, so UK-based car companies, financial institutions, and other businesses that export to the EU now should start preparing for the "cliff edge" that May wants to avoid.

May has no electoral mandate to pursue a hard Brexit. Many of the 52% of Britons who voted for Leave want to stay in the single market, as do all of those who voted for Remain. Furthermore, elected parliamentarians have been given no say in setting the government's negotiating agenda. While May has promised them a vote on the final deal, Britain will still leave the EU if they reject it. This makes a mockery of democracy. And with US President Donald Trump threatening to start trade wars and abandon Europe to Russian President Vladimir Putin's revanchist predations, this is an especially dangerous time for the UK to go it alone. May claims that Brexit will enable Britain to strike better trade deals with non-EU countries, and she is pinning her hopes on a quick deal with Trump's America.

But with Britain in such a desperate negotiating position, even an administration headed by Hillary Clinton would have driven a hard bargain on behalf of American industry. US pharmaceutical companies, for example, want the UK's cash-strapped National Health Service to pay more for drugs.

The Trump administration will drive an even harder bargain. Like China and Germany, Britain exports much more to America than it imports from the US. Trump hates such "unfair" trade deficits, and has pledged to eliminate them. Be careful what you wish for, Prime Minister. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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