

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

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Ill-fated Afghan Refugees are Suffering Maltreatment!

The day Afghanistan welcomed great powers to exploit its land, furthering their innate interests, marks the beginning of Afghan dilemma and mass migration. Since then, Afghanistan is caught in a reasonless and endless civil war which reciprocated with infliction of great catastrophes to Afghans resulting in grand exodus. Subsequently, the motherland rendered fertile breeding ground of Mujahideen who exercised their self-centered motives, forged Sharia and finally ended in establishment of Taliban rule. The grave human rights violation was witnessed during Taliban reign and furnished another mass migration.

The past three decades of war could bring nothing but miseries of homelessness, social insecurity and eternal state of desperation, to Afghan refugees who have been staying in various countries, ranging from Eastern to Western, for over decades. The later owing rational laws under the realm of liberal democracy provided the refugees with basic life sustaining necessities and great deal of liberty. Nevertheless, the former being either Islamic democracy (Pakistan) or theocratic states (Iran, hardly provided a certain degree of liberty and facility. Pakistan has been a hospitable country, hosting scores of legal and illegal immigrants. According to the UNHCR, 1.6 million Afghan refugees have been recorded in Pakistan where most of them are living in Peshawar and other cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Around five million illegal immigrants have been residing in different cities of Pakistan for more than three decades. Apparently, the refugees in Pakistan enjoy certain degree of freedom and right to access to basic amenities of life. Nonetheless, there are multiple complications hindering on the way to their easy going lives ranging from insecurity, health and education. Pakistan is a developing country with a huge population; most frequently the basic facility of health and education can hardly suffice the growing needs of its indigenous citizens. The host country despite being rewarded with funds from corresponding donor agencies, already grappled with variant predicament, could do little to turn the fate of wretched refugees. However, the refugees inhabiting urban localities enjoy a noticeable share of studying in public schools and seek access to basic health units. The nuance cultural variation let it feasible to refugees to easily socialize in Pakistani society with some having homogenized via marital bonds. Significantly, most of the people residing on the two sides of border shared similar ethno-lingual, and cultural practices. Such as, all provisions consolidate the case of patriation of small fraction of refugees which inflict great loss for Afghanistan in term of human resource.

In the wake of growing terrorists attacks particularly, the former Peshawar tragic incident, the government planned to tighten the security net. Moreover, the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa concluded the terrorist attack on an army school in Peshawar had been planned in Afghanistan and ordered the Afghan refugees should leave the state in a month. Subsequently, regular raids were made to search out a credible clue to the perpetrator with Afghan refugees held as the prime suspects, were subjected to frequent maltreatment and harassment.

Allegations of mistreatment and abuse of refugees at the hands of the police continue to emerge ever since Peshawar Incident. The adoptive measures that involve picking on easy targets, such as economically poor refugees who may have little or no means of protection, can never find a coherent justification. The United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Pakistan has informed the government about the refugees having legal immigration documents can stay until the end of 2015, given they have the right to live legally in the country based on the legal document. The UNHCR spokesperson stated the federal government is obliged to repatriate Afghan refugees to their homeland based on their willingness. Despite, such assurances, arbitrary raids and deportations by the K-P government have started. What is most disturbing; however, are allegations of mistreatment of Afghan minors by the police, specifically of seminarian students. Picking up underage students and subjecting them to abuse will not result in any solutions. Pakistan hosting the largest refugee population; the generosity shown so far is to be appreciated but the moral values can't allow or give authority the right to snatch away human dignity exercising an act of abuse against some of the weakest members of society. The government of Afghanistan has to take this very concern of refugees into account. This isn't the only country where Afghan refugees face case of maltreatment. Iran is another such country hosting large number of Afghans witnessing rampant harassment and maltreatment. Iran of course renders great humanitarian service by allowing Afghans seek refuge in this land. Nevertheless the mass violation of human rights must be deemed inhuman if not immoral. Reportedly Afghans are suffering ill-treatment in the said country. Many are on death row on flawed accusation of criminal activities. Previously, numerous such cases were surfaced with or without concern of government. The issues might have been negligibly raised on diplomatic level. Conversely the Afghan government with exception of receiving corps has done nothing satisfactory.

It is high time that government must find out and work out the underlying reason behind miseries that force them leave abroad and how that should be discouraged. The persistent state of insecurity, unemployment is playing eminent role forcing Afghans move to foreign countries in the search for better livelihood. Conversely, Afghanistan has done a little, making congenial grounds to provide every necessity of lives to returning refugees. In the past two terms, the democratic government, succeeded to earn the fame of bad governance, corruption and irregularities. It could rarely streamline the socio-political and financial matters of the state. The incumbent government has to take serious measures, reversing the ill deeds of ex-government whilst striving hard to get this piece of land rid of calamities of terrorism, extremism, corruption, illiteracy and poverty, making it amenable to live in, from multi-viewpoint.



New Dreams, New Destinations

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Like me, many of you might have seen the pictures of Dubai when it included a few old houses and few huts were being established on the beach. Population was limited and people mostly depended on fishing, or other local sources of income. Oil was discovered but its mass production and export had not started. Then suddenly, there was a blast in the form of refining and export of oil and money started flowing from different corners of the world. This money brought a lot many skilled people from different corners of the world who wanted to cash their skills and acquire their share in this inflow of prosperity. The money obtained from the oil exports became a good source to invest in numerous other industries and then it emerged as one of the rapidly growing economies of the world. Today, we know Dubai as a city which has the busiest port, one of the biggest airports, the tallest building of the world, most developed network of roads and transportation, most successful hotels and recreational places and other features that have gained it the honor of one of the most prosperous states of the world.

But these are the changes which are external but these changes also changed the thoughts and dreams of the people. People, who were content with a few mud houses and their meager income, got so brave that they started rearing the wildest dreams. One of them went and bought an international and one of the most expensive football teams of the world. Another one dreamed of establishing one of the most successful airline companies of the world and he turned his dream into a reality. Another one thought of building the biggest artificial island of the world and soon it was there. Then a person thought of building the tallest building of the world and it got its reality in the form of 'Burj-Al-Khalifa'. There is a long list of such wildest imaginations and their successful implementation. In the heat of desert, you can ice-skate, without any major team on world level, there are well-facilitated grounds of cricket, football and many other games, and if you want to see Disney World, you can easily enjoy it in Dubai.

But what is more interesting is that, the people who used to ride camels, drank water from wells and did not know about any traffic or its laws, molded themselves as a disciplined, modern, forward-thinking, and technology-sensitive nation. This nation now realizes the importance of commerce, of quality education, of technology-driven advancement and other things which are common among the developed and educated communities of the world and which get their birth from a well-planned and well-organized effort of many years. It brings out a reality that environment changes the general thinking and conduct of people. When they live in an environment with limited possibilities, they think and dream limited. When they live with same old environment, they never come to experience what others are doing and how world is advancing in the field of science, technology, commerce and civic life.

This is not the story limited to Dubai. There are a number of states and cities that have prospered from this change of environment resulting in the change of thoughts and ideology. In Pakistan, the capital city Islamabad was newly established almost 40 years before. This city was established with best town planning and management and now this small capital is house for beautiful houses, well-organized market spaces, parks and foreign embassies, with all the civic facilities. Similarly, people who lived here are all civilized and well-educated and have dreams with high spirit and ideology. Anyhow, this is not the case with the adjacent city of Rawalpindi which is at a

distance of only half hour's drive. This old city includes of dark and dirty streets, ragged houses, small shops and of course, people with similar thoughts and approaches. Old and New Delhi also depict the same result.

Inside the country, there is a general perception that Afghans are lazy, corrupt, and dishonest and always adopt shortcuts to reach to the success. But some Afghans have shown surprising performance in the foreign and developed countries of the world. When the war started, millions of Afghans migrated to the different countries of the world. A lot many of them went to the developed countries of America, Canada and other European states. They not only got adjusted in these countries swiftly but they also emerged as a hardworking and honest community, reaching to success in their fields and showing a worth-praising performance. From their social vigilance, sense of responsibility and desire to extend hard work for success, they were the exact opposite of the general perceptions found in the country. Both of these perceptions are right on their places. They were lazy, corrupt and dishonest in their country but when they moved to a different society, they also became different and adopted all the good qualities of the new society. This example again depicts the same result, i.e. our personalities and all its traits are shaped according to the people and environment around us.

Kabul is one of the most congested cities of the world. After the establishment of a democratic government, there came an influx of jobs and thus it witnessed a crowded urbanization. The city was planned for a limited population and thus today we see that our roads are not in position to handle the traffic, and its inhabitants are suffering a lot from the shortages of water, electricity and other civic facilities. Millions of dollars have been pumped into the city to improve its general condition but if we start rebuilding and reconstruction from a side, the wear and tear of the city starts from the other and thus this exhausting and never-ending process of mending and repairing doesn't seem to come to its logical end. Similarly, people living in such an environment are also having same kind of thoughts and spirits. We time and again hear the complaints of general indiscipline, corruption, robbery, and other social evils which are associated with the backward areas of the city. Harlem, a district of New York once became notorious for its gangs and other groups involved in crimes and other illegal activities. It again depicts the same conclusion that environment plays a vital role in making up the minds and personalities of people living in it.

Keeping in view the above fact about Kabul, a very wise plan was improvised according to which a brand new Kabul city is going to be built by the name of Deh Sabz Kabul or Kabul Green City. This city has been very well-planned and some of the fertile minds of the world are working to turn this dream into a reality. The construction work has started and in near future, a new Kabul city will be on the map of Afghanistan where people will be having new and elevated spirits and thoughts. This city would bring a new era of development and prosperity. It is hoped that, having a look at its success, rest of the cities of the country would also think to adopt this strategy and would try their best to provide their citizens with an environment where they would think and act better. This amazing dream of future would be responsible for changing the fate of millions living in the area.

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Assad Emerging As Victor in Syria

By Manish Rai

It's hardly a secret that the Obama administration's plan to topple Syrian President Bashar-Al-Assad has long since been derailed by the rise of the Islamic State that now controls over one-third of Syrian territory and swathes of Iraq. But the evolution of Obama's rhetoric across successive State of the Union speeches illustrates just how baldly the U.S. has abandoned the prospect of regime change in Syria something it once demanded. As a result of it now Syrian President Bashar-Al-Assad now atleast in near future sees his position secured. But the forces of change coupled with strong Iranian and Russian backing and a splintered rebel movement have been a major advantages for Mr Assad.

US Secretary of State John Kerry recently said it is time for President Assad, the Assad regime, to put their people first and to think about the consequences of their actions, which are attracting more and more terrorists to Syria, basically because of their efforts to remove Assad. He made no call for Mr. Assad's resignation, a notable omission for Mr. Kerry, who has typically insisted on it in public remarks. Instead, he spoke of Mr. Assad as a leader who needed to change his policies. It clearly shows major policy shift of US with regard to Syria.

Not only America but other western countries are also looking in mood of tolerating Assad regime. The political solution will of course include some elements of the regime because we don't want to see the pillars of the state fall apart, France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said last week. But this drastic change in the policy of US and West regarding Syria doesn't happen all of a sudden it's a results of very clever strategy of Bashar- Al-Assad. President Assad casts himself as the nation's guardian against Sunni jihadists, but he has deliberately encouraged the rise of extremism. The Syrian president's forces have allowed ISIS to consolidate a rump caliphate in north-eastern Syria as a visible warning about what the alternative to his rule looks like. Indeed, Assad's troops rarely battle ISIS, saving their fire for more moderate enemies. Many analysts now believes Islamic State did not appear from nowhere but was part of a diversionary tactic by the Assad regime to undermine the credibility of its opponents. The regime released jihadists from Syrian jails, and they were able to make common cause with Iraqi militants who profited from America's departure from Iraq on a timetable set by US electoral considerations. The regime has now won that trick, with some unwitting help from the Americans. As a result of this strategy of Assad regime they have got a de facto coalition partner in the form of the United

States itself, which has not only launched strikes against Islamic State targets within Syria, but also targeted other groups battling the Assad regime like the Khorasan group. American planes now bomb the Islamic State group's militants in Syria, sharing skies with Syrian jets. American officials assure Mr. Assad, through Iraqi intermediaries, that Syria's military is not their target. The United States still trains and equips Syrian insurgents, but now mainly to fight the Islamic State, not the government. While the Americans and Mr. Assad ostensibly share a common enemy, the two parties are not formally collaborating. Yet American fighter planes regularly invade Syrian airspace to bomb Islamic State targets and Syrian armed forces don't show any reaction against US aircrafts. It's a clear sign of informal understanding between Syrians and Americans. If the main threat is the Islamic State and the goal is to defeat it, might the West at some point be forced to work formally with Mr. Assad. The greater threat in the eyes of west is not now Mr. Assad but the Islamic State, especially if it continues to expand in Syria, entices more foreign fighters into its ranks and uses its territory to launch attacks on the West. A recent study by the Rand Corporation which does research for the government, says the collapse of the Assad regime, while unlikely now, would be the "worst possible outcome" for American interests depriving Syria of its remaining state institutions and creating more space for the Islamic State and other extremists to spread mayhem. Americans see an emerging international consensus on the need for a long-term diplomatic solution between Mr. Assad and diverse rebel groups. There is also interest in United Nations-led cease-fires in local communities like Aleppo that might serve as a basis for a broader peace. Now the Russians are stepping in and trying to bring the two sides i.e. Syrian Government and Oppositions groups into talks with the apparent aim of a more gradual change in Syria. The prospect of these talks taking place are dim. But the diplomatic move confirms the clear shift in emphasis of US foreign policy away from removing the Assad regime to stopping the ISIS advance. Syrian reconciliation seems bleak but still Assad has enough reason to be confident that he will stay in power at least for some time to come. With his uncompromised grip on the power, Assad seems to have proven his ability even to the US and west by tightening the rope around Syria's belly. Although Syria still occupies world attention, it is isolated and stuck within Assad's political narrative dynamics.

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