

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



July 16, 2017

## Mosul – The Death Knell for ISIL?

Pushed out from many of its stronghold from Syria and from Mosul city of Iraq, the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is losing territorial bases in the in the very region that once incubated its growth. Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi formally declared victory over the ISIL group in Mosul and Iraqis celebrated the victory on Monday evening with their eyes sparkling with hope. Sustaining heavy casualties and suffering indescribable pain, Iraqi nation hope to heave a sigh of relief.

However, the fear for terrorist acts still fill the air in Iraq and the bloody wounds and debris left in the aftermath of war will remain a nightmare for Iraqis. Moreover, ISIL destroyed the highly symbolic site before Iraqi forces could reach it as they pushed the group from Mosul, where Iraq's government declared victory on Monday.

Wearing a black military uniform and flanked by commanders from the security forces, Iraqi Prime Minister thanked troops and the US-led coalition that backed the offensive. But he warned that more challenges lay ahead.

"This victory alone does not eliminate [ISIL] and there is still a tough fight ahead. But the loss of one of its twin capitals and a jewel of their so-called caliphate is a decisive blow," Lieutenant-General Stephen Townsend is cited as saying.

The cost of the nearly nine-month battle to retake the city has been enormous: much of Mosul in ruins, thousands dead and wounded and nearly a million people forced from their homes. The UN says 920,000 civilians have fled their homes since the military campaign began in October for recapturing Mosul city and close to 700,000 people are still displaced.

Emerging in a critical time, ISIL wedged itself into the deepening furrows between Sunni and Shia Muslims, the group also focused its energies on provoking discord within sects. Demonstrating a savvy for identifying long-present tensions, it infiltrated Sunni tribal communities and turned sub-tribes or generations against each other through the selective backing and funding of groups.

ISIL group deepened sectarian anger and distrust towards states in the region. As ISIL loses land, these sentiments will still pose trouble for governments attempting to rule in the aftermath.

ISIL group violated the rights and dignity of people, including women and children, through killing and violent acts on the grounds of their caste, color and creed. For instance, Yazidi women bore the brunt of the ISIL's cruelty and radical ideology. They were raped and killed in the worst possible way.

Today, ISIL's territories are shrinking as its fighters' face mounting pressure from a US-led coalition, as well as Syrian President Assad's regime backers. Many observers have sounded the coalition attack on Mosul as ISIL's death knell. However, ISIL will always present tremendous problems for state governments – even in its retreat.

However, the fact is that the ISIL group is not only losing ground but also its morale, especially with the news spread about the death of its Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights declared on Tuesday it has "confirmed information" that Baghdadi was killed. However, he has been reported dead several times. For instance, Russia's defense ministry said in June that it might have killed Baghdadi when one of its air strikes hit a gathering of ISIL commanders on the outskirts of the Syrian city of Raqqa, but Washington said it could not corroborate the death and Western and Iraqi officials have been skeptical.

The 46-year-old Iraqi-born leader of ISIL has not been seen in public since making his only known public appearance as "caliph" in 2014 at the Grand Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul. With a \$25m US bounty on his head, Baghdadi has kept a low profile and was rumored to move regularly throughout ISIL-held territory in the area straddling Iraq and Syria. His death, if confirmed, would be a new blow to the group which is also battling a US-backed coalition of Kurdish and Arab fighters for control of Raqqa.

I believe that there is a strong possibility for Baghdadi's death as he has been marginalized from political issues. This issue seems very similar to the death of the Taliban's leader Mullah Omar, which was revealed after more than two years. Official statements continued to be released in the name of Mullah Omar until July 2015 when Afghan intelligence announced he had died in a hospital in Pakistan on 23 April 2013. Now since the ISIL keeps silent in such a critical time as the group is losing its morale, he must have died.

It should be noted that despite losing ground, the ISIL group will continue its terrorist acts not only in Iraq and Syria, but in the entire region and the world will have to keep on its anti-ISIL offensives.



## Panama Papers Challenging Pakistani Prime Minister

By Hujjatullah Zia

The six-member Joint Investigation Team (JIT) that probed Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif family's business dealings in its 10-volume report submitted to the Supreme Court on July 10 recommended that a corruption case should be filed against Sharif and his sons Hassan Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz, as well as daughter Maryam Nawaz, under the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) ordinance 1999.

The leaks in April 2016 revealed that three of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's children owned offshore companies and assets not shown on his family's wealth statement.

The JIT investigated Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz at the Federal Judicial Academy (FJA) in Islamabad set up by the Pakistan's Supreme Court. The JIT said that Maryam Nawaz, her brothers Hussain and Hassan Nawaz as well as her husband Captain Mohammad Safdar, had signed false documents to mislead the Supreme Court. Maryam claimed to be "trustee not the owner" – which was denied by JIT saying that she was the real and ultimate beneficial owner of the Avenfield apartments. It said that the font used in documents submitted by Maryam Nawaz suggested that the 2006 declarations were fake and called it a federal crime.

Sharif's brother and Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif strongly objected to Maryam's summoning. "There is no moral justification of the JIT decision to summon the daughter of the prime minister," he is cited as saying.

The case was first highlighted in 1996 by a UK newspaper, which alleged that Sharif laundered money to buy the apartments in London's expensive Park Lane area. A case was registered against him but was shelved when he came back to power in 1997.

Moreover, in April last year, the prime minister found himself in a precarious position following the "revelations" made by the famed Panama Papers. Leaked documents showed that three of Sharif's children had links with offshore companies that owned properties in London. Sharif denies any wrongdoing.

The Pakistani Prime Minister called the leaks the work of people targeting him and his family for their political aims. In an address to the nation on 5 April 2016, he said those "who use ill-gotten wealth don't keep assets in their own names".

Sharif and his family have denied wrongdoing. In November, they told the Supreme Court that their London property was bought through investments in companies

owned by the Qatari ruling family.

The case harmed PML-N in two ways. First, it triggered a strong sense of mistrust among Pakistani nation and led to controversial issues. The graph of discontent heightened tremendously and the air of acrimony is likely to continue unabated especially with the Pakistani media pursuing the issue seriously.

Second, the opposition parties, which seek to participate in Pakistan's future election, are capitalizing on the issue and deem it a ripe time to win the public support. Therefore, all major opposition political parties have demanded Sharif step down and stay away from power until his name was cleared. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari called on Nawaz Sharif to step down, until an inquiry into the money laundering allegations levelled at his family are completed. "As long as the investigations into the Panama leaks are on-going, you should resign. You can resume when you are absolved of the charges," he said, reminding Sharif of advice he had imparted for the former Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani when the latter was facing multiple charges in court.

Moreover, With the Panama leaks hitting the headlines, the government came under pressure from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) which was founded in 1996 by former national cricket captain Imran Khan who demanded Sharif's resignation. In brief, many opposition leaders, including former President Asif Zardari, have suggested Sharif should resign as a fair investigation is not possible if he remained in power.

However, Sharif said in response to the demands that his PML-N party had bagged more votes than the opposition parties combined. "The people of Pakistan have elected me and only they can remove me from this post," he said. Similarly, the court stopped short of removing Sharif from public office. Instead, it ordered investigators drawn from civilian investigation agencies and military intelligence services to examine the money trail, look at records where available and obtain testimony from key players.

Besides marring Sharif's reputation, the case has brought serious trouble for him and his political position is at great stake since political figures turned against him. Indeed, now Sharif is seeking to do everything in his power to survive the issue until the 2018 election. But it seems that there is a faint chance for survival in this terrible ordeal.

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## Equality of Nations in Afghanistan

By: Abdul Hamid Arifi

The equality of tribes and ethnic groups is a highly significant issue and one of the fundamental principles in human rights discourse, which has been stressed in international instruments and national laws, mainly in Afghanistan. Religious tenets also constantly stressed on equality of mankind and lack of discrimination. The differences on the grounds of one's race, color, gender, language, etc. are stated to be the reason behind understanding and evolution of human societies that yet to be changed into reality in Afghanistan. On the contrary, tribes sought to deny the rights of one another, stoke racial, religious and tribal conflicts, treated one another harshly, and all intentions are based on refusing one another. It comes as we are supposed to hold the rights and dignity of one another in respect rather than denying them or resorting to violence. Claiming concession and monopoly have been the main reason behind the pain and sufferings of Afghan nation throughout the history and led to severe conflicts.

The claim for concession manifested itself either in the frame of religion or race and language and so on. According to the martyred leader Abdul Ali Mazari, we will have to consider national unity a principle in Afghanistan. In other words, national unity in Afghanistan should be a red line for all nations. Hence, those who strengthen the spirit of discrimination and concession intentionally or unintentionally across the country and take step for their self-interests, will push the society to chaos and tragedy.

This act will lead one to a quagmire rather than ethnic honor or pride and the history will record the one involved in this issue as national traitor. Therefore, we all need to cultivate the spirit of tolerance, strengthen common interests and mutual respect and share common sufferings which will be the only solution to this problem and will put an end to discrimination and prejudice.

Equality among tribes in Afghanistan means to have equal rights and responsibilities, equalities in the realm of economic, social, political and cultural issues.

Afghanistan's Constitution has recognized this valuable principle as it is stated in its preamble that the Constitution is approved to "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."

Similarly, it is said in article 22, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law."

Based on the stress put in Constitution, the principle of equality should remain neither an elusive dream in Afghan society nor a permanent ambition for citizens. We need not neglect insisting on the implementation of constitutional values or sacrifice the fundamental rights of citizens for our personal or factional interests. Claiming rights and justice is an invaluable issue if it is based on law but not means for gaining individual or factional interests.

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country with various race, creed and language and with black record of discrimination and claiming racial and ethnic superiority. According to history, claiming superiority and monopoly were one of the major reasons behind conflicts which disregarded the equal rights of citizens, and the national resources and opportunities were within the realm of a certain group. Currently, it is believed that the ground is paved for accepting equal rights of citizens and equal status for all tribes and ethnic groups are included in the Constitution. In addition to recognizing this principle, Afghanistan's Constitution defines the tribes in Afghanistan as, "The nation of Afghanistan shall be comprised of Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwui, and other tribes. The word Afghan shall apply to every citizen of Afghanistan...."

Hence, considering legal and religious bases regarding the equality of race, tribe and ethnicity, the issue of equality should be viewed from different perspectives such as equality in human dignity, equality in rights and responsibilities, equality in determining destiny, equality in creed and religion, equality in exploiting national investments, equality in getting education, equality in being provided opportunities in employment and appointment and so on.

The institutionalization and actualization of these valuable concepts need collective view rather than individual, ethnic or factional view. So, all ethnic groups are respectable and must not be treated with humiliation. The ground must be paved for all tribes to gain their rights without resorting to violence. Stressing on detrimental conflicts and selfishness will result in nothing other than tribal tensions and let the history repeat itself.

In brief, the significance of officials' attention to this issue is beyond doubt and the equality of tribes and ethnic groups is a vital issue in social, cultural, religious and political arenas in Afghanistan and hoped to be held seriously.

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