

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

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Aide-mémoire on World Environment Day

Among the international issues that have been influencing the human beings, the deterioration of environment through different types of contaminations is a major one. This issue, if left unattended, could lead to a major catastrophe with the potential to expedite the extinction of human race.

As a matter of fact, earth's environment has been experiencing certain degradation due to addition of excessive contaminants. These contaminants are basically the outcome of chemicals and products that are being invented and used with a great pace in the modern world. There is no doubt that the scientific inventions have blessed human beings with myriads of facilities; however, the improper use of these facilities and their mismanagement has brought them some evils, as well. These evils have the capacity to disturb our environment and introduce disorder within the ecosystem that is necessary for the life to exist on the planet earth.

The contaminants basically form pollution, which can influence environment in many different ways. Pollution does not affect the air alone, there are different types of pollution that include; light pollution, littering, noise pollution, soil contamination, thermal pollution, visual pollution, water pollution and some others.

Afghanistan is one of the countries that has been suffering from environmental degradation. With the growing population and overcrowding in the urban areas of the country, the problem of environmental pollution is getting more serious. The air surrounding us, from which everyone gets his/her share of oxygen is getting more polluted with each passing day. Besides, as there is no proper sewerage system and waste disposal system the situation is deteriorated further. Even the latrine system in the country is not up to the mark and really requires great attention in order to be environmentally safe. The issue of clean drinking water is another great concern, bothering the people to a large extent. Burning of low quality fuel in the large quantity by every sort of vehicle, and burning of wood and coal for household and other purposes add dangerous contamination in our environment continuously.

The problem of air pollution is very much rampant in the urban areas of the country; especially Kabul city has been suffering because of this menace to a worrying extent. The air in Kabul has been announced as highly dangerous for people both by national and international authorities. National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) considers Kabul's air vulnerable and fears that it can cause eyes, lungs and skin diseases, including cancer.

Kabul city is a valley, wherein in winter, because of thermal inversion, very small amount of pollutants, containing such dangerous gases as nitrous oxide and sulphur dioxide, is able to get dispersed in the outer atmosphere, therefore, the air pollution increases and cast dangerous effects.

Along with air pollution the land and water pollution in Afghanistan, especially in urban areas are getting serious as well. The drainage system in the urban areas is still not developed properly or it is left with serious deficiencies. The drains that carry the water containing waste material from household and other uses are not covered. Even in the capital Kabul, the drains are not covered. Rather they have become dustbins for the people. The people throw the wrappers, plastic bags, papers and other waste materials in the drains without any hesitation or humiliation. Most of the times the drains are blocked by the excessive dirt; and the dirty water flows out of the drains on the roads, generating disgusting smell and inviting different types of insects.

The same water then dries and the dirt along with the dust particles fly in the air because of the passing vehicles and the same air is inhaled by the passersby. Further, the ponds of dirty water are refuge for mosquitos and flies and other insects. These insects are really dangerous for spreading serious epidemics. And such issues are never dealt seriously even in the most developed of the cities.

The issue of environmental pollution should be dealt appropriately both by people and government of Afghanistan before it is too late.

Any program regarding environmental protection should be two-fold. First, the government must introduce laws and the mechanism to enforce them. Since, the introduction of nation's first environmental law in 2005, no remarkable development has been made in chalking out the mechanism to enforce them. Laws, unless implemented, are of no use. Severe penalties should be charged against those who choose for irresponsible behavior regarding the protection of environment publically. Traffic system along with the facilities to have proper check and balance system against the dangerous emissions by vehicles should be put in action. In addition a through awareness program must be carried out, which should penetrate among the residents of the country, so that they should be fully aware of the actions they carryout in deteriorating the environment. Workshops, Advertisements, Debates, Lectures and other techniques for furthering awareness campaigns must be carried out, especially in the urban areas of the country.

Secondly, every individual must feel his/her responsibility towards the environment and must make sure that he/she does not become a reckless being and must prove helpful for the environment. However, extensive awareness programs in this regard can be really helpful. The World Environment Day, June 05, can be used very positively in this regard and much can be taught to the people through different sorts of programs and techniques.

Environment is a collective and natural property of all the living beings and it must be protected collectively.



Worst State of Rule of Law Needs Reversal

By Asmatyari

The society we dwell in is solely based on aristocratic and autocratic temperament –meritocracy finds no space instead is pushed to state of absolute denial. If you belong to an inferior gender, class, ethnicity and sectarian group, you are left underprivileged and denied access to fundamental rights to life, equality, liberty and happiness. You are frequently subjected to grave discriminations; given you are ethnic minorities, presumed inferior sex, religious minority or a teenaged youth. The fallacious and duplicitous trend pursued reads human dignity and values on the basis of flawed social and economic status, meant to earn personal gains at the cost of execution of talents and human capabilities. These social injustices constitute principle reason behind many political and social problems we face.

Similar qualms are unearthed by World Justice Project (WJP) which advances the rule of law around the world –placed Afghanistan the second-worst country in rule of law following Venezuela that has topped the list of 102 countries ranked in the report. The WJP is U.S.-based non-profit association – earlier released the report which was prepared based on responses from 1,000 people in each country and a total of 2,400 experts on how ordinary people see rule of law in their country. Also in the regional-level ranking, Afghanistan is placed in the last position, report reads. How would the rule of law be ensured when the law in a state finds the least application?

The survey conducted by WJP based on 44 indicators divided in eight categories which are: constraints on government power; absence of corruption; open government; fundamental rights; order and security; regulatory enforcement; civil justice; criminal justice and informal justice. Going through these indicators we do make an identical assessment about the government falling short to mainstream its affairs. The worsened condition of law and order and frequent activities of ISIS and Taliban reflects as if insurgents are running a parallel government. On the other hand the former arbitrary release of large number of Taliban inmates seems to be strengthening their might and they are signaling their presence by carrying out attacks. What is clear is that the insurgents are expanding the range of their operations. The insurgents are operating at will and quite rapidly expanding operations to parts of the country where it previously appeared to have little ability to act. It also seems that the militants are familiar with important installations, and their attacks are meticulously staged.

Converse to statute of declaration of human rights, Afghanistan shows a dismal picture of law and order accompanied with rampant human right violation. Insecurity, crimes against humanity, increasing violence against women and children, lack of access to education, torture and killing of the innocent people are just some of the human rights violations happening in our country. The earlier torturing and burning to death of a guiltless lady on flawed accusation of torching the pages of holy book, depicts the gravity of social injustices, prevalent in Afghan society.

The role of the Afghan state justice institutions in maintaining rule of law and social orders is relatively weak. This particularly applies to rural Afghanistan, where almost 80% of the Afghan population lives in. Traditional justice system is active by default in many parts of the country, being more powerful in southern, eastern and central parts of the country where state justice institutions have nominal existence. Due to the weakness of the formal justice system in Afghanistan, however, in many communities traditional justice systems operate by

default as the only justice system. Community leaders are sometimes uncertain about how certain practices have come to be accepted in their communities elders will say that the values are religious values, and religious leaders identify the same values as cultural, coming from the elders. This can occur particularly with harmful cultural practices, such as forced marriage, or payment of a girl as compensation or restitution. Responding to certain aired reservations, earlier the President had called on several lawyers for inspection over having forged degrees or being irrelevant in the field. Unlikely the president could not get them in line with the need of the country.

Hence, the delayed, denied or plagued legal justice system has left people with a single option of consulting traditional justice system. Many people view the formal justice system as foreign, corrupt, ineffective, expensive or geographically difficult to access. The system is composed of customary/tribal institutions of decision-making and dispute resolutions that incorporate the prevalent local customary law, institutionalized ritual and remediation. The members of these entities are village elders, influential leaders and religious leaders. The decisions are mostly exercised on flawed ground of certain biases.

In the absence of an effective national judicial system, the right to judicial protection has been compromised as uneven local standards have prevailed in criminal trials. Fair trial principles are enshrined in the Afghan constitution and the criminal procedure but frequently violated for various reasons, including the lack of well-educated, professional staff (especially defense lawyers), lack of material resources, corruption and unlawful interference by warlords and politicians. In order to stop this cycle of violence, states must institute policies aimed at human rights protection.

The rampant mishandling of resources, misuse of public office, and position of trust, veiled methods for sanctioning or rewarding those who hold positions of public trust through a system of checks and balances among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and short of efficient systems of internal control of government including civil service standards and incentives, ethical codes, and administrative reviews are evident to partial system of accountability and poor governance.

It is likely the WJP report ranked Afghanistan at 102, the worst country. The judicial sector of Afghanistan is shown as the second-worst sector, ranked 101 followed by criminal justice which is ranked 100 in the list. "The rule of law is not the rule of lawyers and judges; all elements of society are stakeholders," the report said. "It is our hope that, over time, this diagnostic tool will help identify strengths and weaknesses in each country under review and encourage policy choices that strength the rule of law." The rule of law certainly is the exercise of fair trial to every individual irrespective of his social background, gender or racial group.

We have to mind it that apprehending militants followed by subjecting them to a fair trial is a crucial for maintenance of law and order. Long lasting peace can only be installed in Afghanistan provided the anti-state elements are brought to book through fair trial, holding the right culprit accountable for his deeds. In doing so the government should too consider the wages and authority of public officials serving this department, so that they should not be misled by any attractive offers. One of the central of element of good governance is proper regulation of law and order. Regulation makes it possible for men to live together peaceably in a community given the law rule than nuisance.

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The Vulnerability of Social Freedom

By Hujjatullah Zia

Freedom, men's basic right, is violated flagrantly. Women's heads are banged on the wall and their dignities are disrespected, men are abducted and their bodies are riddled with bullet and children fell victim to suicide bombings on the way to school. One pursues his interests at the cost of others' life and dignity. Isn't it rightly said that "man is man's wolf"?

I do agree with Hobbes who believed that wickedness runs in man's blood. The macabre story of the sufferers will fill you with strong disgust. Our freedoms are curtailed to a large extent on the grounds of sex, color, race and belief. For instance, you will be in cultural chains for being female, your life will be in great jeopardy for belonging to a minority ethnic group and your blood will be of no value for nurturing particular beliefs such as disagreeing with the radical's fundamental ideology.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, a French politician and philosopher, has rightly said that "man is born free, everywhere he is in chains". Since we, the human beings, are born free, we have to break the chains of slavery and do not yield to oppression or oppressors. I do appreciate the militia fighters who have been enlisted to battle the Taliban militants near the northern city of Kunduz. As the Taliban militants extended their realm of cruelty and conflagration, the local residents deemed it a moral obligation to fight against the Taliban's guerilla. Playing the role of a neutral onlooker in such critical situation will put one's humanity under question. At least we have to raise our voice and eyebrows about violation of freedom based on discriminations and cruelties.

If we further politicize freedom and view the Talibanic ideology in this regard, the Taliban were utterly against this discourse. Their closed frames of mind were once put into practice in Afghanistan which led to innumerable challenges. Schooling and social activities were ban for females and males were supposed to dress up and wear beard as the Taliban militants. Transcending their stereotypes was tantamount to perishing your own life.

Since the maxim of "live and let live" is totally meaningless in the Taliban's mindset, let's put it away and talk about the practical realities being practiced across the country. The hackneyed phrases on newspapers' headlines about violation of the individuals' freedoms reflect the bitter facts going on in our community.

It is an incontrovertible fact that man is born with a set of inherent rights, especially "the rights to life, liberty and estate". These natural rights are inalienable and can be curtailed only on the basis of law. However, since man is deemed man's wolf, he lacerates his fellows fiercely and sucks their blood to the last drops. People

are hurt mentally, physically and emotionally while walking on streets, commuting to workplaces or traveling to cities.

A member of parliament, Ramazan Bashardoost, quoted a man that two of his vehicles were robbed and her daughter was raped by unknown men two months ago; however no considerable action is yet taken by the responsible sources. Such stories are rampant in the society. The children are abducted and their families have to pay the ransom without the officials' involvement. As a result, a 10-year-old child was abducted about four months ago by unknown gunmen in Helmand province. His father paid Afghani 3 million for his release.

Some experts believe that the Mafia is widely involved in the cloak-and-dagger operations – especially in the abductions and mysterious deaths. There are two main reasons behind their criminal acts. The first reason is that members of the Mafia along with the Taliban militants, who gain great advantages from narcotic cultivation, intend to divert the government's attention and energy from poppy eradication campaigns. Afghanistan produces some 90 per cent of the world's illicit opiates. Helmand province, in the south, remains the country's major opium cultivating area, followed by Kandahar, Farah and Nangarhar. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan reached record levels with the former increasing seven per cent to 224,000 hectares in 2014, and production levels potentially climbing as much as 17 per cent.

At the Vienna launch of the report, UNODC Executive-Director, Yury Fedotov, warned that Afghanistan's narcotics problem remains a major global challenge and shared responsibility.

"The illicit opium economy and related criminality and corruption continue to undermine security, the rule of law, health and development in the region and beyond," he added.

The second reason is that they seek to gain financial supports in any possible ways including abduction, land grabbing, threats, etc. Therefore, they are widely involved in public disorders and threatening people's life and freedoms. To put it succinctly, their negative role in trampling upon people's rights – especially their rights to freedom – is highly salient. So, they are the real wolves who cherish wild characters and have to be the first to be defeated.

Ill-fatedly, the role of Mafia is undervalued in Afghanistan and there is no particular strategy for their eradication. I believe that their role is not less than terrorists. Since terrorism and drug trafficking are deemed global threats, the international community is the first to counter these challenges. In short, the violation of men's freedom in the society outrages the public's conscience and this trend must be stopped in any possible way.

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