

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

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Taliban not Genuine Negotiators

Despite the issue of talks, as the Taliban and the US Special Envoy for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad are preparing for the seventh round, the Taliban insurgents have intensified their attacks and suicide bombings turning down to declare truce.

In the second round of talks, held between the Taliban and Afghan political figures in Moscow, the Taliban negotiators insisted on the full withdrawal of US troops. However, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford said in his recent statement that Washington's campaign against terror groups in Afghanistan would continue unabated notwithstanding the Taliban's persistence for a complete troop pull-out from the country. "No one has suggested the US is going to leave Afghanistan until our counterterrorism interests are addressed. ... That is nonnegotiable," he is cited as saying. The Taliban and US negotiators have reportedly agreed to a draft timeline for two issues: the full withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan and dismissal of the Taliban's tie with terrorist groups, including the ISIS and al-Qaeda. Nonetheless, Khalilzad made it clear that nothing was agreed unless all issues were agreed.

Ushering in his trip to meet regional officials in Qatar, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Germany, Belgium, and the United Arab Emirates, to step up peace talks, Khalilzad tweeted that peace process was making strides. "We've made substantial progress over the last month. On this trip, I want to take that momentum and accelerate the #AfghanPeaceProcess," he wrote. Being optimistic, he called for parties to show "flexibility". There are some challenges before the peace process. First, the Afghan government and regional stakeholders have been marginalized in the talks between the Taliban and US representatives. If this one-to-one talks reach deadlock, there is no third party around the table to push for breaking. It is believed that engaging regional actors and the Kabul government would make the talks inclusive and productive.

Second, the Taliban are simply pushing for their demands without considering those of their interlocutors. Having said this, although the Taliban negotiators had been delisted from the UN blacklist, US troop pullout had been agreed, and some of their prisoners released, the Taliban had accepted not a single demand of their interlocutors and have intensified their attacks in recent months. The Taliban leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada has said, before the seventh round of talks, that foreign forces in Afghanistan are "condemned to defeat", but signaled positively for continuing talks with the US. He added that the Taliban would continue their fighting without pause on Eid Day, a Muslim festival at the end of holy month of Ramadan.

Third, instead of siding with Washington in the talks, Russia continues a parallel negotiation to Doha talks through inviting the Taliban and US political and Jihadi leaders every once in a while. This would contribute to the Taliban's international recognition and boost their morale for fighting. It implies that Moscow is showing Washington that it has leverage on the Taliban or close tie with their leadership simply to urge the US indirectly to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban played a foul game with the Afghan government under the issue of peace talks in the past and killed the former head of Afghan High Peace Council Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, I have been viewing the Taliban's intention with doubt and mistrust. So far, the Taliban group has not proved its bona fide intention for peace as it has intensified its attacks.

Dunford's words for calling the withdrawal "nonnegotiable" have to be the response of Trump administration to the Taliban's escalated militancy. If peace talks do not bear the desired result with the Taliban's stubbornness and reach deadlock, there are two ways ahead. First, regional stakeholders need to engage actively in brokering the stalemate and push the Taliban to stop violence and bloodshed. Second, the US and its international allies have to continue their attacks stronger than ever. The defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria and the defeat of a highly strong Tamil Elam terrorist network in Sri Lanka suggest that a strong military deal will dismantle terrorist networks. Indeed, it is believed that if the NATO forces reinforce their attacks on the Taliban, boycott with their supporters, and dismantle their financing resources, the Taliban will be doomed to failure. To defeat the Taliban, Afghanistan's borders have to be tightened, intelligence reinforced, suspects even within the government's body investigated, and air and ground attacks intensified. Each soldiers should be allowed to shoot the militants on the head. So, the Taliban have to either come to table with genuine intention or have to face the consequence or military deal.



Ramadan: Month of Peace and Blessing or Month of Violence and Atrocity?

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

According to Islamic teachings, the holy month of Ramadan is the month of blessings, forgiveness, kindness, brotherhood and love of humanity. Getting closer to Eid-ul-Fiter it becomes more preponderant to Muslim people to show more generosity and sympathy to their poor brothers, sisters and community. Eid Ul Fiter which is the symbol of success against personal egoism and internal evil it becomes obligatory on every individual to pay Zakat-ul-Fiter (religious tax) to poor people, especially orphans, disabled, widowed and underprivileged class of society. On contrary to all these teachings and values, the terrorists groups show more brutality and atrocity within the month of holy Ramadan.

Taliban and the so-called IS militants sparing no efforts to shed the bloods of our innocent people during the holy month, especially in the last week of holy month of Ramadan. The latest explosion in the month of Ramadan took place today (Monday) in Kabul's Darul Aman road at about 1:30 pm local time; it targeted a bus, carrying employees of the Independent administrative reform and civil service commission. According to Tolow news quoted from Wahidullah Mayar, spokesman for Ministry of Public Health, the death toll from Kabul explosion rises to five. He said 10 others were wounded in the explosion that targeted employees of Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission.

According to security officials, there have been three explosions in the capital, Kabul, including a sticky bomb attached to bus carrying university students that martyred at least one person here yesterday morning. Ferdus Faramarz, spokesman for the Kabul police chief, has confirmed that two other blasts also hit PD5 in the capital city, injuring dozens of our innocent civilians. Meanwhile, according to spokesman for the public health ministry, at least four women were among the wounded from the bus attack and have been taken to hospitals for further treatments. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks in Kabul, but both Taliban and Islamic State militants were behind such incidents and have staged attacks in city that resulted to martyring and injuring our civilians.

In general, there has been regular news of violence during holy month of Ramadan across the country. As aforementioned, according to Islamic teaching this is a month of love and peace, but the militants made it a month of violence and bloodshed for innocent Afghan civilians as they are responsible for over 90 percent of casualties. Unfortunately, some of ordinary Afghans who are faithful Muslims have kept silent on such atrocity at the hands of Taliban. If there was an incident with such grave violation of our religious values outside the country, they would have started countrywide protests and demonstrations. But they keep mum in most of the incidents. They are required to raise their voices via mosques and media condemning such

attacks by the terrorist outfits.

Besides the violence, there is other abnormality showing extreme hypocrisy in our society. Some traders make an artificial dumping of goods to make the prices double which is against the philosophy of this month. But Taliban have brought sorrow and grief to many families this Ramadan and hundreds of people will not celebrate the Eid, since they have lost their beloved ones across the country. The Continued terror attacks by Taliban and other terror groups in the most sacred month in Islam, have once again established the fact that Islam and human life have no value to these barbarians. Thus, they are more committed to regional intelligence network rather than Islam. The Afghan people, government and its international partners need much to do to eradicate terrorism.

In fact, it is very surprising when a group who are the claimant of commitment to Islamic values, target school children, women, mosque and other peaceful civilians which is completely in paradox; Yesterday they kidnapped four Afghan peace marchers in southern province of Helmand. They were abducted after entering Taliban-controlled Musa Qala district, travelling 15 kilometres inside the district. The insurgents abducted the four marchers after having fast-breaking meal with the convoy. Those abducted were leader of the march, Iqbal Kyber, its spokesman Bismillah Watandost and provincial leaders Sarwar Ghafari and Haji Farhad Adil.

Alternatively, the terrorist group have also paid heavy price in persisting devastating violence across the country. Within only a month at least 100 anti-government militias were killed during military operations just in northern Balkh province. As media quoted from Gen. Ajmal Fayez police chief of Balkh, the insurgents have been targeted in various parts of Chamtal, Sholgara, Balkh Chahar Bolak and Balkh districts of the province. 30 vehicles belonged to the terrorists have been destroyed and 130 suspicious accused of different criminal cases were arrested during this time, Fayez added. Also, 40 heavy and light weapons and 40000 letters alcoholic beverage have been discovered and seized and several narcotic drug factories have been demolished during the military operations and clashes, Fayez further added.

Thus, more than 100 Taliban militants were killed in an aerial raid of NATO drone in Ghazni province last night reflected in multiple media sources. As quoted from Aref Noori spokesman for Ghazni governor more than 100 Taliban militants were killed in a NATO drone raid in Ghazni province and numerous of weapons were seized by security forces. It is mentionable that four top commanders of Taliban named Haji Asad, Atiqullah, Mullah Khalil and Mullah Sharif were also among the dead.

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China's New World Media Order

By: Wu'er Kaixi and Christophe Deloire

Since the Tiananmen Square massacre 30 years ago, China has achieved extraordinary economic development. Yet, contrary to the expectations of many Western leaders and analysts, the country has not gradually embraced press freedom or respect for civil rights. On the contrary: as a recent Reporters Without Borders (RSF) report shows, China today is actively working to build a repressive "new world media order" - an initiative that poses a clear and present danger to the world's democracies.

Press freedom, one of the main demands of the Tiananmen demonstrators, is officially guaranteed by Article 35 of the Chinese constitution. Yet the Communist Party of China (CPC) and its state apparatus still routinely flout this provision.

In fact, China is one of the world's leading jailers of journalists, and ranks 177th of 180 countries in RSF's 2019 World Press Freedom Index. The "Great Firewall of China," an ultra-sophisticated Internet-filtering system, limits the access of most of China's 830 million Internet users, and the CPC has no qualms about pressuring publishers and social-media platforms to censor themselves. China now openly rejects the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with rhetoric about "social harmony" and the "relativity of values."

Self-confidence has replaced the self-consciousness that some Chinese leaders felt in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre. Today, the regime is proudly promoting its authoritarian model around the world. The new world media order that it is attempting to build is less well-known than the Belt and Road Initiative, but just as ambitious.

With its media-repression campaign, China is capitalizing on divisions within the world's democracies. It is finding the cracks in societies' commitment to democratic values, such as tolerance and openness, and attempting to rend them open with propaganda promoting its own political tenets. Its leaders know that, when journalists are silenced, the alternatives to authoritarianism are gradually extinguished. After all, it is impossible to foster constructive political debate when questioning the official view is a punishable offense.

Already, the CPC has begun exporting its repressive methods by means of major international conferences, such as the World Media Summit and the World Internet Conference. In

Southeast Asia, legislative reforms aimed at restricting press freedom are patterned on Chinese laws, and many journalists are being invited to learn "journalism with Chinese characteristics."

Even in places where press freedom remains legally protected, China is interfering with its citizens' ability to make informed choices about public policy. From Sweden to Australia, Chinese embassies are pressuring Western media outlets to censor their own reporting. Meanwhile, the authorities are buying sponsored content in leading Western publications, and continuing to invest in their global propaganda apparatus.

The world's democracies must move beyond their myopic competition for China's favor and come together to resist its alternative authoritarian vision. This means mounting an ambitious, persistent, and coordinated response that defends the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We must not hesitate to fight back against those who attack press freedom. We must raise our voices to condemn the abuses that strike at our values. And we must do it now.

On July 10 and 11, leading defenders of press freedom from around the world will meet at the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London. They must take this opportunity not just to reaffirm core principles, but also to rally together to build barriers to China's media influence, and to end impunity for press-freedom violations.

Such concerted resistance would honor those who have paid the ultimate price for defending freedom of information in China, such as Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo, whom the Chinese government left to die in detention. It would also honor the more than 100 journalists detained today in life-threatening conditions, including RSF award-winner Huang Qi and the photographer Lu Guang, who received numerous prizes for his work on social and environmental issues in China.

Thirty years ago this month, thousands of peaceful demonstrators were massacred in Beijing and across China for courageously standing up to an authoritarian regime. The world's democracies owe it to these individuals to show similar courage today, as they defend press freedom - and democracy itself - worldwide.

Wu'er Kaixi, a member of the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Emeritus Board, was a leader of the Tiananmen Square protest in 1989. Christophe Deloire is Secretary-General of RSF.

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