

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



June 12, 2016

## International Day against Child Labor

June 12 is observed as the International Day against Child Labor in different countries around the world. The day was basically launched by International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2002 in order to focus considerations on the important issue of child labor all over the world and highlight actions and determinations to eradicate this threat. On 12th June every year, NGOs, civil society organizations and media raise voices to highlight the troubles of the child labors and inspire governments and international organizations to carry out measures to control them.

As per the information from ILO there are around 215 million children around the world who are child laborers. Most of them work full time and do not get the opportunity to get education or be involved in any sports and have entertainment opportunities. The environment they work in is mostly inappropriate and, therefore, they are susceptible to maltreatment, delinquencies, violence, drug addiction and trafficking, and sexual exploitation. There are many among them who do not get even proper nutrition and medication. In brief, they do not avail any sort of opportunity to live like children and have suitable sustenance that can assist them in becoming energetic and optimistic members of the society.

This year the International Day against Child Labor is celebrated under the theme: End child labor in supply chains - It's everyone's business. ILO believes that with 168 million children still in child labor, all supply chains, from agriculture to manufacturing, services to construction, run the risk that child labor may be present. To support businesses in their actions to remove child labor from their supply chains, the ILO and the International Organization of Employers (IOE) have jointly created the Child Labor Guidance Tool, a resource for companies to increase their knowledge and ability to conduct business in line with international labor standards on child labor.

One of the basic reasons of the child labor is, undoubtedly, the growing poverty. The countries that suffer from poverty and instability have the highest ratio of child labor. Afghanistan is also among the same countries. According to a rough calculation around 6 million children in Afghanistan into child labor.

Child labors are exposed to crimes and maltreatment to a risky extent, especially the ones who are employed by shop-owners, mechanics and small firms. They are even put to violent treatment by their employers on pity matters. Further, another concerning factor regarding the plight of the children in Afghanistan is the growing number of child beggars.

Families, stricken with intense poverty, do not hesitate even to send their children for begging. Apart from that, there are professional beggars who utilize the helpless children for the begging purposes. The children are even abducted for the same purpose. The phenomenon of violence against children is multifaceted. It involves recruitment of children by armed forces and armed groups.

The involvement of armed forces in this regard is really embarrassing. The recruitment that is carried out by militant groups is mostly for the purpose of carrying out suicide attacks through them, who because of their immaturity or because of the intense pressure do not understand the incentive of their actions.

There have been many incidents of suicide attacks in different parts of the country, wherein the attacker were below 16 years of age. Apart from that the children are also welcomed by the militant groups with the intention to have a cadre that they can train in accordance to their own will, within their training camps.

It is important that the menace of child labor should be tackled before it is too late. However, the situation does not seem to be getting well as the poverty seems to be strengthening its root in the country and the government is not doing enough to curb the situation. According to a statement by the president of All Afghanistan Federation of Trade Unions (AAFTU), "Child labors are increasing and there are many reasons. First, the government has not done anything for them, which they must do; second, no investment took place in the country, which must be done; and the third one is the government does not pay attention to the wages of workers. All of these reason have caused the increase in child labor."

The proper nourishment of the children, their character development and their education are the most important considerations to contemplate on, if the government is really serious to safeguard the rights of the children. The same children are going to be the builders of future; their proper care should be ascertained through every possible means. Apart from the government the members of the society can also play a tremendous role in diminishing discrimination against the children, saving them from child labor, uplifting their morale and supporting them in becoming responsible members of the society.



## Re-emergence of Banned Parties in Pakistan

By Hujjatullah Zia

A number of radical parties have resurfaced in Pakistan under new aliases after being banned by the government. Practicing upon fundamental ideologies and strict interpretation of religious texts, the parties seem to pose threat to Pakistan and neighboring countries through terrorist activities.

The parties are widely engaged in stoking sectarian violence within Pakistan and undermine the internal security on a large scale via orchestrating attacks against ethnic minorities. The radical parties challenge Pakistan government every once in a while as creating tension among the ethnic groups in different major cities. I remember vividly when the minority group fell victim to terrorist acts throughout Pakistan, while conducting their religious rituals.

It is said that many outlawed parties have re-emerged to continue their acts of terror. One of the organizations has reappeared is the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), which was first banned on January 22, 2002. It resurfaced as Millat-e-Islami before the government banned that iteration in November 2003. But it could not suppress the group who managed to reinvent itself as the Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ). Although the ASWJ was banned on February 15, 2012, it has continued to flout that ban by staging sporadic activities in Pakistan without much fear of retribution from the state.

Similarly, the Hafiz Saeed-led Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was banned in 2002. The group and Saeed were able to reinvent themselves under the banner of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and expand their operations into a vast charity network as well. Despite being sanctioned by the United Nations, Pakistani government has only kept the group on 'observation' while the group's chief Saeed continues to headline events in Pakistan delivering public speeches.

Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), accused of carrying out deadly attacks in India, was first banned on January 22, 2002. It did not take long for the group to resurface under the new name of Khuddam-ul-Islam. Pakistani government banned that group on November 15, 2003. However, the group has continued to operate in the shadows. Tehreek-e-Jaafria Pakistan (TJP) is another banned organization which was first proscribed on January 22, 2002. It soon re-emerged with a new title, Islami Tehreek Pakistan. It was again banned on November 15, 2003.

It is believed that the re-emergence of the radical organizations will compound the security challenges in Pakistan to a great extent and put the rights and freedom of the public at stake. Pakistani citizens will lose their lives under racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, the political instability will pave the grounds for easy infiltration of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Pakistan as some will be inclined to their radical ideology and pledge allegiance to Al-Baghdadi's Caliphate.

So, it should be noted that it is not only the Taliban who stage terrorist activities but many other networks, as mentioned above, who are no less perilous than the Taliban militants. Furthermore, many madrasahs are the hotbed of terror and radicalism and mem-

bers of warring parties are trained in the same places. Although some were discovered by Pakistani government, many others are believed to survive and produce terrorists - this fact is reported by Pakistani media every once in a while.

Afghanistan is not immune to the aforementioned parties either since the Taliban have constantly crossed the Afghan-Pak porous borders. The vulnerability of Afghanistan to militant factions is beyond doubt and this country bears the brunt of violence and terror in Asia. The head of radical organizations issue fatwa under religious terms not only against US-led international forces but also against Afghan national army. They are inculcated to carry out jihad in Afghanistan.

Following the attack outside a building of the National Directorate for Security in Kabul that killed more than 70 people and injured more than 350 others, the director of the US State Department's Press Office, Elizabeth Trudeau, said, "We have consistently expressed our concerns at the highest level of the government of Pakistan about their continued tolerance for Afghan Taliban groups such as the Haqqani network operating from Pakistani soil." She added that Pakistan had reiterated that it would not discriminate between terrorist groups "and we continue to call on them to live up to that commitment". It is worth saying that the existence of militants in a country is tantamount to a double-edged sword which will harm the host and neighboring countries.

The heavy offensives in Afghanistan had led to frequent tension between Kabul and Islamabad and prompted Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani to talk with serious tone. Although Pakistan launched the Zarb-e-Azb operation against the Taliban militants, it could mitigate militancy neither in Pakistan nor in Afghanistan. Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Gen. Raheel Sharif on Friday met with Commander Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan General John Nicholson and US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Olson and said that all efforts for durable peace in the region have to be synergised with shared commitment and responsibility in order to make them successful. He said all stakeholders need to understand Pakistan's challenges with regard to porous border, inter-tribal linkages and decades-old presence of over 3 million refugees.

He further added that "Blaming Pakistan for instability in Afghanistan is unfortunate," he said.

He said Pakistan is committed to work for a long term peace process for Afghanistan under the four nation Quadrilateral Coordination Group framework, involving Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the US.

In a nutshell, the militants should not find the opportunity of laying eggs instead of combating them later. Similarly, Pakistan will have to prosecute members of warring factions and apply strict law in this regard.

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## The Changing US Engagement in War in Afghanistan

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

US President Barack Obama has approved playing greater role by US forces in Afghanistan to support the Afghan forces battling the Taliban. Based on the policy change, US troops in Afghanistan would have broader cooperation with Afghan security forces in the fight against the Taliban including providing air support to Afghan units in the battle field. The decision is aimed at helping the anti-insurgency campaign in Afghanistan and preventing the Taliban from posing major threats and taking grounds in their offensive against the government forces. The decision is coming more than a year after NATO forces concluded its combat missions and maintained limited forces to assist in training Afghan security forces. The approval for playing a more robust role by US forces in the ongoing war in Afghanistan is coming as a crucially important development for the efforts to contain the Taliban insurgency and foil the group's attempts to take more grounds across the country. The redefinition of rules of engagement for the American troops is expected to boost the ongoing anti-insurgency campaign by providing air support to the Afghan forces. Since the conclusion of the combat mission of NATO in 2014, the role of the remaining US forces was confined to providing support in forms of advising and training to Afghan security forces. They were only allowed to directly engage in fighting with the Taliban only in cases of self-defense and in particular circumstances with direct permission from the military leadership. This had complicated the support role of US forces in cases when Afghan forces needed help from the coalition. The limited role even resulted to confusions among US forces over the limits of their role. American soldiers in Afghanistan complained of confusions about how far troops were allowed to go to help Afghan forces in the fight against the Taliban while senior commanders failed to provide clear guidelines on limits of engagement. The restrictions on the engagement of the US forces with the militants have had broad impacts on the ability of the Afghan forces fighting the Taliban and repelling the group's offensive last year. During the war in 2015, the limitations led to poor support by US forces to Afghan security forces struggling to contain the Taliban's spring offensive. The Taliban managed to heighten their offensive and pose higher security risks across the country. The militants came to resurgence and expanded their influence across Afghanistan. The Taliban had their best prize since 2001 when the group momentarily captured the strategic Kunduz city in the north. It was the first time since 2001 for the group to seize a major urban area like Kunduz, and it took months for the Afghan forces to secure the city and its surroundings. It was in the Kunduz battle that the US forces found it inevitable to engage more directly to prevent Taliban militants from taking major grounds. With the peace efforts virtually ended by the recent developments in the leadership of the Taliban, the Afghan government and the United States have no viable option but to draw and long-term

plan for fighting the Taliban and other militant groups. The current challenges facing Afghanistan and the broad political and economic uncertainty make it imperative for the US and the Afghan government to rewrite the anti-insurgency campaign plans for the upcoming decade. Afghanistan continues to face enormous challenges like political instability, weak economy and pervasive corruption that make it harder for the Afghan government to win the war against the Taliban. These challenges further compound the security risks and undermine the government's efforts to win the war against the Taliban. To ensure sustainability of the campaign against the Taliban, Afghanistan needs to lead successful political and economic developments, and on the other hand, further extend military cooperation with the US-led international forces. The ongoing war in Afghanistan may remain unresolved for an unforeseen period of time. It could take years and even decades to weaken the Taliban by military means and then persuade the ground into peace negotiations. Since it reemerged as an insurgency around 2006, the Taliban have kept fighting a war of attrition against the Afghan government while the government have failed to develop the anti-insurgency campaign into a sustainable and long-term battle with the aim to gradually weaken the militants. Former president Hamid Karzai and the national unity government tried to appease the Taliban by being lenient to them and promising concessions for them if they come to the table peace negotiations. However, none of the policies of appeasement worked and the Taliban persistently escalated the war. However, the recent toughening of stance by the national unity government towards the Taliban should have sent a clear message to the Taliban: that they will be suppressed militarily if they refuse to join peace talks. The government of Afghanistan needs to make it clear that the ongoing war is a long-term one and that the militants would be persuaded into peace talks through defeating them on the battleground. The national unity government has been praised for its U-turn on some policies of the former government of Afghanistan. It has improved relations with international supporters and has persuaded the international community to increase support to the Afghan security and defense forces. It has outlined clearer policies on engaging in peace talks with the militant groups and suppressing them in case they refuse to join peace talks. But more importantly, the national unity government managed to broaden security cooperation with the US and secure the country's long-term security partnership. The latest decision to broaden engagement of US troops in the military efforts against the Taliban is coming as another step forward in insuring a robust US support to the ongoing anti-insurgency campaign in Afghanistan. With the US President set to reveal his plan on further reduction of troops in Afghanistan, the Afghan government needs to urge Washington to postpone the reduction plan and keep its forces in Afghanistan at its current level.

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