

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



June 17, 2015

Peace Negotiations with Taliban

Expectations are getting stronger that peace talks with Taliban would bear fruit. Recently, there have been some developments in this regard and Taliban have been participating in some meetings, showing their willingness to talk, or at least this has been portrayed.

Taliban delegation participated in a meeting that was organized in Pughwash, Qatar and, afterwards, had a meeting with High Peace Council (HPC) in China. They also had an important meeting with Afghan women delegation in Norway, which was vital in a sense that they, at least, agreed to talk to women delegation. Taliban during their reign did not allow women to participate in political affairs and did not appreciate law to safeguard their rights as per the international requirements. One of the most important discussions, if the peace process proceeds, would be the rights of women as there is a huge distinction between what the present Afghan constitutions states about their rights and what Taliban believe they should be.

A Taliban delegation also met Afghan officials in Dubai a couple of weeks earlier and now an Afghan delegation is at Oslo, Norway, where, it is said they are to meet Taliban peace envoys. This delegation is led by Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, the Second Deputy of Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and includes Deputy Foreign Minister Hikmat Khalil Karzai, former speaker of parliament Mohammad Younas Qanooni, former minister of women's affairs Husn Bano Ghazanfar, former minister of commerce Anwarullah Ahadi and a member of the High Peace Council (HPC), Farhadullah Farhad.

According to a statement by Ahmad Shekib Mustaghni, spokesman for Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), "Part of the meeting will focus on the restoration of peace in Afghanistan... Our information indicates that a delegation including the Taliban's top leaders will attend the talks."

It is important to see what will be the outcome of this meeting as Taliban have not openly accepted that their delegation will meet the Afghan government delegation though they have agreed that their delegation is at the conference. Moreover, there does not seem to be a comprehensive strategy regarding the talks or such a strategy has not been disclosed at least. The talks seem to be isolated from one another and do not seem to be a continuation of a fruitful process. Moreover, it is still ambiguous whether the Taliban delegations truly represent all Taliban who are fighting in Afghanistan. Taliban do not seem to have a unity of command and control; there are different factions of them operating under different leaderships. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude whether the Taliban representatives meeting Afghan government delegations really represent Taliban and their words and promises truly represent the minds and the hearts of the ones who are in direct fight with Afghan forces.

Taliban have not shown any willingness to call off their fight and currently they have continued their Spring Offensive and are in violent clashes with Afghan security forces in different parts of the country. They have intensified their attacks in the northern and western parts of the country and few districts have, in fact, come under their control. Currently, they have rejected the call of Afghan Religious Scholars' Council for a ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan. Similarly, Afghan National Army (ANA) has reportedly terminated reinstatements on the use of artillery against insurgents. As Taliban are literally in a war with Afghan security forces with no evident willingness to end it, it is difficult to see the dreams of peace coming true; or as some of the analysts believe this intensification in war may be a tactic by Taliban to earn a good bargain in talks. However, no peace negotiation would ever be successful unless there is a willingness and practical measures for a ceasefire.

Another important factor that will play a key role in the peace negotiations is the intention. Negotiations can only be successful provided that the intentions of the involved parties are clear and true. If Afghan authorities, Taliban leadership and the regional countries, particularly the neighboring countries show honest commitments, there is every possibility that Afghanistan would see the sun of peace and tranquility brightening its every corner. On the other hand, if all the stakeholders have ill-intentions of gaining only strength and self-centered benefits, it is really difficult to restore peace in the country. As Afghan MP Shukria Barakzai has mentioned, "If there is a firm commitment on the two sides and both sides are committed to the prosperity of the Afghan nation, in that case, we can have purposeful talks. But if these meetings are only to kill time, then the task will be hard to achieve, despite that we know all are tired of the war." Similarly, former Taliban commander Syed Akbar Agha is reported to have said, "If consultations and meetings between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban are conducted on a regular basis, it would bear positive outcomes on the issues facing Afghanistan."

Peace, as a matter of fact, is in the advantage of all the stakeholders; the only requirement is to realize this undeniable fact.

Growing Pollution, Hazardous to Environment!

By Asmatyari

With the turn of millennium the issue of the environment has suddenly evolved into a widespread issue which is greatly discussed throughout the world. No longer are humans living in a world where the environment is serene or stable but much rather becoming unrecognizable and diminishing before our eyes. A number of serious environmental problems are inherent in Afghanistan, which are of great ecological concern in terms of its sustainable economic future. These include soil erosion, pesticide misuse, deforestation; desertification, urban pollution, water logging & salinity, and freshwater pollution just to name a few.

The major constraint to overcoming these problems, in-fact perhaps the main contributor to their intensity is the population growth, which is very high in contrast to the natural limited resources that are available to the people. Also included in the constraints is the unsustainable use and management of these resources. Although it is primarily an agricultural country, the landscape is predominantly arid. Water, already a scarce commodity in most parts of the country, is now facing further shortages. This shortage is hindering the country's potential to develop agriculture. There are limited indigenous sources of energy, fossil fuel reserves are low and there is no great potential in the biomass energy.

The natural environment is being polluted due to the unnatural factors. Humans cause more pollution than the environmental causes like a volcanic eruption. The environmental degeneration is happening only due to the callous and detrimental attitude of the humans. People are destroying the environment for their own interest and the surrounding is getting polluted. The considerable number of cars is used by people in all, even in undeveloped countries, industrialized ones characterized by that of fabrics which produce largest amount of exhaust gases and cheap air traffic is available almost everywhere. All those promote global temperature to rise, that eventually leads to catastrophes and disasters over the world. Therefore it as clearly that, every country including its residents is responsible.

The former report of U.N. weather agency is an eye opening to international community, disclosing threatening levels of World carbon dioxide pollution in the atmosphere which has reportedly reached to the highest record. The report reads the heat-trapping gas, pumped into the air by cars and smokestacks, was measured at 393.1 parts per million last years, up 2.2 ppm from the previous year, said the Geneva-based World Meteorological Organization in its annual greenhouse gas inventory. That is far beyond the 350 ppm that some scientists and environmental groups promote as the absolute upper limit for a safe level. As the chief gas blamed for global warming, carbon dioxide's 2012 increase outpaced the past decade's average annual increase of 2.02 ppm. Based on that rate, the organization says the world's carbon dioxide pollution level is expected to cross the 400 ppm threshold by 2016. That level was already reached at some individual measure-

ment stations in 2012 and 2013. Scientists say the Earth probably last had this much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere at least a few million years ago, when sea levels were higher. Carbon dioxide levels were around 280 ppm before the Industrial Revolution. Trapping heat just like in a greenhouse, carbon dioxide accounts for three-quarters of the planet's heat-trapping gases that scientists say are causing sea levels to rise, glaciers to melt and some weather patterns to change. Others, like methane, trap heat much better but have a shorter life span. Carbon dioxide remains in the air for a century, some of it far longer, which means that a lot of future warming is already locked in.

Carbon dioxide, methane and some other gases are known as greenhouse gases. The rising amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere shows how people have "upset the natural balance of our atmosphere and are a major contribution to climate change," said Michel Jarraud, the secretary general of the World Meteorological Organization.

It would be unconceivable to force all societies and people on the earth, at the same time, start solving such vital problem. In this case, we have to start from ourselves, for instance, take a public transport instead of drive a car, then if any of us would try to do that, this would reduce greenhouse effect to some extent. Similarly, even a few nations which would be able to decrease carbon dioxide emissions by replacing natural energy sources especially oil by renewable ones such as solar, wind and water power, would be beneficial. Consequently, their attempts could spread these ideas and methods of improving situation with global warming and lead to larger number of people and countries to be involved in this.

It is very difficult for the humans to accept any change from the environment they are born and live in. The man-made creation of Environment has been given a lot of prominence these days. The primary reasons for issues like Global warming Land degradation pollution etc are due the great dangers faced by everyone as a result of the negligence. Everyone must understand that the ecological balance has to be maintained so that one can stop the destruction being caused to every living and non living thing in the environment.

In order to create awareness relative to protection of environment, every year June 5th is celebrated as World Environment Day. Everyone must make their own efforts to bring down the consumption of fuel hazardous to our environment. All the products that have been made with the use of petroleum should be eliminated by identification. The environmental filth has to be brought down significantly by taking appropriate measures. It is important that public awareness must be escalated concerning environmental issues and its proper remedies. It is better that we look for natural solutions like shift to a more fuel efficient vehicle make use of paper bags try to economize by using the car pool or public transport go by walk or use a bicycle recycle things etc. If we are to preserve our world we must take a stance on this issue and take action for what is right, not carrying on the actions that will lead to a desolate, destroyed Earth.

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Civilians Suffer in Iraq and Syria

By Hujjatullah Zia

The endless conflagration in Iraq and Syria leads to great turbulence and civilians continue to bear the brunt of this conflict. The humanitarian law is widely violated and the non-combatants' rights and dignity are trampled upon. According to a top UN humanitarian affairs official, as the war in Syria went into its fifth year, more than 220,000 are dead and over 11 million refugees internally displaced.

The conflict, which began in mid-March 2011, has already claimed more than 220,000 lives, according to UN estimates; more than 12.2 million people continue to require essential aid to continue to live and more than 4 million have become refugees in neighboring countries. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has warned it no longer has the funds to care for victims of the Syrian war: by the end of last year, less than half of the UN assistance plan for Syria was funded.

For its part, the Security Council also highlighted the lack of funding, which it said had "forced humanitarian agencies to reduce food rations" by 30 per cent, to people who depend on them for survival. Every year of the conflict has seen an exponential growth in refugees. In 2012, there were 100,000 refugees. By April 2013, there were 800,000. That doubled to 1.6 million in less than four months. There are now more than four million Syrians scattered throughout the region, making them the world's largest refugee population under the United Nations' mandate.

At this rate, the U.N. predicts there could be 4.27 million Syrian refugees by the end of 2015 — the worst exodus since the Rwandan genocide 20 years ago.

The youngest refugees face an uncertain future. Some schools have been able to divide the school day into two shifts and make room for more Syrian students. But there is simply not enough space for all the children, and many families cannot afford the transportation to get their kids to school.

However in Iraq, expectations are far lower and political support for the mission among lawmakers, the White House and the American people is far more tenuous. The goal in Iraq "is to retake lost territory."

After the collapse of Saddam's regime, Iraqi government did not reach to agreement with the U.S. that would allow a number of U.S. troops to stay for training and giving advice to Iraqi soldiers. What followed was a slow deterioration and collapse of the Iraqi Army and police forces that U.S. commanders had built at tremendous cost.

The civilians in Iraq do not suffer less than Syrians. Last year, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay condemned the appalling, widespread and systematic deprivation of human rights in

Iraq by the self-proclaimed Islamic State and associated forces.

The violations include targeted killings, forced conversions, abductions, trafficking, slavery, sexual abuse, destruction of places of religious and cultural significance, and the besieging of entire communities because of ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliation.

"Grave, horrific human rights violations are being committed daily by ISIL and associated armed groups," Pillay said. "They are systematically targeting men, women and children based on their ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliation and are ruthlessly carrying out widespread ethnic and religious cleansing in the areas under their control. Such persecution would amount to crimes against humanity."

Last year in Nineveh Governorate, hundreds of mostly Yazidi individuals were reported killed and up to 2,500 kidnapped. The abductees were reportedly being held in various locations in Tal Afar and Mosul. Individuals who agreed to convert were being held under ISIS guard. Of those who refused to convert, witnesses report that the men were executed while the women and their children were taken as slaves and either handed over to ISIS fighters as slaves or threatened with being sold.

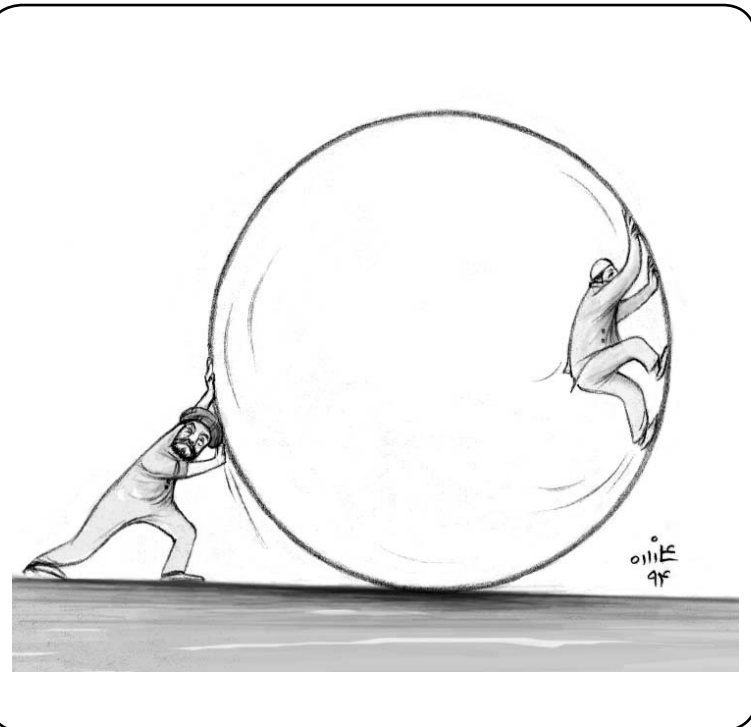
U.S. officials have claimed that Iraqis morale is on the wane to fight against ISIS. "What did the U.S. military learn from the last decade of support to the Iraqi army?" asked Emma Sky, author of "The Unraveling," who spent four years in Iraq as a senior adviser to the U.S. military. "We can give the Iraqi army lots of equipment and training, but we cannot address the psychology and morale of the force and its willingness to fight."

However, some Iraqis complain that the U.S. sat on its hands while tension was going on. The Americans insist they are trying to avoid civilian casualties, and claim significant successes. Privately, officials say they do not want to be seen hammering Sunni strongholds in a sectarian war and risk upsetting their Sunni allies in the Gulf.


However, the game is and whoever plays the main role, civilians, including women and children, are the sacrificial lambs within the violence and bloodshed going on in Iraq and Syria. Since this lethal conflagration continues unabated, millions of people are afflicted with the miseries. The transgression of the non-combatants' rights and dignity — which outrages humans' conscience — put the international community under question for playing the role of onlooker. Syria's war is entering its fifth year and millions of people lost their lives, displaced and dishonored, however international community failed to cease it.

It is believed that ISIS, as violence runs in their blood, has changed to a global threat. And they are the greatest cause for the people's death and miseries. Therefore, the world has to root them out and do not let them to lay further eggs. Moreover, the international community is supposed to take serious action to end the humanitarian catastrophe.

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