

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



June 21, 2016

## The Plight of Afghan Journalists

The situation for Afghan journalists does not seem to be getting any better. The rising insecurity and the lack of attention to the plight of the journalists has led to some very difficult circumstances that the journalists have to go through so as to perform their duties. Even the foreign journalists are facing serious difficulties in fulfilling their responsibilities. Kabul police recently warned the foreign nationals and the journalists in particular to limit their travels in the city because of security risks and the risks of kidnapping that seems to be on the rise. Afghan media organizations feel that the current warning by the police, in fact, demoralizes the spirits of the journalists in the country and would bar them from collecting information. Instead, the security authorities must ensure the security of the country as a whole and of the journalists, in particular.

Nai, which is an organization supporting open media in Afghanistan has severely criticized government for failing to ensure journalists' safety in the country. Sediqullah Tawhidi, the head of Nai, said in a statement on Monday, June 20, "This is difficult for foreign journalists. They cannot travel with security guards in the city. It causes them problems in collecting information."

The report shows some serious concerns regarding the security of the journalists; both national and international ones. Therefore, recently many national journalists opted to leave the country; few even lost their lives on the way to Europe.

Mostly, the societies that are well developed and have great respect for knowledge and information, make sure that the rights of the journalists are guarded properly and they are provided with such circumstances wherein they are able to perform their responsibilities with full dedication and devotion.

On the other hand, the societies that suffer from political instability and experience wars, and disturbances and do not recognize the worth of true knowledge and information tend to forget the vital responsibility of guarding the rights of the journalists. The journalists in such societies tend to suffer from different sorts of discriminations and, unfortunately, even lose their lives.

Mostly conflict zones are dangerous for the journalists. In order to provide true and timely information, the journalists have to move into or close to the places where wars and conflicts happen. They, therefore, put their lives at risk and try to fulfill their responsibilities. Different groups, organizations or countries in such zones have to be very careful about the rights of journalists and make sure they are not targeted. However, that does not seem to happen and many journalists lose their valuable lives every year. Moreover, because of the influence and approach of different extremist networks, the number of journalists losing their lives in the peaceful countries is also alarming.

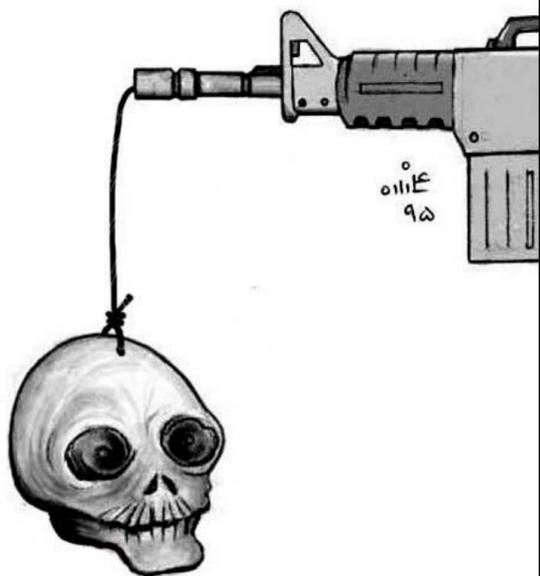
Apart from the right to life, according to International law, journalists are entitled for certain other rights as well which all the governments and organizations around the world must respect. Journalists, according to the Declaration of Rights and Duties of the Journalists, must have free access to all information sources, and the right to freely inquire on all events conditioning public life. Therefore, secret of public or private affairs may be opposed only to journalists in exceptional cases and for clearly expressed motives.

Therefore, any factor hindering the journalists from having access to all information sources must be considered illegal and should be eliminated.

Moreover, the journalist have the right to refuse subordination to anything contrary to the general policy of the information organ to which he collaborates such as it has been laid down by writing and incorporated in his contract of employment, as well as any subordination not clearly implicated by this general policy. And, the journalists cannot be compelled to perform a professional act or to express an opinion contrary to his convictions or his conscience.

Ill-fatedly, Afghanistan is also one of the countries that have not been giving enough heed to the rights of the journalists. The war and conflicts and the negligence of the relevant authorities have resulted in different sorts of discrimination against the journalists in the county. Afghan government and different other organizations and groups must make sure that they strive to protect the rights of the journalists as they are not a party to the conflict and do not serve anyone's purpose.

Provided that the rights of the journalists are protected, it is important that the journalists must fulfill their responsibilities in the best possible manner. They are required to respect truth whatever be the consequence to themselves, because of the right of the public to know the truth; defend freedom of information, comment and criticism; and report only on facts of which they know the origin of; not to suppress essential information nor alter texts and documents and not to use unfair methods to obtain news, photographs or documents.



## Mehsuds and Mansour's Deaths are Equal

By Hujjatullah Zia

Seven members of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have reportedly surrendered themselves to Pakistani authorities among them are Hakimullah Mehsud's brother Ejaz Mehsud and his uncle Khair Muhammad Mehsud. Hakimullah, who was in his thirties, had been killed in a US drone strike in North Waziristan Agency in November 2013. He was buried at an unknown location a day later. He had succeeded his mentor, Baitullah Mehsud, who was killed in a US drone strike in August 2009.

In the aftermath of Baitullah Mehsud's death, the organization experienced turmoil among its leading militants. By the end of August 2009, however, leading members in the TTP had confirmed Hakimullah Mehsud as its second emir. Media released that Hakimullah Mehsud was killed in January 2010 by injuries sustained during a US drone attack. Unconfirmed reports from Orakzai Agency stated, after the death of Hakimullah Mehsud, Malik Noor Jamal, alias Maulana Toofan, had assumed leadership of the TTP until the group determined how to proceed. TTP is an alliance of militant networks formed in 2007 to unify opposition against the Pakistani military. TTP's stated objectives are the expulsion of Islamabad's influence in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in Pakistan, the implementation of a strict interpretation of sharia throughout Pakistan, and the expulsion of Coalition troops from Afghanistan. TTP leaders also publicly say that the group seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in Pakistan.

On 25 August 2008, Pakistan banned the group, froze its bank accounts and assets, and barred it from media appearances. The government also announced that bounties would be placed on prominent leaders of the TTP.

Visiting senior US officials following Mullah Akhtar Mansour's death at the Rawalpindi GHQ, Pakistan's army chief Gen Raheel Sharif expressed strong displeasure at the violation of Pakistan's air space and demanded that Tehreek-i-Taliban head, Mullah Fazlullah, together with other TTP militants, be targeted by drones. Linked to Al Qaeda, TTP has a history of savage atrocities committed against Pakistan.

"Whether Fazlullah will be droned if he is ever spotted remains to be seen. But the general's demand raises troubling issues. To call for killing Fazlullah while mourning the loss of Mansour is inconsistent," a Pakistani writer Pervez Hoodbhoy wrote in his article entitled "Droning Mullah Fazlullah". He added, "Fazlullah is to Pakistan what Mansour was to Afghanistan. Their respective organizations - the TTP and the Taliban - are not identical but they share ethnic ties and a common mindset."

TTP carried out the most fatal attacks in Pakistan. As a result, the attack on the Army Public School in the northwestern Paki-

stani city of Peshawar on 16 December 2014 - which led to the death of 141 people including 132 schoolchildren - was carried out by members of TTP group. In addition, an offshoot of the Pakistan Taliban, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack in Gulshan-i-Iqbal Park, the eastern city of Lahore, which took heavy toll of civilians, including women and children, stating that it was aimed at killing members of an ethnic minority group who gathered in the park. However, most of those killed were Muslims. Jamaat-ul-Ahrar further vowed to continue such attacks and also took responsibility for the twin bombings of a church in Lahore last year. They also attacked Bacha Khan University that left at least 21 dead behind.

Similarly, the TTP militant group is also involved in terrorist acts in Afghanistan and pledged loyalty to the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Nangarhar province. TTP also forms "ISIL-K" group in Afghan-Pak porous border and stages deadly attacks against Afghan and US forces.

It is believed that there is no matter of good or bad Taliban. All warring parties should be condemned and fought against weather they are Mansour or Fazlullah's men. Afghanistan is as much in favor of Fazlullah's death as it agreed upon Mansour's murder. Taliban fighters, belonging to any groups, cause violence and bloodshed upon the same ideology - perhaps with a little difference in the level of radicalism. Since atrocity runs in the blood of all Taliban fighters, they should be treated the same that is to say be dealt militarily. Despite all the terrorist acts carried out in Afghanistan by any warring factions within years, Afghan government called on them to lay their arms and join peace process. In other words, the door for peace talk is open to any parties - such peace offerings demonstrate Afghanistan's generous acts and great patience towards the hostile groups. However, when militants persist on their acts of terror, there will be no option left other than military action. Now, neither Mansour nor Fazlullah matters for Afghanistan. Hence, both are known as infamous terrorists' leaders. The US forces also fight against all warring factions indiscriminately. For instance, two TTP's former leaders Baitullah Mehsud and Hakimullah Mehsud were also killed by the US drone strike the same as Mullah Akhtar Mansour. Pakistan is also supposed to deal with the issue of Mansour and Mehsud's deaths in the same way since both were radical ideologues and involved in terrorist acts. In a nutshell, both the deaths should be gloated over and Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US will have to counter insurgency and operate against all militants who carry out terrorist acts in Afghanistan or Pakistan's soil.

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## Consciousness about Society

By Dilawar Sherzai

It is important for a human being to be well aware of the society wherein he lives. He needs to have such consciousness because it would be possible for him to understand his role, status, rights and responsibilities. In this way he would be able to play a positive role in the society.

Socio-political consciousness helps the individuals in the society to make maximum use of collective life as it is through social life that human beings have made marvelous achievements. The tasks and accomplishments, which are otherwise impossible to be fulfilled, become very usual and are attained without much effort through cooperative undertakings.

Socio-political consciousness is not one of the qualities that exist within human instincts. It has to be developed within him through proper nourishment and inculcation. Socialization plays a very important role in this regard. Children who are born in a society do not necessarily become social in the real sense of the word. Especially in today's society when the people have become very much mechanical and materialistic it is difficult to find children get easily associated with the social and political groups. Social isolation is widespread and social interactions are now maintained through technology. In such a scenario it is really important that children are socialized appropriately and this has to be inculcated in them that their relation with the society is of great importance and they have a responsibility towards the environment wherein they live. Family can play a tremendous role in this regard. As family is the very first institution wherein human beings experience their social lives, the attitude, manners, thinking and ideas that are developed in the very beginning of family life are really very difficult to forget. Parents who are able to give proper time to their children and share love and affection with them have the capacity to make their children responsible social and political beings. Cooperativeness among the family members makes them realize how they can create synergies through collective efforts and make human beings truly human. Sense of responsibility, task-sharing, trustworthiness and love can first be developed in children through their families. It is really important for all the children to get educated from their families that all the people are important in some way or the other. Everyone wants to be loved, valued and honored. Therefore, a sort of sensitivity has to be developed within the attitude of the children so that they also realize the importance and the need of others. They should learn sharing their toys and playing in teams as per the team rules. Families are really basic and vital; therefore, it is really important that the institution of family must be used to the maximum extent in order to spread socio-political consciousness.

Schools, colleges and universities can also play a tremendous role, but ultimately it is the overall society wherein the individuals get their education and experiences of socio-political life. Therefore, they have to acquire everything from the society. There are certain

ways that can be adopted within the societies by the individuals to develop socio-political consciousness.

One of the most important steps in this regard is to have the courage to play a role within a society in a constructive manner. Solution-oriented attitude can play a tremendous role in this regard. An individual needs to make sure that he has a role, in some way or the other, in the resolution of conflicts within the community or society. Some people try to avoid conflicts and remain limited to their comfort zone; however, such an attitude would never help them be a responsible being. Apart from the resolution of the conflict, an individual must strive not to let the conflict be built and go out of control. In short, he needs to play an active role in the conflict and stop hiding himself behind others in such situation.

For being socially aware it is necessary that an individual should enhance his sensitivity towards the social justice and harmony. He should have the capacity to judge others and their actions as per the demands of justice not as per their social status, appearance or wealth. He needs to understand what the basic rights of the human beings are and must strive to take care of them. Moreover, he must analyze the social and political decisions in the society on the basis of justice, not on the basis of ethno-centric biases.

An important way of achieving socio-political consciousness is to have more information about the society around. It is important for an individual to know about the social issues and evils and try to play a role, no matter how small, in their eradication. Today, in human societies there are evils like poverty, racism, discrimination, sexism and some others; they all play their role in making human societies suffer. It is important for an individual to know them, accept them as issues and strive to oppose them in certain ways. It is definitely easier to live a lonely life and always be confined to one's comfort zone. However, it is really important for socio-politically conscious individual to come out of his comfort zone and be counted within the social life. It is also important that an individual should be the part of diversity, and must strive to intermingle with others so as to learn from them. It will also develop a sense of tolerance for others and supports in maintaining harmony. Showing compassion and empathy can play an incredible part in getting closer to others and tightening the social bonds. Realizing the pain of others when they are hurt and understanding their position is really imperative to invigorate the social responsibility. Courtesy and responsiveness are also necessary in this regard. It is also important for an individual, who desires to develop socio-political consciousness, to be ready to listen to others and ask them for feedback regarding his attitude and behavior. Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that the boundary between what is social and what is personal should never be violated as it is one of the basic requirements of consciousness. Being overly social may disrupt the social bonds and affiliations, and may even generate conflicts.

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