

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



March 08, 2016

## Human Trafficking on the Rise

The United States (US) on Monday, March 07, 2016, announced a contribution of \$10 million to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to end the exploitation of the Afghans subjected to forced-labor and sex-trafficking. The USAID Mission Director Hebert Smith, while speaking on the occasions emphasized that the issues like human trafficking for different purposes must be stopped as it influences the lives of millions of the people. Meanwhile, Laurence Hart, IOM's chief of mission and special envoy, called human trafficking a serious blight on Afghanistan. He said, "We will use training and information campaigns to strengthen law enforcement regionally, and we will keep victims safe through recovery services, repatriation..." Human trafficking is without any doubt a serious international issue nowadays. As there have been poverty and discriminations in different parts of world, there have been increased chances of human trafficking. Every day hundreds of people are trafficked from one place to another for certain purposes. Throughout the process, the people who are trafficked serve as a commodity that can be bought and sold whether they agree upon it or not. In most of the cases they do not even realize that they are being bought and sold. It is now a complex phenomenon and it involves different individuals and groups. The whole process actually includes these individuals and groups as various players at different locations that take the victims to their desired place. The techniques used by different individuals and groups differ from one another and they include both legal and illegal ways of transactions, travels and even crossing the borders. Human trafficking is a trend in the countries where the standard of life is not satisfactory and people suffer because of lack of economic facilities or they are threatened by instability that has even jeopardized their lives. Feeling dissatisfied from life or threatened by danger, they develop hopes to bring about better changes in their lives and fall easy prey to human traffickers who promise with them better future, which are never turned into action. In Afghanistan, recently it has been observed that there has been a rise in human trafficking. IOM has also noted a steady increase in young females trafficked from bordering countries in Afghanistan. Many victims are children who end up in carpet-making and brick factories, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and drug smuggling. This is really a matter of great concern. Females who are otherwise considered as the 'honor' of the society are left at the mercy of the traffickers and they ultimately end up in the houses of the 'foreigners' who can use them the way they want. Does not this situation awake the so-called, dignity, of Afghan men?

The dissatisfied, insecure and poverty stricken life has compelled the people to search for unconventional and easy ways of earning livelihood. Moreover, the series of civil wars and religious fanaticism have made the life miserable for most of the people and many have migrated out of the country, and many others are now being victimized by human trafficking. Since the downfall of Taliban the circumstances have seemed to improve but there are serious concerns after the withdrawal of international forces and return of instability. People are not sure about their futures. There are many who do not know what to do with their lives. Uncertainty prevails everywhere. There is no solace for the victims of poverty, instability and war. Families just think of finding ways of guaranteeing their survival. They send their children and even daughters out of their houses to earn some morsels of food. They do not hesitate even if they become the targets of the curse of begging, street crimes and now this monster human trafficking. Human trafficking is really a serious crime and all the ways that strengthen the process must be checked properly through strong legal measures. This project supported by US may play a role in highlighting this issue and taking certain measures to control it but it will not be possible to solve the problem without the involvement of the government and the people as a whole. Unfortunately, Afghan government has seemingly diverted its attentions completely towards the issue of insecurity, where it has not been able to achieve anything worthwhile. Therefore, it requires diverting attentions to some of the other major issues as well that are influencing the people to a large extent and pushing them into jeopardy. Above all, the issues like human trafficking do not only influence the individuals who are being trafficked but also their entire families; and ultimately such issues will bring bad name to the nation as whole. Therefore, the government must make all sorts of effort to nip the evil in the bud. At the same time, Afghan government must make sure that ordinary people are provided the rudimentary requirements of life and stable political and social circumstances so that they should not go for such options.



## Afghan Civilians Suffer Insecurity

By Hujjatullah Zia

The unmitigated violence and bloodshed have inflicted heavy casualties upon our nation and the Taliban's spring offensive increased the death toll over the past year. The warring factions flagrantly violated the humanitarian law through spilling the blood of civilians, including women and children, and killing the Wounded In Action (WIA). Reportedly, the security situation deteriorated in the country since mid 2015. As a result, there were 11,002 civilian casualties in 2015 including 3,545 deaths, the UN said in its annual report on civilians in armed conflict, a four per cent rise over the previous high in 2014. One in every four casualties was a child, with the report documenting a 14 per cent increase in child casualties over the year.

Similarly, a number of Afghan men and women were killed mysteriously on the grounds of their race and color for which no party claimed the responsibility. Since sectarian violence was stoked with the emergence of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the public believed that members of ISIL group were behind the scenes. It is self-explanatory that the emergence of ISIL group will further muddy the water and pose greater threat to the nation. Therefore, there is a sense of fear and despair in the air and rumors say that the ISIL fighters will stage heavy attacks in the country.

Meanwhile, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) seeks to bring the Taliban outfits to the negotiating table and Afghan officials urged all warring parties to join the peace process. To their unmitigated chagrin, the Taliban still continue their militancy. Afghans believe that war and terror will only lead to further destruction, violate their fundamental rights - that is to say the rights to life, liberty and property - and increase the graph of casualties in the country. Hence, all Afghans dream for peace and prosperity.

The protracted war revealed the fact that it is not a panacea for the problems and Afghanistan and Taliban have to reach an amicable agreement through negotiation - it seems a necessary evil, though. The victim families simmer with a sense of indescribable pain and anguish. "The pain is still there, it never ebbs. They say time heals a wound but I disagree. It merely covers the open wound with a thin scab which, when peeled away, reveals the flesh anew, exposed, lacerated and oozing with pain. I look at other mothers with their children, holding them close, protecting them as they pass me, my eyes well up and the emptiness returns. How lucky are those women who can put their hands through their children's hair and feel each strand falling between their fingers."

Afghans believed that they will heave a sigh of relief with

the establishment of democratic government via holding election and approving constitution. The nation dreamed of a society void of violence and bloodshed in which human rights and dignity were valued on a large scale and in which one's blood would not be spilled on the basis of his/her color, sex, race and beliefs. In other words, as it is said that every cloud has a silver lining, our nation deemed that it would be the bright side after years of pain and suffering. But their dream did not come true and the nascent democracy was not a panacea for the bleeding wounds of war-weary nation. The insurgent groups victimized people to put pressure on the government. Their freedoms were curtailed and their rights were widely trampled upon. The terrorist groups resurfaced with greater strength, after the fall of the Taliban's regime, and triggered terror and instability across the country. Their insurgency was intensified in recent months and led to further casualties.

With the Taliban's heavy inroads and emergence of the ISIL group, people's life and liberty are still at stake. The interminable militancy continues taking toll of civilians. Similarly, Afghan women and children are susceptible to terrorist attacks and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and the country turned into unlucky place for them. For instance, the lifeless bodies of women and children in suicide bombing cases is a slap on the face of humanity and such a gory picture will fill one with a sense of hatred and revenge. Thus, there will be no room left for a peaceful and prosperous life.

The irony is that people suffer painfully under a democratic government. It is said, "There isn't a single Afghan family that hasn't been affected by the daily acts of brutal and deadly terrorism carried out across cities, towns, and villages. Children - girls and boys - are attacked on their way to school and mosques and public spaces are blown up all in the name of a noble religion, which in reality stands for peace and peaceful coexistence."

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan assigned responsibility for 62 per cent of total civilian casualties in 2015 to anti-government elements. However, the report also noted a surge in casualties caused by pro-government forces, including the international troops. In a nutshell, one's rights and dignity are threatened in one way or another and men, women and children are killed in cold blood in suicide bombings and terrorist attacks. Therefore, a large number of people take refuge to foreign countries and it is a real tragedy for the country.

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## The New Interventionists

By Mark Leonard

The consequences of Russia's intervention in Syria stretch far beyond the Middle East. The Kremlin's military campaign has tilted the stalemate in favor of the government and derailed efforts to craft a political compromise to end the war. It also heralds the beginning of a new era in geopolitics, in which large-scale military interventions are not carried out by Western coalitions, but by countries acting in their own narrow self-interest, often in contravention of international law.

Since the end of the Cold War, the debate over international military action has pitted powerful, interventionist Western powers against weaker countries, like Russia and China, whose leaders argued that national sovereignty is sacrosanct and inviolable. The unfolding developments in Syria are further evidence that the tables are turning. While the West is losing its appetite for intervention - particularly involving ground troops - countries like Russia, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are increasingly intervening in their neighbors' affairs.

In the 1990s, after genocides in Rwanda and the Balkans, Western countries developed a doctrine of so-called humanitarian intervention. "The Responsibility to Protect" (colloquially known as "R2P") held countries accountable for their people's welfare and compelled the international community to intervene when governments failed to protect civilians from mass atrocities - or were themselves threatening civilians. The doctrine upended the traditional concept of national sovereignty, and in countries like Russia and China, it quickly came to be viewed as little more than a fig leaf for Western-sponsored regime change.

So it is ironic, to say the least, that Russia is using a concept similar to R2P to justify its intervention, only in this case it is defending the government from its citizens, rather than the other way around. Russia's efforts are, in effect, an argument for a return to the era of absolute sovereignty, in which governments are uniquely responsible for what happens within their country's borders. Russia's stance also reflects its preference for stability over justice and its acceptance of the legitimacy of authoritarian rule. With the proliferation of "color revolutions" in places like Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, Russia and China have become increasingly wary of popular uprisings. The threat of Western intervention, in their view, only compounds the potential for instability. Indeed, the Chinese have coined their own stiff foreign-

policy jargon for this sentiment: fan xifang xin ganshe zhuyi (loosely translated, "countering Western neo-interventionism").

But Russia's respect for sovereignty has notable limits. In Crimea in 2014, the Kremlin embraced a very different doctrine of intervention, justifying its actions in Ukraine on the grounds that it was defending the rights of ethnic Russians. This marks a return to a pre-Westphalian world of linguistic, religious, and sectarian solidarity, of the sort Czarist Russia practiced when it regarded itself as the protector of all Slavs.

Not surprisingly, this justification for intervention is rapidly finding adherents in other parts of the world. In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has adopted a parallel argument for its support of Sunni forces in Yemen and Syria, as has Iran in backing its Shia allies in both countries. Even China is increasingly being pushed to take responsibility for its citizens and companies overseas. At the beginning of the Libyan civil war, China airlifted tens of thousands of its citizens out of the country.

All of this has come at a time when the West is losing its military preeminence. Improvements in the Russian and Chinese militaries and the increasingly common use of asymmetric strategies by state and non-state actors are leveling the battlefield. Indeed, the proliferation of state-sponsored non-state actors in places like Libya, Syria, Crimea, and Donbas is blurring the distinction between state and non-state violence.

After the Cold War, the West imposed an international order that defined geopolitics worldwide. When that order was threatened, Western leaders felt authorized to intervene in the affairs of whatever "rogue state" was causing the problem. But now that order is being challenged on several fronts simultaneously - globally by Russia and China, and at the regional level by increasingly assertive players in the Middle East, Latin America, and even Europe.

As a new order takes shape, the roles countries have played for the last 25 years are likely to be reversed. In the West, the concept of sovereignty and the limited use of power is likely to make a comeback, while national leaders who have traditionally called for restraint will become increasingly bold in unleashing their troops. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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