

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



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## Human Rights Violations Continue

The scourge of war and violence still inflict heavy casualties and indescribable sufferings upon nations. Political rivalries and regional tension, which generate violence and conflicts, lead to horrible consequences and life has turned extremely cheap. Apart from the spirit of colonialism and regional rivalries, there are two main reasons behind human rights violation: Religious extremism and cultural restrictions.

### (1) Religious extremism

Lack of tolerance has narrowed the room for a harmonious co-existence. Religious extremists show no patience towards one's faith and beliefs and seek to impose their warped mind on people with the barrel of gun. Dogmatic beliefs and lack of tolerance have led to unmitigated violence and bloodshed. That is to say, the ongoing regional violence roots from the dogmatic beliefs of religious extremists. For example, the Taliban, al-Qaeda, ISIL, Boko Haram, al-Shabab and other terrorist networks are running the war for religious reasons. Religious extremists claim that only they are on the right path and other individuals either die or follow their ideology. Such a mindset will sow the seeds of discord and foment war.

To foist their radical ideology on people, the hardliners are widely involved in militancy and terrorist attacks in the region and show no iota of mercy to men, women and children. Currently, civilian casualty is one of the serious issues which make international headlines. People are killed on a large scale on the grounds of their religious beliefs. For instance, the ISIL group enslaved, sold and raped thousands of Yazidi women (Yazidis are a majority Kurdish-speaking religious group) in Iraq who were regarded as "sex slaves" and "this narrative has stereotyped Yazidi women as passive victims of mass rape at the hands of perpetrators presented as the epitome of pure evil".

The Taliban's harsh practices against Afghan nation also stem from their radical ideology. They kill Afghans, especially civilians including women and children, in cold blood. The Taliban's regime - founded in Afghanistan in September 1996 and toppled by the US-led Northern Alliance in December 2001 - ruled Afghanistan with the barrel of gun and spilled streams of blood. In other words, Afghans, mainly the Shiite minority group, sustained heavy casualties under the Taliban on the basis of their religious beliefs.

The misogynistic mindset of the Taliban took its toll on Afghan women, who were not allowed to participate in social, educational, cultural, political and economic activities. The Taliban treated women as pariahs and considered them as an object to simply satiate the carnal desire of men. They discriminated women on the basis of their gender and encroached on their rights and liberties to a great extent. During the Taliban's regime, Afghan women had to be dressed in burqa, a head-to-toe covering, and chaperoned. Violence against women was widespread but their voice fell on deaf ears. Women were treated as an inferior creature and had to be subject to men. Hence, dogmatic beliefs and radical ideology will lead to the gross violation of human rights across the globe.

### (2) Cultural Restrictions

Cultural restrictions and traditional cultures will impede women from participating in social, cultural and political issues which is against religious tenets and sound mind. For example, women were barred from driving car in Saudi Arabia for many years. For defying prohibition and taking the wheel in the Saudi Capital Riyadh, some women were arrested and some others were fired from their jobs. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman lifted the prohibition in September 2017.

After all, Saudi women still face strict cultural restrictions. Without the permission of men, they are not allowed to apply for passports, travel abroad, get married, open a bank account, start certain businesses, get elective surgery and leave prison.

In Afghanistan, cultural restrictions and traditional customs also curtail women's freedoms on a large scale, which is not only contrary to religious tenets but also to Afghan Constitution. Women are the casualty of the tribal code of conduct and conservative mindset which hold strong sway in tribal belts. Culturally, women are not allowed to play their role in social, economic and political activities in remote areas. In some cases, some women are tortured in desert court - mainly in the Taliban-dominated areas - by the verdict issued by tribal council that has no legal basis. Traditional custom overrides religious tenets in tribal structure of Afghanistan in many cases and people are mostly tradition-bound. Worst of all, they paint their narrow-mindedness with the brush of religion and attribute their own mentalities to religious principles, which is a strong blow to religion.

To sum up, violent practices which result in the violation of human rights is one of the serious issues before modern world and this will challenge the unity and harmony of nations. To alleviate one's pain and anguish, mitigate violence and carnage and promote the spirit of peaceful coexistence, human societies need to step forward to build "a community of shared future for mankind" and practice upon moral code and international principles.



## The Reasons behind China's Swift Economic Development

By Hujjatullah Zia

Poverty alleviation is most likely to bear the desired fruit and the gap between rural and urban areas will be bridged in near future in China. The colossal companies and mammoth construction projects in many provinces of China indicate this fact.

Chinese government seeks to alleviate poverty and build a prosperous life for all the Chinese in 2020. The dream for building a moderate and economically balanced society is most likely to come true if one tours both rural and urban areas in China. Leaving the agrarian economy behind, rural areas are also being industrialized swiftly. The gigantic companies equipped with modern technology, which once seemed an unachievable dream in rural areas, exist there in large number. The huge infrastructures and skyscrapers in Chinese provinces will drop your jaw.

On my recent trip to Sichuan province, I was highly amazed by colossal companies operating not only to promote the living standard of locals but also to connect this province with the world through constructing railway stations and enhancing trade. I was astonished to visit Oracle (Tianfu New Area) Technical Talent Innovation and Entrepreneurship Base, West China Modern Logistic Port, New Century Global Center and China Railway Express (CRE), to name but a few. The first enterprise (Oracle) seeks to upgrade traditional companies, and provide the management consultation and investment consultation services.

West China Modern Logistic Port, which is based in Suining City of Sichuan province, gears to serve west China and link coastal areas. This port develops significant industries as modern logistics, trade and circulation, e-commerce, and manufacturing. With its inauguration in 2008, this port has introduced 93 platform projects, 38 projects are under construction, 36 projects have been completed and 14 projects are being prepared. China Railway Express (CRE), based in Chengdu city of Sichuan province, connects Sichuan with Lodz station - which is the largest and most modern railway in the city of Lodz, Poland - via Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and other countries with the total length of 9826 km. Carrying goods from Chengdu to Lodz will take place in 10 days, much faster than by sea and much cheaper than by air, and then it will take one to three days to distribute goods to anywhere in Europe. In 2016, CRE was graded the first among all other railway expresses in China for having 460 runs and 1000 runs were planned in 2017. It forms a cross-border network of "one main line, multiple

auxiliary lines and direct arrival at many stations." CRE has 16 lines all over the Europe - including Germany, Italy, and Czech Republic - where it carries cargoes directly. According to a member of CRE's staff, the last line was opened in April 12 this year. CRE achieves a win-win situation for China and Europe and will promote role of merging the Yangtze River Economic Zone and the Silk Road Economic Belt.

China seeks to promote connectivity and deepen reform and opening up. Chinese economists believe that "if you want to be rich, you must build roads at first". The transportation construction is the mainstay of economic development. Therefore, Chinese enterprises reinforce sea, land and air constructions so as to facilitate trade between China and the rest of the world.

To view huge companies with thousands of employees across China, industrial parks, mammoth projects and constructions, and innovative industries, one will believe that alleviating poverty will be a piece of cake for Chinese government. For example, only Sichuan province has established business ties with over 221 countries and regions and 17 countries have their consulate general there. Currently, China is carrying out a new round of Western Development and the "Belt and Road" initiative, Yangtze River economic belt and other development strategies to catalyze economic development in this province. Chinese businesspersons and economists are highly creative. For instance, Xingfu Ancient Village, which has only 204 residents, was opened for business in 2016. Receiving 48,000 visitors, its revenue hit a record high up to four million yuan in two months. As a result of this rural tourist destination, the income of each household increased 30 per cent last year. In the past, residents were supposed to pay to take their agricultural products to cities but now they are bought by tourists. Traditional inns with nice facilities are installed there for tourists to pass their nights and locals are recruited in those inns. Hence, this innovation created job for locals in remote areas and facilitated their business. In short, the integration of agriculture and tourism has put the village on a fast track for the benefits of local residents. Thus, industrialization and technological advancements, connectivity and innovation will alleviate poverty and build a prosperous life for the Chinese in near future. Considering the aforementioned facts, China can be a perfect economic and business model for developing and under-developed countries, including Afghanistan.

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## The Upcoming Elections, Responsibilities of IEC and Government

By Mohammed Gul Sahibzada

In democratic societies, elections are the basis for establishment of a representative and legitimized governments. Afghanistan has been grinding in war for the last more than four decades, wrecking destruction on our national institutions, national resources and infrastructure and this has taken huge toll on the very fabric of our society. Almost two generations of Afghan population have grown in war and this phenomenon has caused flurry of other deprivations and miseries on this war weary nation. Despite all this, people of Afghanistan look at elections as beacon of hope and the harbinger promising future. Political parties field their candidates with specific manifesto to contest elections including independent candidates.

During last four major parliamentary and presidential elections of 2005-6 and 2010-11, men and women flocked to polling stations in thousands to cast their votes for their favorite candidates. Insurgents had not spared a moment to issue threats and warnings to people trying to stop them from casting their votes, but people defied these warnings and moved ahead to vote - sometimes walking for miles to reach the polling stations. There have been cases where insurgents have spotted ink on voters' fingers and chopped their fingers off as punishment for voting. Violence never caused a dent in people's resolve to support ongoing democratic processes started in 2002 in the country. But as much as people of Afghanistan presented sacrifices and endeavored to contribute towards democracy and fair and free elections in the country, institutions - including Independent Elections Commission (IEC) and government security organizations - have missed these opportunities and failed miserably to reflect peoples' desire to bring about a government and/or parliament of their real representatives. Fraud and cheating had become widespread, corruption in the rank of IEC and security agencies responsible for organizing and conducting elections were rampant and elections were tampered at every stages in the process.

We have witnessed the results of these elections, and as a case in point presidential elections of 2014 had almost plunged the country into chaos if it wasn't for the intervention of the then US secretary of State John Kerry to encourage the two rival candidates to join hands and form a National Unity Government. The parliament that had come into shape after 2010 parliamentary elections continue to enjoy as a law making body despite expiration of its terms more than two years ago! It is a shame to see worsening economic, political and social conditions of people's lives despite the influx of billions of US dollars through the government channels from international community - mainly the United States of America for support and strengthening the very same conditions of people's lives. We have seen the brightest brain draining from the country due to worsening economic conditions and lack of access to employment opportunities, and all this have been happening because members of parliament and senior government officials have formed nexus to recruit only those with kinship to members of parliament or other senior government officials - depriving large swaths of educated, talented youths who would otherwise deserve to legitimately have access to some of these op-

portunities. Worsening security situation and lack of good governance and all forms of evils that continue to take toll on Afghan society are the result of fraudulent elections.

The IEC and government agencies responsible for organizing and managing elections should plan for putting in place viable mechanisms to manage the upcoming elections with the least cases of frauds and cheating. One way to do so is to dispatch delegations to neighboring countries in the region including India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Indonesia to observe elections there and learn from their experiences of how to conduct fraud free elections. There are elections in the state of Karnataka in India in April 2018, and it should be possible for IEC and ministry of interior of Afghanistan to constitute delegations and send them to Karnataka to observe election process, study mechanism in place and discuss techniques of management carried out. In addition, IEC should have close coordination with government security agencies for managing polling booths. For example, an external belt and interior belt of police teams should be formed at every polling booth. Both should check and control voters for their IDs and other specifics, but these police teams should not belong to a single agency. They should be from different government security agencies in order to avoid coalescing in favor of certain candidates. Also, IEC should devise a policy whereby staff recruited from one region should be sent for duties to another region in order to avoid favoring certain candidates of their kinship. These rules had been nominally in place in previous elections, but they were not implemented.

Government officials should stop using government cars, means, resources and positions to influence voters. IEC and government agencies involved in election should constitute a powerful committee whose tasks should be to watch government officials trying to influence voters. Unless IEC makes the whole election process rules based and strictly implement these rules, frauds cannot be eliminated. Governors in all thirty four provinces should be given clear instructions to provide all out support to IEC and its observers, and keep themselves impartial during the process of elections. Under the instruction of the president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, a powerful and independent committee should be formed with its members coming from various security agencies, IEC and foreign observers with authority to intervene in areas that required remedy or where there is a situation. Since chances are that disputes can occur in certain polling booths in certain geographical area, IEC should put in place mechanisms to immediately cordon off that particular polling booth and organize remedial steps including recount or re-cast of votes. This will avoid ripple effects of such cases to other polling booths during elections day.

In the backdrop of continued, untold sufferings due to ongoing war on terror, and the formidable resolve of the people of Afghanistan to rebuild their country's national institutions, bring about real representative government and parliament members, it is the one most important duty before government of Afghanistan and IEC to conduct fair and free elections.

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