

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



May 28, 2015

## Respect for Fellow Beings

One of the bonds that keep the members of a society close to one another is undoubtedly respect. Giving respect to others is essential if one wishes to keep the social relations strong and durable. Respecting others only for the fact that others are human beings as well and have the right to live in the same world is without any doubt a human attribute. There are possibilities that others may differ from you, oppose you and may even earn your hatred, but the first gesture towards them must be filled with reverence and esteem.

Respecting others means giving them enough opportunity to express themselves and striving to understand them. It does not mean giving them worth and value because of their social status, wealth or influence, but admiring them for being what they are in their nature, behavior and thinking. Everybody has the right to be listened to and given enough time for proper display of his true nature. Respecting them means guarding this right.

In our society the difference in viewpoint and stance between two persons or two groups of people means being each other's enemy. This sort of attitude has created a great deal of disrespect among the people. Is it really the kind of attitude that must be adopted by the most superior of the all the creatures? Does this suit the rational minds that have the ability to think and to differentiate between the right and the wrong? Such sort of attitude is really very damaging for a nation and does not let the cooperation, mutual respect and trust take place easily.

It is imperative to understand that it is basically the same right that you and your opponent demand and that is the right to have opinion. Yes, it is correct that you can have that right but you must take care and respect the same right of your opponent. You both have to respect each other and realize that what the other person is saying is basically his opinion, not a sin or a crime. If there is no such respect then there is no need of sharing opinions and ideas and then there is no other way of deciding what the truth is. First, it is really necessary that there should be respect for each other and then start the discussion and arguments so as to find truth.

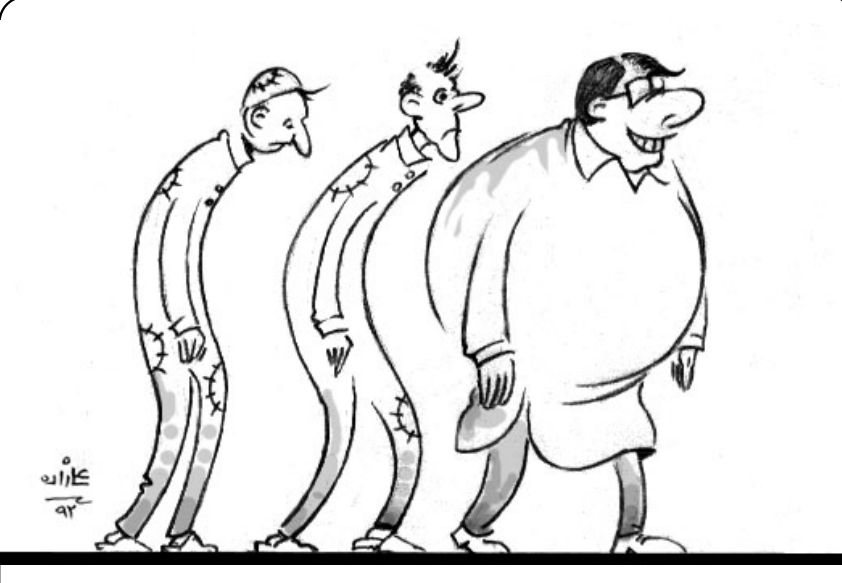
It is also possible that a person may face different situations in his life. In the world where there are inequalities and differences, he may face people who belong to lower class or may meet someone who may belong to the affluent section of the society; his responsibility at that moment is to consider both of them worthy of the same respect. If there is disrespect for someone, which is possible as it is not practical to have respect for everyone in the society, it should be based on a proper judgment, not on a judgment based on social status and influence. A person's behavior, his love for other fellow human beings and his valuable ideas can be considered as the basis for respect not his wealth. Bestowing respect on the basis of affluence and opulence is bound to create false criteria and result in injustice and disharmony within the society.

It is also important for all the members of our society that they have the tendency to impart respect to others but on the basis of achievements and services that have supported in achieving positive factors in our society. As our society is still tribal in its true nature, it can be found that the people tend to respect others based on their family background and dominance based on money. Therefore, it can be found that the society members who are busy in contributing positive services, for example teachers, do not have as much respect as tribal heads who do not have even proper education and cannot provide something positive to the society.

A similar sort of attitude can be observed in different sorts of gatherings, events and functions. The people who belong to wealthy families, though may be even illiterate get every sort of respect. They are treated as the special guests and given the most of the concentration and attention. On the other hand the people who may have spent their whole lives for social service but do not have enough money to be counted among the rich class are neglected and not given their due position.

This sort of the wrong criteria has resulted in a society suffering from evils and imbalance. People, in our society, strive to get as much wealth as possible, instead of pursuing education and knowledge. This has resulted in a society that is suffering from myriads of problems as negative competition to gain as much wealth as possible in every possible manner has given birth to nothing else except social evils.

The time has come for us to change our attitude and amend our standards. Our society requires to fight social evils and problems, it cannot afford to continue in the present state indefinitely. The people need to realize whom they consider valuable enough for the society - an educated and knowledgeable person who has all the qualities of a scholar and can support the society intellectually or a self-centered, status-conscious person whose whole life has been spent by gathering money in every legal and illegal means?



## Promoting Local Resistance against the Taliban

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

With violence going on in a number of provinces across the country, the Afghan government is seeking assistance from local armed groups to tackle the Taliban offensive in the North. Media reports say that thousands of armed men from former jihadi groups are preparing for take up arms and resist the Taliban. According to the reports, the government has called on Jihadi figures to back up the government in the fight against the militant groups. However, officials have suggested that the government is not going to promote a policy of rearmament in the country, saying that it only supports grassroots resistance against the Taliban. Sediq Sediqi, the spokesman of the Ministry of Interior said the MoI supports 'public resistance' against the Taliban, but does not distribute arms among the people. Seemingly, the Afghan government avoids publicly confirming a new approach of fighting against the Taliban and pursuing a policy of arming locals for fighting the Taliban. The logic for this is clear. The government is quietly moving to mobilize locals against the Taliban to contain the Taliban spring offensive in provinces where Afghan army and police have limited or minimal presence. Despite the government's denial of pursuing such an approach in the anti-insurgency campaign, it seems the government sees this approach less costly and far more effective for curbing the Taliban seasonal fighting in Northern provinces of the country. Despite the news surfacing, the government's reticence over the issue is indicating that it is not going publicly endorse mobilization of ordinary people for the fight as it could be potentially dangerous for the long term.

In short term, there is no doubt the policy would work effectively to keep the Taliban at bay and fail their spring offensive. The Afghan army and police forces are struggling with tackling the Taliban spring offensive in a number of provinces including Kunduz, Takhar and other provinces. The Taliban this year have deployed thousands of fighters in the north to fight as part of the groups' spring fighting. The government needs to match the militants in fighting whether through deployment of more security personnel or by mobilizing locals to fight the Taliban. However, there are widespread fears that if people get armed, it could potentially undermine security and stability in the future. Many still remember the era of the civil wars in the country, when there was complete anarchy and chaos across the country. It is a fact that arming ordinary people and local groups for fighting against the Taliban could be a potential risk for future security of the country. However, for time being and the foreseeable future, armed local groups are less violent than the Taliban. The Taliban is now virtually threatening the government's stability and the ANSF's sustainability. Such groups have efficiently defended their areas from the Taliban without committing intolerable atrocities. The government can promote a safer approach of arming 'resistance groups' against the Taliban. The best policy for helping public resistance against the Taliban is to engage in supporting locally commit-

ted groups who are responsible for security of their own localities and towns. This would prevent creation of large and irresponsible groups operating beyond their areas. Another approach the government can count on is to help individual anti-Taliban figures who are loyal to the government to rise as commanders of the grassroots resistance against the militant groups. In addition to that, the government can somehow control and oversee operations of local anti-Taliban groups by Afghan military and intelligence agencies.

Anyhow, the dangers of such a policy could not be refuted. But it is a proved tactic that will help ease the brunt of war from the shoulders of the overwhelmed Afghan security agencies. An explicit example of formation of forces beyond army and police ranks is establishment of the Afghan Local Police (ALP). Initially president Karzai was bitterly against the idea proposed by American commanders to imitate their experience in Iraq in forming local resistance groups against the insurgents. The former president finally agreed to formation of the ALP when assured of his government's control over the locally engaged force operating beyond formal military establishment.

The ALP has been effective in securing the highways and small towns in some most volatile provinces in the south and north. It has been criticized though in some provinces for committing actions such as violence and lootings. Still, the ALP has remained largely responsible and under strict control of the government. The government can use its past experience of formation of the ALP in controlling and overseeing local resistance groups. Formation of the ALP has not been disastrous for Afghanistan, and so the promotion of local resistance groups will not be a catastrophe for the country if they are managed efficiently.

However, there are already signs of alarms for promotion of local armed groups in some insecure provinces that are largely out of the government's control. The policy of supporting local resistance groups cannot be applied to every province as they can easily join forces with the anti-government groups. The government should pursue the policy only in provinces that are considered as safe and propitious for such a policy. The public apathy towards rearmament of non-committed groups is justified. But the impacts could be mitigated through sound and calculated policies, while the result for tackling the resurgence of the Taliban could be remarkable.

The Afghan army and police forces are losing men at an alarming rate. The government needs to boost the reinforcement for the fighting and help morale of the ANSF. The Taliban fierce offensive along with high casualties of the security personnel as well as attrition rates in the police and army ranks is consuming the strength of the ANSF. The government should take dedicated plans for the containing the spring offensive through better equipment of the ANSF as well as promoting local resistance against the Taliban. For any approach in the war, the government needs to have clear and calculated policies to convince the public and help the anti-insurgency campaign.

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## The Challenges of Kabul Residents

By Hujjatullah Zia

Being one of the highly populated city of Afghanistan, what happens in Kabul has a direct connection with various activities across the country, ranging from security-related issues to the economy and even the way we are perceived in the rest of the world. So how does the world see Kabul? Well, on a day-to-day basis what the people of Kabul live through is the murder of innocent civilians and businesses selling adulterated food to customers regardless of the consequences. We see people hanging from buses to reach their workplaces and children struggling to attend school by using public transport which should not be on the road. Kabul appears to us in the midst of a total collapse of governance making life for ordinary citizens a nightmare. The street vendors, the taxi-drivers and the commuters are worried not to be the victims of suicide bombings happening every once in a while in public and crowded places.

Afghanistan is still known as a highly dangerous country - as the U.S. President Barack Obama has recently stated this fact. The civilian casualties have increased across the country. Every day, Afghan people, including women and children, lose their lives in terrorist attacks and suicide bombings. The infiltration of the Islamic States (IS), also known as Daesh, in the country has permeated greater fear among the citizens. Since the emergence of Daesh, mysterious deaths and kidnappings take place. Kabul residents are not exception to such threats. People lose their lives on the streets, shopping malls, markets and schoolchildren are killed on the way to schools. In short, the counterterrorism strategy did not come to fruition in Afghanistan.

Sanitation conditions for the people are far from satisfactory, clean drinking water is a luxury, and electricity is available for only a limited number of the population. These everyday battles make communities vulnerable, sick and tired as they are of their arduous daily routine. The hot weather and mounting pollution lead to critical diseases of the residents. If you walk on a street in Kabul for one hour in summer, what you inhale will be all dust and polluted air.

Kabul was once a relatively lush haven for several hundred thousand residents. But decades of war, migration and chaotic sprawl have turned the Afghan capital into a barely functioning dust bowl. One of the casualties of war has been the infrastructure that supplies the people with a clean water source. However, the war is not the only cause of the crisis. Geographical constraints, climate change, and the lack of education on clean water and sanitation also adds to the problem.

It is no surprise to see that the residents of Kabul city carry water the same as remote areas of Afghanistan. A considerable number of the residents, especially those who live on the top of hills,

carry water from distant places. This is part of normal life in this populated city.

One of the many reasons for these numbers being so appalling is because their infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed by years of war. From 1992 to 1996 the civil war led to indiscriminate shelling of Kabul and other cities which destroyed the infrastructures. Then in 1996 the Taliban took over, leading to a lull in the violence. However, the Taliban did little to rebuild the infrastructure in Kabul and elsewhere, instead focusing on imposing their radical ideology. In 2001 the Taliban was pushed from power by coalition forces, and Afghanistan has been suffering from militancy carried out by the Taliban's guerilla.

Driving from the hilltop to the city center highlights another of Kabul's challenges - traffic. The mostly unpaved streets are choked with five to 10 times the number of cars they were designed to handle. On top of that, vendors, beggars, pedestrians and bike-riders all compete for space. It can take hours to cross from one side of Kabul to the other.

The increase in street beggars, most of them women and children, is also a considerable challenge in Kabul city. If you walk on streets, you will see a number of beggars queuing and some are imploring the passersby for an Afghan to survive hunger. It seems that their numbers increase with each passing day in the summer season. What touches me more is the scene of younger children who are deprived of going to school and wander the streets for a piece of bread from dawn to dusk. Their future will be pitch dark and they will suffer their whole life for getting bread and butter. Street crimes aggravate the problems further. People are mugged even in public places, their rights to life and properties are robbed and they are preyed upon on the streets. Moreover, the persistent hunger forces the addicts to break into houses and steal things to survive hunger.

Hence, people - particularly in the populated city of Kabul - are in the grip of various challenges and insecurity, poverty, unemployment, lack of facilities and sanitation and street crimes are the most important problems to be addressed. Unfortunately, these problems have been aggravated in recent months and have changed into a matter of great worry for the citizens. In short, the social and individual pains and sufferings have left people in a state of despondency.

One way to gain back public trust would be to immediately initiate some large public interest projects in Kabul such as a big health project, access to electricity and clean water and establishing good traffic system. Hope these challenges be considered in near future.

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