

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



May 30, 2018

## Afghan Women Remain Distant from Justice

Women in Afghanistan are kept distant from their basic rights and from access to justice. As per a recent report, Injustice and Impunity: Mediation of Criminal Offences of Violence against Women, released by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Afghan women's access to justice remains insufficient to an extreme level. The report has found: "The report's findings, including details indicating unchecked impunity in honor killings and the murder of women, signals that justice for Afghan women victims of violence remains severely inadequate. . . The use of mediation in criminal cases serves not only to normalize violence against women but also to undermine confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole." The report highlights the important point that the existing legal framework and court adjudication processes in Afghanistan provide options for women facing violence, and emphasizes that mediation cannot replace the judicial protections provided to women by the constitution and laws of Afghanistan. However, violation of rights of women and violence against them are frequent in Afghanistan under such mediations.

For Afghanistan the rights and empowerment of women and access of justice for them have always remained an issue. As the country has suffered from instability and wars, many other sectors and issues have been neglected by the authorities. The issue of weak or no governance has been the most dominant one. There are many parts of the country that remain unattended even today. The law and order system and the access of justice in such parts of country are almost inaccessible. In the absence of formal courts and justice system, the vacuum in such places are filled by traditional courts and verdicts that, in most of the cases, violate the rights of women.

In Afghanistan, though, a so-called democratic government has been formed, it has failed to carry out a democratic governance system. The power still remains with the powerful warlords and selfish leaders and they have failed to make the system work for the poor masses. In fact, the lives of the common people have remained unchanged to a certain extent. Meanwhile, the weaker strata, particularly women, have paid a very high price as a repercussion.

Afghan authorities need to make serious commitments about women as women in this country have not been empowered as much as they should be. Women in Afghanistan have been undergoing discriminatory behavior for decades now. The religious extremism and obsolete tribal values have been vehemently responsible for violation and violence against them. Even though, they have been echoing their concerns, they do not seem to get as much attention as possible in the patriarchal Afghan society.

As a matter of fact, the male-chauvinistic ears are not ready to hear them though they feel their vibrations clearly. Nevertheless, the efforts in this regard must never be given up and they should continue in every possible way. One of the ways to rise up and be counted in the social and political life is to strive participating in the social and political institutions and processes. And, this is not the responsibility of a particular faction of society, not a particular stratum, not even a particular gender but of all those human beings have some concern and some love for human rights, the ones who believe in dignity of human beings and their existence without any differentiation of gender.

Particularly, men can play an imperative role. Though they have been mostly responsible for the discrimination, modern men can now change their attitude and commit themselves to make the difference. Fighting the discrimination and violence does not necessarily mean that women alone should shoulder the responsibility. There should be efforts to bring about changes in the attitude of men towards women; otherwise, fighting for the rights of women would be very difficult.

In similar fashion, the different institutions, functioning in the society must also fulfill their responsibilities and they must ensure that there should not be biased policies and attitude against the women. Their policies and practices must never be inclined towards discrimination and injustice on the basis of gender. Not only the women rights organization but different other social, political and administrative organizations can have a part in making sure that women are properly compensated within the system and are not neglected on the basis of prejudice. In the countries like Afghanistan, the religious and tribal institutions can also play tremendous role in uplifting the position of women and giving them the status they deserve. As most of the people are religious and tribal, they can easily be motivated by such institutions for better and higher purposes.

It is important that the efforts regarding women rights do not end only in conferences and celebrations by certain organizations and individuals but in resolute commitments and most importantly practical efforts for the rights and empowerment of women. Proper implementation of Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law can be a great start; however, that would require serious and committed efforts from the authoritative sections of the society.



## Flood and Drought: Extra Burdens on the Shoulders of Afghan Citizens

By Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Afghanistan is one of the countries that is highly prone to a number of natural disasters like earthquakes, flooding, drought, landslides, and avalanches & man-made disasters. It is common to have in the spring when snow begins to melt and rainfall is heavy & in south and southeast often trigger drought floods. More than four decades of war and civil conflict, as well as environmental degradation, have all contributed to increasing vulnerability of the Afghan citizens to natural disasters. On the other hand, according to the research findings, Afghanistan faces significant shortcomings in the areas of water, sanitation, health, security and natural resource management. No one claims that, it is possible to completely avoid natural disasters; indeed the government can reduce the sufferings by creating proper awareness of the likely disasters and its impact by developing a suitable warning system, disaster preparedness and management of disasters through application of information technology tools. In fact, poor disaster management is one of the main causes of huge sufferings and casualties in Afghanistan.

During recent days flood hit Samangan, Takhar, Kapisa, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Badghis, Ghor, Panjshir, Sari Pul, Ghazni and Parwan provinces of Afghanistan. According to the ANDMA, at least 34 people died and 4 injured in flash floods in Afghanistan recently. This report added that the flooding had affected 11 provinces. Around 600 animals had died, 240 houses were destroyed and 624 houses were damaged. And around 80 hectares of agricultural land was also severely damaged.

In addition to flood, according to an analysis of climate and drought records by the Asian Development Bank, localized droughts in parts of the country have a return period of three to five years, while drought covering large areas recurs every 9-11 years. The recent drought in the country, is unusual and perhaps the worst in country's history. Of the 32 provinces, drought has a high frequency in the provinces of Herat, Ghor, Uruzgan, Ghazni, Faryab, Jawzayan, Balkh, Samangan, Kunduz and Badakhshan. The provinces of Takhar, Bagkan, Saripul, Badghis, Bamyan, Wardak, Laghman, Kunar, Nangarhar, Pakhtiya, Khost, Farah, Zabol, Paktika, Nimroz, Hilmand, and Kandahar face medium risk of drought.

### Poor Policies and Practices for Flood and Drought Risk Management

Social scholars argue that building social resilience to water-related disasters in any country is a slow process of evolution in thinking, negotiating and developing the frameworks to under-

stand and manage risk. It requires developing step by step, policies and practice, put them in place and test them as required. To this end, Afghanistan needs to develop and put in place integrated flood and drought management policies.

### Integrated Flood Management

An integrated flood management policy should firmly be rooted in and take its principles from IWRM, integrated land, water and risk management. Doing so, it is recognized that floods can never be fully constrained; meaning that they do not only pose a threat but also have beneficial impacts, and these impacts affect many sectors of economy in a given context. As such, it makes the government authorities to shift the focus from flood control to flood management and to flood risk reduction. In this context, the authorities just by taking the whole catchment to consideration in the long term can decide about the best use of scarce resources, and unintended consequences can be avoided. According to this approach, the disaster management authority can manage the water cycle as a whole, integrate land and water management; access and manage risk and uncertainty; adopt a best mix of strategies; ensure a participatory decision-making approach with a range of stakeholders; and adopt integrated risk management approaches.

### Integrated Drought Management

Drought management is the opposite of flood management; it focuses on preparedness, prevention and mitigation. Indeed, it takes place in a very different context, since the floods often appear rapidly, while droughts are slow-onset, and have a longer time frame for prediction and diagnosis. In the past in terms of tradition drought management, the approach was focused on an emergency, humanitarian response to hunger and loss of livelihoods. While the integrated approach focuses on the whole cycle of disaster management, with focuses on the risk management aspect of the cycle.

Disaster management, including flood and drought management, requires integrated policies and plans. In other words the Government authorities need a perception shift; changing their approaches from disaster control to disaster management. Disaster control only considers one aspect of the phenomena and only addresses it in a short term period and neglects the other aspects of the problem; while in disaster management different aspects of a problem is considered duly and are addressed systematically. As such, the heavy burden of flood and drought on the shoulders of the citizens of Afghanistan is the outcome of the wrong policies and plans of the disaster management authorities, lacking an integrated approach to disaster management.

## Trump's Recipe for Middle East Chaos

By Joschka Fischer

US President Donald Trump's decision earlier this month to withdraw the United States from the Iran nuclear agreement, and to shift toward a policy of renewed sanctions and confrontation, will make the future of the Middle East even more uncertain. The signs in the weeks since have not been encouraging.

Trump's decision cannot be justified by any breach of the agreement on Iran's part. It is, rather, a return to the old, largely unsuccessful US policy of confrontation with Iran. The only difference this time is that the Trump administration seems determined to go to the brink of war – or even beyond – to get its way.

If the administration has any plans for keeping Iran's nuclear program in check in the absence of the nuclear deal, then it is keeping them a secret. Judging by some of the administration's rhetoric, it would appear that airstrikes against Iran's nuclear facilities are on the table. But bombing would only delay Iran's nuclear program, not stop it. Would Trump then consider a massive ground war to occupy the country and topple the regime? We know all too well how that strategy worked the last time it was tried.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) concluded by Iran and the US, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China, plus Germany and the European Union, was not intended only to prevent a regional nuclear-arms race or a military confrontation. It was also supposed to be the first step toward creating a new, more stable regional order that would include Iran.

The old order was established by the World War I-era Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France, which largely created the national borders that exist in the region today. A century later, it is clear that the old order has become obsolete, given that it no longer provides any semblance of stability.

Instead, the most important regional players – Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey – have all been vying for influence in the war in Syria, and collectively sliding toward a hopeless conflict for mastery of the entire region. Because no one country is strong enough to eliminate or subdue the others, this escalating struggle promises only years, if not decades, of war.

The region's instability can be traced back directly to the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003. With the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, Iran suddenly gained an opportunity to pursue a kind of quasi-hegemony in the region, starting with its Shia-majority neighbor. And after a series of mistakes by the West in Syria, Iran was able to establish an unimpeded presence stretching all the way to the Mediterranean.

This is the backdrop against which the JCPOA was negotiated. The deal was meant to reintegrate Iran into the international order, thereby encouraging it to play a more responsible regional role. But Trump's decision has foreclosed that possibility, leaving Iran's future role in the region an open question. Make no mis-

take, though: one way or another, Iran will remain an integral part of the Middle East. It is an ancient civilization that cannot simply be sidelined or ignored, unless one wants to invite even more chaos.

Having abandoned the framework for influencing Iran by diplomatic and economic means, the Trump administration's only alternative now is regime change. Clearly, White House hawks such as National Security Adviser John Bolton have not heeded any of the lessons from the US debacle in Iraq. Given the failure to bring stability to that country or to Syria, it should be obvious that escalating a confrontation with a much larger country like Iran has little to recommend it.

Unfortunately, the JCPOA probably cannot survive the re-imposition of US sanctions. European firms are not going to forsake the much larger American market just so that they can maintain ties with Iran. And once Iran loses its economic lifeline from Europe and other parts of the world, it might well decide to restart its nuclear program, or even to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, raising the risk of war.

Moreover, Russia and the US are further undermining nonproliferation by modernizing their nuclear arsenals. Where once their leaders talked about mutually agreed arms reduction and verified disarmament, now they are more interested in miniaturized nuclear warheads that can be used as bunker busters. When the world's two leading nuclear powers behave like this, the prospect of another major war in the Middle East becomes all the more terrifying. After all, with Russia's deeper involvement in Syria, the risk of a clash between Russian and Western forces in the region has already been growing. And it is not as though Russia would simply give up its new position of strength by abandoning Iran now.

None of this bodes well for Europe, which will be directly affected by an escalation of tensions in the region, owing to its geographic proximity and historic obligations to Israel. In the event, the EU would have to lead on finding a negotiated solution that addresses both the hegemonic intentions of regional players and the issue of nuclear- and conventional-arms control. For now, Europe must assert itself as a voice of reason, by holding firm to the idea of a peaceful reordering of the Middle East – regardless of how difficult this task may seem at the moment. Europeans know all too well the consequences of endless hegemonic struggles. The EU was established as a response to a century of war and terror that brought Europe to the brink of self-destruction. The lesson since then has been clear: only reconciliation and cooperation can ensure a peaceful regional order. Trump's way – hegemony – means chaos.

Joschka Fischer, Germany's foreign minister and vice chancellor from 1998 to 2005, was a leader of the German Green Party for almost 20 years.

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