

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



November 16, 2017

## Uncontrolled Rise in Opium Production This Year

It appears that Afghanistan would require more time to set its fight against poppy cultivation and production on track. Rather, it should first control the negative influences poppy cultivation may have because of its rising production. A survey by United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on Wednesday, November 15, revealed that Afghan opium production has jumped by a staggering 87 percent in the ongoing year - from an estimated 2016 level of 4,800 tons to about 9,000 in 2017. The survey has found that the total area under poppy cultivation has jumped by 63 percent or 127,000 hectares compared to 2016. In 2017, the total area of cultivation is 328,000 hectares.

According to a statement by UNODC's Executive Director, Yuri Fedotov, "In Afghanistan, already suffering from the opium produced within its borders, the increases will drive drug abuse, an increased dependency on the illicit economy, and rising levels of corruption ... New actors and markets are likely to emerge; some of these new actors may be terrorist groups attempting to use the drug trade to finance their global operations." So, the rise in opium production will ultimately finance terrorism, produce more drug addicts and make the war against terrorism very difficult.

It is widely accepted now that the poppy cultivation and its smuggling are linked with the networks of organized crime in the country that further extends to international mafia and drug dealing and they have their strong backers in the international drug market and national authorities who appear to be guardians of the nation. But the most alarming and unfortunate fact is that they have their links with the terrorist networks in the country. The growing insurgency and expanding networks of terrorism suggest that the terrorists have strong financial support from drugs. This situation is really very much intimidating. This is going to devastate the lives of the people of Afghanistan in various ways and unfortunately no break in it seems very much likely - at least not in near future as the statistics show that there has been and there will be increase in the opium production in the country if not handled properly.

The situation would not be difficult to handle if it was limited only to farmers but the fact is that the farmers are not alone to benefit from the rising prices and the rise in production; rather farmers take a negligible part of it while most of the income goes to the networks that manage its filthy business. And it is not concealed from knowing minds that the terrorist networks have a lion's share in such income. So, it means that with the growth in the production of opium, there will be considerable increase in insurgency from the terrorist networks that are already in the process of gaining strength. Moreover, it has also been observed that the cultivations mostly take place in the areas where Taliban seem to have more control. This clearly suggests that there is connection between the poppy business and the growing insurgency.

Definitely, this in Afghanistan is well knit in the larger network of organized crime. But unfortunately, the measures that have been carried out to counter the growth of this menace have not been comprehensive and serious. It is even believed that some of the important figures are involved in backing this business who should, otherwise, have the responsibility to counter them. And the growing corruption and negligence of responsibility in the country does not let the government notice such realities.

Though Afghanistan has been greatly influenced by this menace, it is yet to hit the bull's eye in this regard. Moreover, there have been technical and financial assistance from the international community to help Afghanistan eradicate this evil, but most of it goes to the pockets of rampant corruption. So, the uncontrolled opium production is determined to influence the country in various ways. It, on one side, is making drugs available to a large number of people, who are both intentionally and unintentionally becoming addict to it and becoming responsible for giving birth to different social problems. On the other hand, it is providing the fuel for insurgency as it is bound to benefit the terrorist networks in the country that largely depend on such sources of income after losing support from elsewhere. Government authorities in this regard have to get very much serious and try to take concrete steps to make sure that the production is reduced to a considerable extent.

Most importantly, the government must try to establish its writ and control over the places where there is widespread cultivation and production of opium. Moreover, there must be no tolerance for opium fields and they must be destroyed whenever and wherever they are found. At the same time, the efforts to grow substitute crops must be encouraged and promoted. Afghan saffron is one of the best in the world and its use as a substitute crop can be very successful. Above all, any sort of corruption in this regard must never be tolerated and the ones who are involved in this filthy business must be dealt with iron hands.



## Kabul and a Women's Garden

By Fatima Faizi

There are many states with manifold cities in the world, however, there are some countries in need of open spaces for women. Kabul is a city in dire need of open space for women to meander without being watched by lustful eyes. A number of men deem it a certain right to watch women's body for pleasure. Sometimes, they murmur some words while observing women, the pain of which will be felt only by women.

Jane Jacobs a great theorist about city says that a city street equipped to handle strangers, and to make a safety asset, in itself, our of the presence of strangers, as the streets of successful city neighborhoods always do, must have three main qualities:

First, there must be a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space. Public and private spaces cannot ooze into each other as they do typically in suburban settings or in projects.

Second, there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind.

Third, she says that the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers. According to Jane Jacobs, nobody enjoys sitting on a stoop or looking out a window at an empty street.

Almost nobody does such a thing. Large numbers of people entertain themselves, off and on, by watching street activity. Jane Jacob, who is also the author of "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" says that in order for a street to be a safe place, "there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street."

She believes that adding more police presence will not make streets safer, because it does not address the root problem nor tap into the real power of making them safer. Adding police officers adds an artificial sense of safety. The real way a street is made safer is from an unconscious effort of its own residents and other occupants. The streets that are the safest are the ones where the occupants police the street on their own, not necessarily with conscious effort, but while going about their daily business. While they are walking the sidewalks, people tend to keep an eye on things.

Streets where people do not use their sidewalks, such

as in neighborhoods where people do not socialize with their neighbors, are those where crime is invited. The criminals know the streets where no one keeps a watch on the neighborhood, and those are the ones they target. It is wished that the "eyes upon the street" would exist in Afghanistan so as to prevent from unusual and uncontrolled behaviors of some individuals.

The terms of "eyes upon the street" would be better used for those men who know no boundaries and seeking to realize each and every thing about others. It is easily noticeable on streets. Those women who walk on the street feel as if they watched through magnifying glass. For instance, when a woman stands on the corner of a street waiting for someone, all eyes will be focused on her. They will follow who meet her and what they talk about. In such a case, a space like Women's Garden, where women can walk without being watched with scrutiny, will be a great asset.

One will ask that how the women who call for equality deem this Garden as asset! It is because men narrowed public places for women due to their inappropriate behaviors. Mostly, women were not able to meander freely. Take, Babur Garden, for example. Both men and women are allowed to walk in but a woman does not dare walk alone there.

The places like Women's Garden in Kabul is highly suitable. In this case, no men have been deprived of their rights. As women's freedoms have been curtailed in public places, their rights there is also discrimination in utilizing public places. So, there is a need for places to be used by women.

Such atmospheres will support women to regain their identity outside home and feel independence. They have the right to live or walk far from masculine atmosphere and pass time freely and with peace of mind.

Experiencing a safe atmosphere is highly significant for us. There are many women in Kabul who do not go out from the four walls of home for days and months. Afghan women encounter much restriction and lack of safe places also restrict their freedom and force them stay at home. Therefore, they tend not to walk a lot.

The places like Women's Garden will help women experience public places. In Afghanistan, restaurants and cafés are also considered for men. Although there are specific spaces for families, still there seems barriers before families. To conclude, the places like Women's Garden will give a peace of mind to women.

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## Still in Pursuit of Islamic Emirate?

By Hujjatullah Zia

The Taliban's dream for establishing Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan did not come true. They ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 with the barrel of gun and practiced upon harsh ideology. They also intended to foist their radical mindset on the public at gunpoint. The Taliban curtailed the freedom of Afghan people and cherished a misogynistic mentality. Now the Taliban seeks to continue the same trend in tribal belts both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Under the guise of peace committee, a faction of the Taliban placed a ban on cultural and social activities and restricted women's movement outside their homes without a male chaperone in South Waziristan Agency, Pakistan. The Taliban peace committee has reportedly issued tough guidelines through pamphlets in Wana town and warned local people to abide by these rules otherwise violators would face repercussions. The committee has banned music, athen, a traditional dance which is performed in wedding ceremonies or other festive occasions, and use of narcotics.

Guidelines issued through pamphlets ban cultural and social activities and restrict women's movement. The pamphlets said that women would not be allowed to visit market and clinic or faith healers without adult male members of their family, including husbands and brothers.

The committee is headed by Salahuddin alias Aybubi, a successor of Mullah Muhammad Nazir, who was killed in a US drone strike in the Birmil area of South Waziristan Agency in January 2013.

A Pakistani Newspaper says, "South Waziristan Agency became a hotbed of Talibanisation in 2003 that spilled over to other tribal agencies of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Local leaders of various Taliban factions had established parallel administration in the area."

The Taliban's mindsets root in many radical schools of thought, including Salafi, Deobandism, Muslims Brotherhood Party, Wahhabis, etc.

That is to say, the Taliban did not practice upon a certain school of thought and calling them simply Salafi, or Wahhabi will not be right. They constituted a more radical idea out of many and mostly attended the superficial and apparent issues.

For instance, wearing tall beard was very significant for the Taliban; whereas shedding the blood of innocent individuals was as easy as a piece of cake.

The guidelines issued through a pamphlet reflects the Taliban's ideology but not in a perfect way. The Taliban's regime implemented those mindsets in Afghanistan. During their regime, the people were not allowed to watch

TV, dance in wedding or public ceremonies, listen to music, etc. and women were not allowed to go out without male chaperone. However, placing ban on using narcotic drug in South Waziristan is highly ridiculous. The bulk of the Taliban's financial support is gained from cultivating narcotic drug. In Afghanistan, the Taliban, neither during their regime nor at present, issued fatwa against cultivating narcotic drug. The Taliban are believed to have a hand in glove with the Mafia and smugglers of narcotic drug. Now banning the use of narcotic drug in Waziristan by the Taliban is no more than masking their sinister faces under sanctity.

It comes as reports say that the cultivation of narcotic drug has increased to 87 percent in Afghanistan, mostly in war-stricken areas, which is an unprecedented rise. Now the question is that why cultivating drug increases in restive provinces? It is self-explanatory that the Taliban support this issue and do not care about the fact that cultivating drug is against Islamic tenets. The Taliban never practiced upon Islamic Sharia and always preferred their own social, political, and economic interests to Islamic law. If they really practice upon Islamic values, they will have to issue fatwa against cultivating and smuggling drug in Afghanistan.

After all, why they simply do not place ban on killing innocent people, including women and children? The Taliban militants kill hundreds of people annually both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. During their regime, the Taliban killed not only women and children but also domestic animals in Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh province. They targeted all the living indiscriminately. Despite the fact that the world knows about the Taliban's barbarity, they still intend to hide their cruelty under the veneer of religion through placing a ban on the use of drug in part of Pakistan.

The paradoxical practices of the Taliban are highly shameful. Such acts originate in lack of knowledge and ignorance. Almost none of their practices are favored by Islam, but they still claim to be perfect Muslims and excommunicate others. So, they have changed religion as a vehicle for gaining their social, political, and economic interests.

Unluckily, those who live in tribal belts mostly fall for the Taliban's claim and not only obey their orders but also join them. Subsequently, they urged the locals to send their children to their seminaries to be taught religious knowledge. And people approved of the Taliban's saying. Hence, they simply fall for their bogus claims and the Taliban recruit forces via such tactics.

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