

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



November 17, 2015

## Injustice and Discrimination Continue

The echoes of the cries of poor Rukhsana could still be heard around, when the news reports revealed that Taliban along with some criminals attacked her house and stole all the belongings of her family. Rukhsana was stoned to death mercilessly a couple of weeks earlier at Ghalmeen, an area about 40 kilometers from Ghor for having eloped with a person whom she liked. She was married against her will; therefore, she was not happy with the decision. Though the incident got enough media coverage and the graphic video of her stoning was also uploaded in social media, her family could not get justice; instead they were robbed by the same culprits. It can be easily observed in Afghan society that women become the victim of all sorts of violence. They are forcefully married, mostly to the aged men, when they are still children. It is not unusual in Afghan society to arrange the marriages of the girl before they are mature and in most of the cases before they are ten years of age and they really do not understand the dynamics of marriage and are sandwiched in the complexities of life. Another aspect of traditional marriage system in Afghanistan is that the girls after marriage are basically considered as a commodity that has been bought by the men so as to utilize it the way they please - in most of the cases they are no better in their parents' houses as well.

It is not necessary that the men should have the capability to shoulder the responsibilities of married life. On many occasions, the women are married to the men who are unemployed and drug addicts. Though while being married, different qualities are sought in women, for men there are no strict inspection. It is enough that they are men and they are old enough to marry.

Women are required to be docile and obedient. They are required to be able to work hard along with having beauty and chastity. The suitability is searched only in women, while men are above all such considerations. Moreover, after marriage women are asked to compromise with men in every situation and condition. They are required to sacrifice their entire lives for the betterment of their husbands' houses and lives. When they want to change such a scenario and want to pursue a life of their choice, they are stoned to death. This situation has given rise to every sort of discrimination and violence against women. The unjust and ill-treatment of women in our society has given rise to every sort of trouble the women face. The whole social structure and behavior are designed in such a way that supports discrimination against them and they are expected to tolerate all these without even raising their voice.

The incidents violating women rights in Afghanistan have not been stopped though there have been comparative developments made in the last 13 years or so and billions of dollars spent. In fact the changes are prevalent only on the exterior while from within the Afghan society still lacks the modernity and development it needs in order to reach to a respectable position. The support and assistance of the international community has only been able to provide clean and beautiful attire not a praiseworthy soul to Afghan society and this attire is going to get dirty very soon. The Afghan social structure has been vehemently dominated by religious extremism and tribal nepotism. Most of the self-designed religious doctrines and tribal norms are against the women and discriminate their basic rights. Unfortunately, these norms and doctrines have even gone to the extent of violence and have tortured women physically - mostly in the public. They, in the name of dignity of women, have in fact degraded them. In the ordinary course of action, women are discriminated but the situation gets worse when a society goes through instability and disorder. The instability and disorder, though influence all the strata of society, are bound to effect the weaker strata the most and unfortunately women form one of the same strata. They bear the brunt of the conflicts and war and have to give sacrifices in different ways. The same can be observed in our country Afghanistan. Decades of conflicts and wars have influenced them to a large extent and today, when there has been some sort of development in different fields of life, there is still margin of considerable development regarding the emancipation of women.

There is no doubt that the social and economic conditions in Afghanistan, to a large extent, are responsible for the deteriorating standard of living for all the people but the negligence of women's rights and dignity are also a dominant reason. On most of the occasions the rights of women are not only violated by the mere compulsions; rather they are choices made by the people.

With such a situation prevailing around, it is really difficult to see improvement in condition of women who have been suffering discriminations since ages. Afghan authorities and all the Afghan people, especially women themselves, must strive to change the scenario as it would benefit the society as a whole as women are an integral part of it.



## France and Afghanistan - The Terrorism Victims in Europe and Asia

By Hujjatullah Zia

Reports say that a wave of coordinated attacks left more than 128 dead and 180 wounded in scenes of carnage in Paris on late Friday - the incident is said to be the bloodiest in Europe since the Madrid train bombings in 2004. The attackers struck at least six very different venues, ranging from the national sports stadium to a pizzeria.

The casualties eclipsed the deaths and mayhem in Paris during the massacre at the Charlie Hebdo newspaper and related assaults around the French capital by terrorists less than a year ago.

The multiple attacks across the city late Friday were "an act of war...committed by a terrorist army, the Islamic State, against France, against...what we are, a free country," French President Francois Hollande is quoted as saying.

In spite of exerting strict law vis-à-vis terrorism - mainly following the attack at Charlie Hebdo - France suffers the brunt of terrorist assaults in Europe. France established a special court for prosecuting the criminals involved in terrorism and applies harsh rule in this regard. For instance, a person suspect of terror arms will be held under police investigation, within 48 hours or so without access to attorney whereas one accused of other crimes will be held no more than 24 hours. Moreover, it is legally allowed to hold a terrorist suspect in detention for two years during the interrogation while the maximum time for investigating a simple suspect is four months.

Despite the mentioned facts, France is the sacrificial lamb in Europe as Afghanistan is the very victim of terrorism in Asia. It is self-explanatory that terrorism and militancy are the crux of the challenges in Afghanistan. Previously, the Taliban insurgents made inroads in the country under a single leadership; however, now the splinter group has aggravated the issue. After all, the emergence of the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group has left the Afghan nation at the mercy of greater sacrifices and posed a new challenge to the government. The graph of civilian casualties rises in the country with the passage of time. One's blood is shed and his/her dignity is disrespected on the grounds of their cast, creed or religion. In another item, the noncombatants have been made scapegoats in Afghanistan - the same as in France.

Based on a source, Afghan government has also come to a decision to implement severe law regarding criminals/suspects involved in terrorism. A particular court is determined for their prosecution in Parwan province by the President's mandate. Unlike general investigation, a suspect of terrorist issue will be held under interrogation for 10 days without access to attorney and he/she will be held in detention center for a year, which is also extendable, for keeping preventing measures.

Actually, multiple definitions have been given over terrorism:

"A policy intended to strike with terror those against whom it is adopted; the employment of methods of intimidation; the fact of terrorizing or condition of being terrorized." Based on second definition, terrorist is "Anyone who attempts to further his views by a system of coercive intimidation". This definition underscores clearly the other fundamental characteristic of terrorism: that it is a planned, calculated, and indeed systematic act. We may therefore now attempt to define terrorism as the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change. All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim or object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider 'target audience' that might include a rival ethnic or religious group, an entire country, a national government or political party, or public opinion in general. Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little.

Formerly, terrorism did not have a far-reaching aspect rather it was restricted within a limit of political power used by politicians against one another. However, in modern terrorism, people were changed to scapegoat or used as a tool for gaining interests.

Since the militant extremists are mostly the religious ideologues, enforcing severe law failed to curb terrorism in France. Similarly, negotiation was also proved abortive as Afghan officials did their best within the last decade to bring in peace through reconciliation process.

In a nutshell, the foundation of High Peace Council in 2010, which was tasked to bring the Taliban to the table of negotiation, was in vain. Will exerting strict law, such as France, bear the desired result in Afghanistan?

This mechanism is unlikely to stop terrorism. The 2007 bomb blasts in the UK prompted the International Association of Chiefs of Police to come up with techniques to prevent the suicide bomber from reaching his target. "The solution recommended was shooting the suspected bomber in the head. The technique holds out hope for those countries where absolutely no mechanism is in place to stop the living bomb from creating mayhem."

Israel has been able to foil 80 percent of suicide operations through counter-intelligence. Other countries like Afghanistan have to enhance the capacity of their intelligence agencies in order to disrupt the network that organizes and supports such actions. Moreover, both the countries must intensify security in their borderlines to prevent the militants' infiltration.

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## Actual Causes Behind Paris Attacks!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Paris attacks are sad and tragic but they also gave rise to so many questions that might lead to some answers, bitter and hard to digest but pointing to conclusions that might prevent such a tragedy in future. The uniqueness in this attack is the successful planning and operation of terrorists in a city that was already on a high alert. If a city located in the heart of Europe can come under attack, no European city can claim to be safe of the ominous threat of terrorism. Investigations are underway and it would be early to make predictions but as expected, the attacks have resulted in the outburst of hatred against all the Muslims and especially those who are living in France and other European countries. Needless to say that Muslim community and political leaders from all around the world have condemned the attacks as 'brutal and barbarous' and 'having no relationship with Islam' but once again, the opposite winds are on high air and these statements are going to add to the vulnerability of European Muslims against the hatred based on ethnicity and religion.

The biggest failure is of intelligence agencies in France who were not able to detect anything about the attacks that were carried out on such a large scale. According to French police, they had unveiled and averted many such attacks in summer this year but they could not find any clue about this and terrorists were able to hit a blow on the French capital.

Though we share the pain and loss of Parisians but this incident also gives an opportunity to look at those factors that actually gave rise to these attacks and this may not be the last of its kind. Until and unless the actual causes of this attack are addressed and corrected, the circumstances and consequences may remain, more or less, the same. According to political analysts, the biggest reason is the feeling of alienation rampant in large number of European Muslims. This feeling is not limited to France only but it extends to Britain and a number of other countries, depending upon the level of alienation in different countries. According to a French poll conducted in 2015, there are many French citizens who feel themselves to be without any identity or country and this is promoting uncertainty and pessimism about their future. Majority of French Muslims have emigrated from African countries. Majority of them are those whose parents had come from Africa and they were born in France. They can speak French like any other French citizen and have acquired all the social skills needed to live like any other French citizen but still they are labeled to be 'Arabs' or 'Africans'. It is the reason why, there are many parts of Paris that are known to be areas where 'Arabs' or 'Africans' live and there is a strong sense of division in society.

This all gave rise to frustration, lack of hope and in some cases and especially the youth. The rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq gave them with the opportunity to come out of this frustrating environment and enjoy the feeling of their identity. This fact is also verified by a video released by ISIS in which a number of French Muslims are shown, burning their passports and encouraging others to do so.

However, the channel of escape for French youth was provided by the government when it encouraged its Muslim citizens to go and fight in Syria against the government forces of Bashar-al-Assad. Hundreds of French citizens came to Syria but here they also realized how they were treated in France and this bitter realization added to their hatred against French government and citizens. When France announced to be a part of coalition aerial attack on ISIS targets in 2014, it turned into enemies all the French citizens who were allowed to come to Syria and fight against government forces.

Until the latest reports, the identity of two attackers has been confirmed in which one was born in Paris while another one was having a Syrian passport. Question rises here that how a person carrying a Syrian passport was able to travel and live in France and his activities were not kept under a vigilant observation.

It simply shows that ISIS was able to exploit the feelings of those who felt detached from their societies. In the long run, the government of France and other European countries must re-assess their policies regarding social values and rights of their citizens regardless of their ethnic backgrounds or religion.

The attack came only after a few days when French Prime Minister had admitted that the weapon aimed for the anti-government rebels had fallen into the hands of terrorist groups in Syria.

The former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who was the main character in waging war in Iraq, came up with an apology and admitted his mistakes and it gives an insight for other European stakeholders of this dirty war to make corrections in their foreign policies. As an immediate outcome of these attacks, Muslims have come under severe hatred not only in France but also in all other countries of Europe. And this is absolutely what ISIS had been planning to achieve. The more people hate Muslims and alienate them, the more they will get hopeless and then ISIS will show them a ray of hope and this will provide them with angry Muslims who might become their victims in future attacks.

As expected, this incident has given a new opportunity to a number of European governments to enhance their powers against the rights of citizens and garnish more funds for their security agencies. Britain immediately raised the funding for its security agencies to tackle the threat of ISIS inside the country. Similarly, large numbers of politicians also got an opportunity to accumulate the votes of harassed Muslims and those who might win some votes by talking against Muslims and promoting hatred based on nationalism.

This sad incident has also given rise to sharp decline in support for immigrants and the voices against them are rising high. Eight terrorists of ISIS have unfortunately closed the door that was opened by Ailan Kurdi.

In the end, we all appreciate the move of social networking sites to show solidarity with the victims of Paris attack and the goodwill of solidarity and humanity should not be kept limited.

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