

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



November 12, 2016

The Anniversary of Sectarianism Victims

The martyrdom anniversary of Shokria Tabassom, a 13-year-old girl, was held on Friday in Kabul. Her death galvanized the nation and prompted a nationwide demonstration last year. The warring factions abducted seven members of the ethnic minority group, including Tabassom, in Zabul province and beheaded them without an iota of mercy. The untoward incident outraged the nation's conscience and triggered an outpouring of grief.

The systematic killing of Tabassom and her travelling companions, which was intended to trigger sectarianism among the Shiite and Sunni Muslims, sparked off large demonstration in Kabul, last year, as the procession of demonstrators carried their corpses to the presidential palace and chanted slogans against sectarianism and injustice urging the government to prosecute the perpetrators. The peaceful and self-moving demonstration and national civil movement was called "the Movement of Tabassom".

On the death anniversary, Members of Wolesi Jirga and political figures along with thousands of men and women, including the clergy and civil society activists, attended the ceremony. Some political figures gave strong rhetoric and urged the government to pay equal attention to all citizens irrespective of their race and color. Moreover, the "High People's Council of Enlightenment Movement", which urged the government to route a power line through Bamyan province, and staged two large demonstrations earlier, pronounced its declaration and asked the National Unity Government (NUG) to eradicate discriminations and pay equal heed to all provinces. Pointing out the civilian casualties and attack on a peaceful demonstration, held by the Movement, which killed and wounded tens of people, including women and children, the declaration accused the government of insufficiency and showing reluctance in supporting civil movements. The declaration added that the NUG has narrowed the opportunity for citizens in finding entry in governmental posts. Moreover, it is said that a number of citizens, who risked taking refuge to foreign countries to survive terrorism and poverty; the government signed an "inglorious contract" to make them return to the war-stricken country. Based on this declaration, people lose their hopes with each passing day and the air is filled with strong sense of disappointment since the government has no strategy to tackle the political and economic issues. Warring parties, mainly the Taliban and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), seek to stoke sectarian tension and killed members of the ethnic minority groups on the grounds of their race, sex, color and creed, especially since last couple of years. It is believed that sowing the seeds of sectarianism in Afghanistan's soil, by radical fighters, is a serious threat to the nation.

In the evening of October 11, at least two attackers wearing police uniforms and equipped with grenades and machine guns opened fire on Ashura mourners in Kabul's Kart-e Sakhi shrine, the most popular gathering place in Kabul for mourners marking Muharram.

Few months ago, the US designated the ISIL group's affiliate in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a terrorist organization. The US State Department said the order concerned the Islamic State group's "Khorasan Province" - which US officials refer to as "ISIL-K." It said, "The group is based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and is composed primarily of former members of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban." Hence, some members of the Taliban group have changed their white flag into black one and operating under the caliphate of Al-Baghdadi. They stoke sectarianism to put pressure on the government.

Needless to say, if Afghans do not exercise religious tolerance and equality on the basis of law, the nascent democracy will not lead them to their utopian world. We will have to act upon our Constitution, which is based on religious tenets, international instruments and ethical code. It has recognized the "natural" and "inviolable" rights of men and women and their equality before the law. Therefore, no one is supposed to be discriminated on the basis of their accidental backgrounds. To put it in plain language, men and women are entitled with inherent rights and dignity - that their Creator bestowed upon them - on the basis of being human. Analysts are of the view that if the government does not plan an effective strategy to counter insurgency and combat the ISKP, the rift between state and nation will widen and the graph of civilian casualties will go higher. In the Asia Foundation's 2015 Survey of the Afghan People, citizens who believed the country was going in the right direction declined to 37 per cent from 55 percent in 2014. After insecurity, worsening economic conditions were cited as the main reason for such pessimism. Therefore, the NUG must stop tackle the current issue so as to gain the trust of the public. Constitutionally, the government is supposed to respect and protect the rights and liberty of the nation and form a civil society on the basis of democracy where all citizens be able to exercise their rights equally without a sense of chagrin and anxiety. It is hoped that the NUG will address the challenges and prevent from civilian casualties in near future.



Worsening Displacement Crisis in Afghanistan

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

Afghans have been suffering nearly 40 years of continuous armed conflict and social disorders. Yet, the country continues to suffer widespread violence, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, migrations and human rights violations. After the 2014 presidential election that resulted in the embattled National Unity Government (NUG) and the withdrawal of NATO forces, violence continues to surge throughout the country. The several divided wings Taliban has been making gains and unwilling to engage in any peace talks with the NUG. Furthermore, the so-called ISIS has been gaining ground in many provinces in recent months. The renewed insurgency is applying increasing pressure on government resources which are already diminished by reduced levels of international aid. As a result, Afghanistan has got the place of largest producer of displacement and refugees in the world!

Recently, the United Nations has warned that escalated fight across Afghanistan could displace many more people, lamenting that international support is not enough to handle the unfolding crisis. United Nations special reporter Chaloka Beyani said on last Thursday that UN agencies had registered more than 323,000 Afghans as internally displaced people (IDPs) since the start of this year, in a continuation of an upward trend over the past four years. "Warnings by humanitarian partners suggest that many more IDPs could be displaced by the end of the year, yet attention and resources allocated to their needs seem to be waning rather than increasing," Beyani said during a briefing in Kabul.

The displacement picture in Afghanistan is changing as the conflict evolves and intensifies. The UN official said more and more Afghans have been forced not to return to their homes as the Taliban-led insurgency continues to further undermine the country's fragile security". He said children have paid a heavy price as they have no access to proper education in displacement camps."

It is no exaggeration to speak of a lost generation of displaced Afghan children deprived of education since children constitute about 56 per cent of the displaced population," Beyani said, adding, "Displacement is becoming more protracted for more people as the security situation has led many to make the difficult decision not to return to their homes." Afghanistan has been grappling with the issue of IDPs for decades. The country has been beset by a fresh wave of Taliban attacks from north to the south, which has left many uprooted from their homes. Aid groups warn that the situation may escalate in the short time remaining to winter, when fighting normally subsides. Elsewhere in his remarks, Beyani reiterated previous calls on governments and donors to step up their support, saying aid agencies will need at least 150 million dollars to meet urgent needs, including winter assistance packages.

"I urge the donor community to respond generously and rap-

idly to that call," he said.

It is said that the majority of those displaced are from war-hit regions such as Kunduz and Uruzgan; the conflict in Kunduz and Faryab provinces has also largely contributed to this problem and many displaced residents from this Northern Province have sought refuge in Kabul city. Concerns have also been raised as winter fast approaches.

Hence, government has been criticized over its inability to address the problems of these Internally displaced refugees; Families do not have good living conditions; half of them have not been given aid; government's financial resources are also not enough to address the problems of the displaced families, (especially) before winter. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations has confirmed that only half of the internally displaced families have been given humanitarian assistance.

Since the start of the March 2016, more than 450,000 people have been displaced in the country; the problem is that we do not have access to sufficient financial resources to meet the challenge," said Hafiz Ahmad Miakhail, media advisor of the ministry of refugees and repatriations. Statistics show that currently the number of internally displaced persons across the nation is estimated to be over 1.2 million in total. As in recent months, there has been a sudden increase in arrival of refugees returning from Pakistan.

In addition, about one million people are expected to return to Afghanistan by the end of March 2017 due to political and security developments from both the Pakistan and Afghanistan sides of the border.

Although the voluntary repatriation of Afghan returnees was long announced, negotiations with humanitarian actors have delayed the actual return process. Due to a change of dynamics in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, especially with an intensifying spread of terrorism, the presence of the so-called Islamic State (IS)/ Da'esh in both countries and Afghanistan's deepening ties with India the issue of returns is again at the forefront. According to reports, an average of 7,400 Afghan returnees has been crossing the border into Afghanistan on the daily basis while the previous ones have not been settled yet. Consequently, Afghanistan considered as one of the largest producer of displacement and refugees crisis in the world! Afghan refugees make up over than 21% of the world refugees, who have fled to Europe since January 2015 due to worsening security situation.

In addition, Afghanistan has recognized as the largest producer of narcotics in the world! These caused serious doubts and question in intention for serious fight against terrorism, narcotics and poverty in the country. Therefore, the authorities as well the international partners should understand that this is the high time to revise the policies and strategies against the deteriorating challenges.

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Global Stability in the Trump Era

By Carl Bildt

Angry American voters who feel slighted by the Washington establishment have had their say. A stunned world must now come to terms with what the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States means for global stability in the years ahead.

The world has some time to consider the full implications of Trump's victory, because he will not take office until January 20, 2017, and he will then spend several months staffing his administration with the men and women who will actually formulate and implement its policies.

One thing we already know is that authoritarian rulers around the world can rest easier. They will not hear any more harsh words from the US about their regimes' contempt for democracy, freedom, or human rights. The American goal of making the world safe for democracy will now be replaced by a policy of "America first," a sea-change in US foreign policy that is already likely arousing jubilation in Russian and Chinese halls of power.

We also know that Trump's victory jeopardizes world trade. Trump has promised to ditch the 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership, impose punitive tariffs on Chinese imports, and unilaterally renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. This is the last thing the world needs right now, given that trade - and the global economy itself - is already struggling. Trump has promised to strengthen the US military and national-security regime, and to aggressively pursue the Islamic State and jihadist threats around the world. But eliminating the Islamic State and bringing genuine stability to the Levant will require far more than what he has proposed so far. And while he will probably revise his overly casual comments about nuclear weapons, we cannot ignore the possibility that the world will enter a new period of arms proliferation and instability.

Trump has said that he will renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal, and he has vowed to renege on the US's carbon-reduction commitments under the Paris climate agreement. These are two of the international community's only significant diplomatic achievements in recent years. The consequences of a US retreat from them are anyone's guess. In any case, global stability will certainly suffer. Trump's foreign-policy strategy is based on remaining unpredictable. But while some cynicism

in international relations has frequently been part of US policy (just ask Henry Kissinger), predictability is at the core of America's system of alliances, relationships, and friendships, which it has cultivated over many decades. Damaging America's standing as a good-faith actor on the world stage would set the scene for widespread instability.

When Trump takes office, he will have to move quickly to reassure America's friends and allies around the world. Otherwise, they could seek alternative relationships with the US's adversaries or other unsavory players.

The European Union will play a central role in the drama ahead, because it has long been America's primary partner on global issues, and vice versa. Trump, however, has praised the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU, and his only European friends so far are figures such as UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage, who led the UK's Brexit campaign and even stumped for Trump in the US. Whether he intends to or not, Trump will give populists and nationalists such as Farage a boost in the coming months and years.

Trump may find out too late that a fractured Europe is a less stable Europe, and that there are US adversaries poised to exploit the opportunity of European disunity. Russia, for its part, is explicitly trying to undermine the EU, and to change the rules of the game in Europe. Russian President Vladimir Putin may now view Trump as a new partner in his revisionist project; but he could very well overplay his hand, too.

The world will have to give Trump time to pivot from his anger-driven campaign to responsible governance, which is the only way that the US can maintain its global influence. He will have to make his choices for Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and National Security Adviser early, and the world will scrutinize his appointees carefully.

Trump may turn out to make good choices. But, given the tenor of his campaign, confidence in the US on the part of its foreign partners is at low ebb. With Trump's victory, the world has decisively entered a period of increasing unpredictability and instability. Global challenges are multiplying, and the international order as it has existed since the end of World War II is under grave threat. Even under the best of circumstances, Trump's election has undoubtedly reinforced these disturbing trends. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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