

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

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The Need for Participation of Women in Governance and Political Decision Making: AN Afghan Discourse

Women constitute more than half of the population of Afghanistan. Though they can play a critical role in different sectors including governance and political decision making and Afghanistan is committed to increase their participation in the different spheres, but it has not been able to realize its women agendas so far.

However, studies demonstrate that the level of involvement of women in governance at the governance and political decision making level is not in tandem to the policy requirement of 30 percent affirmative action.

As a result, a discourse of this magnitude demands first and foremost, an empirical foundations of how women in different parts of Afghanistan can galvanize themselves into a formidable group towards the articulation of a common cause of action, which of course, would give a searchlight in fine-tuning a workable blue-prints to ensuring women earn and hold their inalienable rights including positions as the case may warrant. Based on the research findings, due to the strictness, rigidity, cultural complexities and ascending competitive nature of governance and politics in the country, the women bloc have not been actively involved. And when 'they are admitted', the support accorded them is inadequate, epitomized with their small attendance at board meetings, political rallies, voting and political offices.

Women participation in Afghan politics at the grassroots level is an issue of great concern both for the international community and women's rights organizations because women have been relegated to the background politically for a long time, which of course made them lose their rightful place in governance and political decision making processes. Though women account for more than 50% of the population but they are underdeveloped, they are under-represented in politics.

Factors are identified in extant literature as essential determinants of women participation include social and political relationships in a given society. According to social scholars male domination, political parties and culture of formal political structures, wrong socialization of women are the main causes of women low participation at the governance and decision making in the society. Therefore, it is necessary to make attempts to bring to fore the inept scenarios associated with women at the governance and political decision making which have plagued their level of participation; and argue how these have continuously deepened the rate of women marginalization in politics and governable space at the grassroots.

Research show that more women are involved in governance and political decision making at both central and local levels of government, particularly at the various houses of parliament. As a result, What happens at the legislative and executive arena is that men are the major occupant of political offices. Based on research findings, it can be established that women involvement in governance and political decision making is just gaining ground, despite the popular declaration of '30 percent affirmative action' in Afghanistan, characterized by narrow-mindedness, poor attitude, low participation, and high deprivation tendencies. Marginalization of women in governance and political decision making is nothing but an elongation of male dominance in virtually all political affairs. As such, historical fact of this nature is strongly associated with the attitudinal views which had often impede the chances of women to having more political representatives at the various government levels in Afghanistan.

Women participation in the governance and political decision making are crucial for having a diverse and dynamic society. Therefore, as the Wolesi Jirga election is due next week, it is the mandate of all Afghans to vote for gender equality and support eligible women to be elected to voice the concerns of the Afghan women At the National Assembly of Afghanistan.



Kazakhstan is a Center of Interconfessional Dialogue of the Modern World

By: Hadi Ahmad Bargasht

The mutual understanding and consent in matters of religion is one of the main conditions of social and political stability in the modern world.

In this context, the main components of Kazakhstan's model of interfaith relations are: liberal legislation, balanced policy in the field of religion, respect for the historical past and cultural traditions of the people of Kazakhstan, international events aimed at strengthening global security and the development of international cooperation.

As the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasized: «Our model of interreligious harmony is a real contribution of Kazakhstan to the global process of interaction of various faiths». At the same time, it is important to note that the history of independent state development of the Republic of Kazakhstan is only 27 years old, but in this short period RK became one of the leaders in global peacekeeping and integration initiatives, including the holding of regular Congresses of world and traditional leaders religions (Congresses).

To date, six such Congresses have been held in Kazakhstan: the First in 2003, the Second in 2006, the Third in 2009, the Fourth in 2012, and the Fifth in 2015. The Sixth conference was successfully completed on the October 11, 2018.

It should be noted that in Nazarbayev's speech at the 66-th session of the United Nations General Assembly he proposed to hold the Fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions under the aegis of the United Nations. «This is our contribution to the global dialogue to build confidence on the planet», - he said.

Such a representative event brings together delegates from all over the world -adherents of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism and other religions, who jointly discuss the issues of freedom of religion and the role of religious leaders in strengthening international safety. The focus of attention of participants of these congresses are urgent issues of overcoming the spiritual crisis of mankind, uniting the efforts of world religions in order to solve all planetary conflicts. An indicator of the high effectiveness of the work of these congresses is the expansion of the number of influential international organizations and institutions participating in these forums, including the UN, OSCE, UNESCO, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and etc.

The experience of Kazakhstan on the effective interaction of dif-

ferent religions is studied by international research centers, so in the international arena Kazakhstan is perceived as a territory of the world, an effective platform for dialogue and rapprochement of cultures and religions.

According to international analysts, historically Kazakhstan has always been a crossroads a meeting place and a dialogue of different religions, cultures and civilizations of the East and West. Inherited from the cultural and ethical traditions of the Kazakhs tolerance in the spiritual sphere is a good basis for the preservation of civil peace in the present and future.

During the years of independence Kazakhstan has ensured absolute freedom of religious belief to all faiths: Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Jews.

There has been a significant quantitative and qualitative growth of religious institutions. Today, according to the Agency for Religious Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the total number of religious associations in Kazakhstan representing 17 faiths is - 3,088 and in 1990 there were only 670. The number of Islamic associations increased from 46 to 2,229. The number of parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church has increased more than four times (from 62 to 280). The number of associations of the Roman Catholic Church has doubled (from 42 to 79). The number of Protestant churches, both traditional and new, has increased to almost 500. In addition, there are 4 Jewish and 2 Buddhist religious associations. Religious holidays of Kurban Eid and Christmas are announced in Kazakhstan as days off.

It is in the above context that the well-known expert, the UN Special rapporteur Hainer Bielefeldt in one of his speeches noted that Kazakhstan's society is distinguished by high religious pluralism and emphasized the commitment of the leadership of Kazakhstan to support and protect the established climate of stable interreligious coexistence in the country, including through the organization of interfaith dialogue at the central, regional and local levels.

The holding of the next VI-th Congress of leaders of world and traditional religions under the division «Religious Leaders for a Safe World» in Astana has enriched the international community with a new hope of avoiding the worst development, faith in the wisdom and responsibility of humanity.

As a result of the forum, the participants adopted a Joint Statement, which was another major step towards each other, an understanding of the exceptional importance of peace and harmony between religions, peoples and states.

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Jamal Khashoggi Rejiggers the Middle East at Potentially Horrible Cost

By: James M. Dorsey

The fate of missing Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, assuming that his disappearance was the work of Saudi security and military officials, threatens to upend the fundamentals of fault lines in the Middle East.

At stake is not only the fate of a widely respected journalist and the future of Turkish-Saudi relations.

Mr. Khashoggi's fate, whether he was kidnapped by Saudi agents during a visit to the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul to obtain proof of his divorce or murdered on its premises, threatens to severely disrupt the US-Saudi alliance that underwrites much of the Middle East's fault lines.

A US investigation into Mr. Khashoggi's fate mandated by members of the US Congress and an expected meeting between President Donald J. Trump, and the journalist's Turkish fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, could result in a US and European embargo on arms sales to Saudi Arabia and impact the kingdom's brutal proxy war with Iran in Yemen.

It also would project Saudi Arabia as a rogue state and call into question US and Saudi allegations that Iran is the Middle East's main state supporter of terrorism.

The allegations formed a key reason for the United States' withdrawal with Saudi, United Arab Emirates and Israeli backing from the 2015 international agreement that curbed Iran's nuclear program and the re-imposition of crippling economic sanctions.

They also would undermine Saudi and UAE justification of their 15-month old economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar that the two Gulf states, alongside Egypt and Bahrain, accuse of supporting terrorism.

Condemnation and sanctioning of Saudi Arabia by the international community would complicate Chinese and Russian efforts to walk a fine line in their attempts to ensure that they are not sucked into the Saudi-Iranian rivalry.

Russia and China would be at a crossroads if Saudi Arabia were proven to be responsible for Mr. Khashoggi's disappearance and the issue of sanctions would be brought to the United Nations Security Council.

Both Russia and China have so far been able to maintain close ties to Saudi Arabia despite their efforts to defeat US sanctions against Iran and Russia's alliance with the Islamic republic in their support for Syrian president Bashar al-Assad.

A significantly weakened Saudi Arabia would furthermore undermine Arab cover provided by the kingdom for Mr. Trump's efforts to impose a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that would favour Israel at the expense of the Palestinians.

Finally, a conclusive determination that Saudi Arabia was responsible for Mr. Khashoggi's fate would likely spark renewed debate about the wisdom of the international community's support for Arab autocracy that has proven to be unashamedly brutal in its violation of human rights and disregard for international law and conventions.

Meanwhile, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has suffered significant reputational damage irrespective of Mr. Khashoggi's fate, raising the question of his viability if Saudi Arabia were condemned internationally and stability in the kingdom, a key tenant of US, Chinese and Russian Middle East policy, were to be at risk.

The reputational damage suffered by Prince Mohammed embarrasses UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, who together with his aides and representatives in world capitals, worked hard to project his Saudi counterpart as the kingdom's future.

Saudi Arabia has so far done itself few favours by flatly rejecting any responsibility for Mr. Khashoggi's disappearance with no evidence that the journalist left the consulate at his own volition; asserting that claims that it was involved were fabrications by Turkey, Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood; seeking to defame Mr. Khashoggi's fiancé and supporters; and refusing to fully cooperate with Turkish investigators.

Saudi reluctance to cooperate as well as the US investigation and Ms. Cengiz's expected meeting with Mr. Trump complicate apparent Turkish efforts to find a resolution of the escalating crisis that would allow Saudi Arabia to save face and salvage Turkey's economic relationship with the kingdom.

Turkey, despite deep policy differences with Saudi Arabia over Qatar, Iran, and the Muslim Brotherhood, has so far refrained from statements that go beyond demanding that Saudi Arabia prove its assertion that Mr. Khashoggi left the Istanbul consulate at his own volition and fully cooperate with the Turkish investigation.

Reports by anonymous Turkish officials detailing gruesome details of Mr. Khashoggi's alleged murder by Saudi agents appear designed to pressure Saudi Arabia to comply with the Turkish demands and efforts to manage the crisis.

Widely acclaimed, Mr. Khashoggi's fate, irrespective of whether he as yet emerges alive or is proven to have been brutally murdered, is reshaping the political map of the Middle East. The possibility, if not likelihood is that he paid a horrendous price for sparking the earthquake that is already rumbling across the region.

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