

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



October 03, 2017

## Non-Violence is the Mightiest Weapon

Mahatma Gandhi, the well-known Indian spiritual and political leader, always promoted the golden teachings of non-violence. Most importantly, throughout his life, he practiced it with unshakable determination. He had once said, "There are many causes I would die for. There is not a single cause I would kill for." Keeping his invaluable contribution for peace and non-violence in consideration, October 2, his birthday, is celebrated as International Day of Non-violence around the world. United Nations General Assembly designated the day on June 15, 2007 under the resolution A/RES/61/271 to disseminate the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness". The resolution reaffirms "the universal relevance of the principle of non-violence" and the desire "to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence".

The main objectives of the day also include highlighting the importance of non-violence in the world and promote peace and tranquility against violence and war. It is to make the nations of the world believe that they can achieve a better human world through non-violence as Mahatma Gandhi had said, "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man".

Violence has no doubt brought a great deal of misery to human civilization. It won't be an exaggeration to say that humanity would breathe its last in the atmosphere of violence. If love is not provided immediately, no one can stop it from a certain death. Human beings have to love it if they want to see it alive.

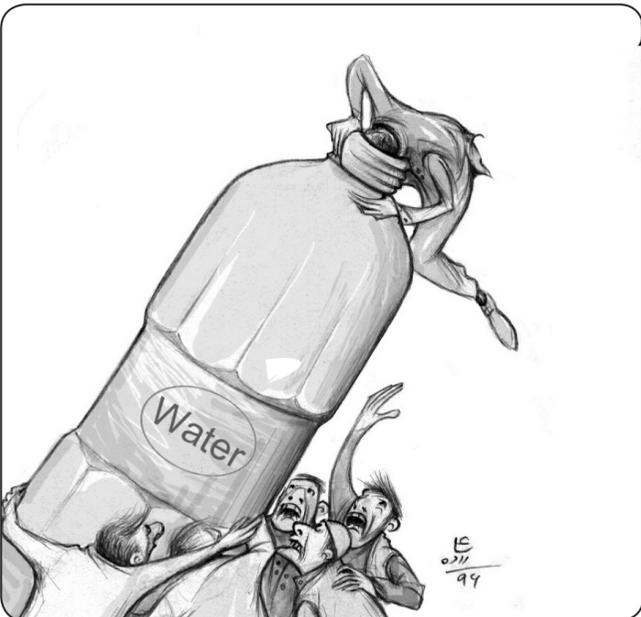
The world we are living in can only be conquered through everlasting love and non-violence. Love has the capacity to bind human beings together. Though there are many in the world who are shouting in the favor of violence and antagonism, they are in fact the sadists who clap at the sight of human sufferings, appreciate cruelty and dance with the cries of human hopelessness and can think of no way to extract the humanity out of this dismal and horrible situation. So, they should know that they are also participants in the miserable holocaust of human beings with the weapons of antagonism.

As human beings, compassion and affection should be our distinguishing qualities that may categorize us as the best of the creatures among the existing species. Non-violence should be the most essential part of our nature. It is non-violence alone that can make us look above the pathetic division of human race. Non-violence alone can make us look above the religious extremism, nationalism, sectarianism and racism.

History has the lesson that all the human beings have never been able to stand under a single flag. It is because all the ideologies of the world have divided the human beings into "we and "they". None of them has ever been able to embrace all the human beings alike. That's why followers of one religion and ideology have launched sanguinary wars against the others. Billions of people have been massacred in the pursuit of the same stupidity. It seems that the blood thirsty inclination of human beings have not been satiated yet.

Human beings definitely need to become one and make love and non-violence their guide in the rocky way to a better destination. They must think larger and make humanity proud. They need to see beyond the vicious circles of their cunning egos and join hands together for a peaceful world. They have to throw down the weapons and have smiles on their faces to win the hearts. They are supposed to teach their children the essential lessons of non-violence so that they may not be caught in the quagmire of hatred. They are to rise in the stature by bowing in front of sympathy and brotherhood. They should paint the world with the colors of bliss, contentment and pleasure, instead of the blood of the human beings. They require keeping in their books the immortal words of invincibility and prosperity, instead of destruction and disorder. It is important for them to be human in the real sense of the word and conquer the world through non-violence, not antagonism.

The day is of immense importance for the people of Afghanistan, as well, as the country has been suffering because of different forms of violence and wars. It is important that the people must realize now that nothing can be achieved through violence. They have spent decades of their lives pursuing their objectives through violence and what they have achieved is destruction and instability. Now, they have to value non-violence and peace and make every sort of effort to introduce them in their social and political lives. To some it may seem impossible but the life, teachings and practices of Mahatma Gandhi clearly shows that it is possible to pursue even the most difficult objectives through non-violence and strong resilience against antagonism, hatred and violence.



## The Susceptibility of Afghan Women to Persistent Violence

By Hujjatullah Zia

The sufferings of Afghan women continue unabated despite the establishment of a democratic administration following the fall of the Taliban's regime. Their rights and freedoms are violated to a great extent. Still, a number of individuals deny the constructive role of women in the society and treat them with humiliation. They only see women's charm and attraction out of sexual desire rather than their personality.

Ironically, those who claim honor and dignity for their own families, show no respect to the family of others. The wicked milieu leaves no room for trust between men and women in the society, which is a great tragedy.

The reports about dishonoring the women whose spouses were killed for the protection of national values and nation's rights and dignity is a strong blow to national fame. US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) John Sopko has said that some widows of Afghan National Security Force members killed in action were forced to perform sexual favors for officials before they could obtain pension benefits.

The report about the disgraceful deeds of officials, which reflects moral, has outraged the conscience of Afghan nation. Such anti-religious and anti-moral practices in a religious society will numb one's feelings and senses. The blood of those widows' husbands were shed in defense of humans and humanity, but they were unaware of the fact that no sense of humanity will be shown to their families. After yielding to men's sexual urges for feeding their children, those widows are most likely to be called "prostitutes".

In the post-Taliban Afghanistan, the rights of Afghan women were debated hotly. Although they were entitled equally in Afghanistan's Constitution, they remain susceptible to social ills, domestic violence, and gender discrimination. For instance, mutilated face of an Afghan woman Aisha, appeared on the cover of Time magazine in summer 2010. The 18-year-old was mutilated by her husband who cut off her nose and ears as punishment for running away. This was not the end of the sufferings of Afghan women, but they were, more or less, treated similarly. The noses or lips of some other women were also sliced mercilessly or they were tortured in the worst possible way.

If the spate of violent acts towards Afghan women continue, public view about violence against women will be desensitized with the passage of time. In fact, showing sensitivity only towards sexual harassment is not going to reduce

violence. It is believed that mental or physical torture is as wicked as sexual harassment. However, it is really surprising to see that physical or mental torture does not trigger as much sensitivity as sexual harassment despite the fact that both are strongly prohibited by religion. I believe that lynching the 27-year-old woman Farkhunda on March 19, 2015 in Kabul was no less disgraceful than harassing one sexually. Our traditional custom and patriarchal system which hold strong sway in tribal belts have desensitized violence against women. The worst possible violence against women such as stoning them to death or flagellating them before the eyes of people, without legal prosecution, take place in the Taliban-dominated areas. The Taliban also shelter the men who commit honor-killings or torture their spouses.

To think realistically, the nascent democracy could not protect the rights and dignity of Afghan women. Regardless of misogynistic views and traditional culture, moral turpitude is also widespread in the country and women - besides children - are one of the casualties. Hence, SIGAR's recent report unravels the vulnerability of Afghan women to moral corruption.

We live in a society where only women are advised to protect their nobility and honor. Women are stigmatized or called brazen by simply laughing on the streets, whereas men's reputation remains formidable despite their engagement in sexual harassment. Similarly, cultural restrictions are imposed only on women, mainly in villages. The fact is that nobility and moral values are necessary for a society and all individuals, regardless of their gender.

It is aptly said, "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you. We are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live."

In the era of human rights discourse, we have to respect the rights and dignity of both men and women - who are born free and equal. The government will have to empower Afghan women and adopt an effective mechanism to stop the interminable violence against them. Moreover, those who are involved in violation of women's rights, must be prosecuted fairly, or else this trend will continue. Indeed, the susceptibility of Afghan women to discrimination, injustice, and patriarchal attitude is a great cause for concern.

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## The Context and Consequences of Referendum on Independence of Iraqi Kurdistan

By Mohammad Qasim Erfani

The referendum on independence of Iraqi Kurdistan conducted on September 25, 2017 is naturally a political incident with the aim of establishing a new state in the Middle East. Despite being disapproved by Iraq central government and its adjacent region like European Union, United Nation and the US, the referendum was conducted with keen interest in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, Kurdistan region was officially recognized by Turkey and Iran; however, the term of 'Kurdistan' was used about a century ago in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. People with the same ethnicity, language, culture, and custom and common interests suffered from being ethnic minority about a century and often dubbed "the largest ethnic group without a state." Kurds form the second largest ethnic group in Turkey - the issue of Kurds was a key subject from 1970 up to now in Turkey's policy - also the second ethnic group in Iraq after Arab Shiites, the third in Iran; where separatists were in conflicts with central government; and the fourth in Syria.

Borderlines failed to remain an obstacle before the unity of Kurds, who showed sensitivity regarding their destiny. For instance, when Abdullah Ocalan, a Kurdish nationalist leader and one of the founding members of the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), was arrested and sentenced to death by Turkish government in 1999, all Kurdish regions reacted strongly. Iraqi Kurdistan region constantly sheltered Kurdish Parties of Iran and Turkey. Moreover, all Kurds expressed concerns when Kobani was surrounded by the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group. Hence, there is a strong sense of solidarity among Kurds who cherish forming a great Kurdistan. It is believed that Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 - signed between the foreign ministers of the United Kingdom and France - sowed the seed of independence for Kurds after establishing modern nation-state over the debris of Ottoman Empire regardless of ethnic, linguistic or cultural tendencies. With the emergence of ethnic national governments of Turks, Arabs and Fars in the region, the Kurdish independent identity was ignored.

Mullah Mustafa Barzani the father of Massoud Barzani was the pioneer of urging for independence and two national parties Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by Jalal Talibani and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Masoud Barzani were the most active parties within several past decades. Iraqi Kurds passed three significant historical periods: First, when Saddam's regime was suppressed by US-led Western coalition strike after attacking Kuwait as Kurdistan region gained a relatively internal autonomy. Second, the collapse of Saddam's regime paved the ground for Kurds' economic and military self-sufficiency within the frame of Iraqi federal government. Third, the emergence of self-styled Islamic State group, that weakened the central government of Iraq,

emboldened Peshmerga (the military forces of the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan) to fight for their independence, especially after gaining the control of Kirkuk oil and agreement signed between the US and Kurdish government to give military and financial support to Peshmerga forces. The absence of a high-profile figure Jalal Talibani left the room for uncontroversial leadership of Massoud Barzani.

The success of Iraqi Kurdistan in 1990s inspired the activities of Abdullah Ocalan, also known as Apo, which was began in 1970s for gaining independence. Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) resorted to armed conflict in Turkey under the leadership of Abdullah, who was finally arrested in 1999. Subsequently, PKK was divided into splinter groups but People's Democratic Party could gain high status in Turkey's parliament in the election.

The idea of forming Kurdistan and the Komala Party in Iran dates back to the Pahlavi regime. These efforts have been intensified at critical junctures such as the occupation of Iran during the Second World War, the Islamic Revolution of Iran, and the Iran-Iraq War. Currently, six Kurdish Iranian parties, including Komala, live in the Kurdish region of Iraq, and sometimes resort to armed conflict with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The recent referendum on independence will increase short-term tension in Iraq and the region. Although Iraqi government will not be able to show military action for preventing from Kurdistan's independence, the tension in many cases such as the issue of Kirkuk will resurface. If no peaceful solution is considered, there seems a strong possibility for armed conflicts between Hashd al-Shaabi forces, also known as the Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs), and Peshmerga. On the other hand, Kurdistan state will suffer heavy financial sanction as Turkey and Iran have embarked on tightening the security of their aerial borders. After all, the war against IS has not been ended and the issue of Kurdistan will decentralize the struggles made by Iraq and its western allies for combating IS group. Perhaps, it will smooth the path for resurface of IS and other militant fighters.

Considering the issue of Iraq, the countries with Kurdish population will show greater flexibility for the political rights, economic welfare, and ethnic identity of Kurds to strengthen mutual interaction. But since Kurdish political parties in Iran and Turkey do not cherish a single view, radical elements will seek to put pressure on states through armed conflicts, which will compound tension. After all, it will inspire other ethnic groups, who are dissatisfied with central governments, in other parts of the world to seek independence. The overt and covert role of great powers in engineering regional evolution, especially in the Middle East, is also undeniable.

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