

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



October 07, 2017

## Afghanistan's Poor Health Care System

The condition of health care system in Afghanistan seems to worry everyone. Even the President, himself, has concerns regarding the system and believes that much work needs to be done to change the scenario. On Tuesday, October 3, while talking in the inauguration ceremony of Afghan Medical Council in Kabul, President Ashraf Ghani agreed that the medicines in the country are of poor quality. He said in his statement, "A circle of evil has contracts with the medics and medical stores and they supply them with low-quality medicines, this situation has to change."

There is no doubt in the fact that the health sector in Afghanistan has always faced difficulties. No proper attention has been dedicated to the sector and as a result many people suffer. One of the major issues in the sector is unavailability of medicine and the quality of available medicine. There have been many cases when the quality of different medicine in the country has found to be of ordinary standard and in certain cases they have even found to be expired. Unfortunately, there is no data to show how many lives it has cost.

Though the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has promised on various occasions that there would be extra attention given to the sector and it would be ensured that all the required medicine for the public health and security sectors would be purchased from authentic national and international companies, there are still concerns that in reality the practices are quite different from the promises.

It has to be noted that 95 percent of medicine consumed in Afghanistan are imported from Pakistan, Iran, China, Turkey, India, the United Arab Emirates and some European countries. Of these medicines, 40 to 55 percent enter Afghanistan illegally and through smuggling. According to the estimates by MoPH, more than \$650 million are annually spent on purchasing medicines in Afghanistan, including \$180 million by the government.

It is of utmost important to realize the fact that in order to uplift the standard of health facilities in the country as a whole, a great deal of attention and dedication is required. There are many health cases that never reach to the doctor, and many patients cannot find enough number of doctors or hospitals in different parts of the country.

It is really tragic to note that the number of people dying because of treatable diseases in our country is more than the people who die because of terrorists activities. Minor diseases that could be cured easily become a matter of life and death for the people because of unavailability of proper services. Our media and our concerned authorities mostly highlight the issue of terrorism and extremism but they fail to focus more attention on the issue that is more basic and more urgent.

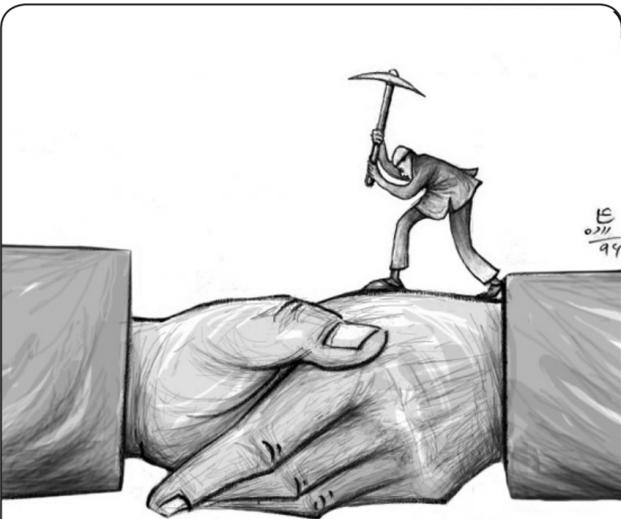
People mostly choose to go to the neighboring countries for serious health problems. There are many people who visit Pakistan and India every year for better medical facilities. This may be convenient for the ones who are financially strong and they can afford, but the ones who cannot afford going other countries remain untreated and mostly neglected. It is really tragic for them as their own country cannot provide them even their basic rights.

Though there are government hospitals as well in the country, the quality of services provided by government hospitals is really very low, their number is not sufficient and they are not established in most of the remote areas; therefore, most of the people do not have access to them. On the other hand private hospitals have been established that can, in no way, be afforded by the people who do not have enough money to pay for their food.

Such a scenario is really dreadful and there should be serious efforts to deal with the situation. Short term projects will never solve the health issues in Afghanistan. Afghan government and the supporting nations must pursue long-term strategies to handle the issue, if they want to help the people of Afghanistan.

At the same time, corruption and loose control, regarding the quality of medicine that is sold to the common people, are responsible for further debilitating the health of the people instead of supporting them during their ill health.

Previously, an investigations in this regard showed that though millions of dollars had been poured into the health sector, there were many Afghans who had their nearest health center at a distance of three days and unfortunately two-thirds of pharmacies did not have professional staff. Such a scenario is really dreadful and worth special attention; moreover, only lip service would do no good to change the scenario. Therefore, the authoritative people must take necessary measures and must curb the situation as the issue is very delicate and it is related to the lives of the people. Carelessness in this regard is a type of indirect murder.



## A Push for Peace that Puts Afghans First

By Tadamichi Yamamoto

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

On my recent travels across Afghanistan, I've seen fresh evidence of a grinding and horrific war that continues to plague the lives of all Afghans. The war and the fears that drive it have resulted in a relentless cycle of violence that Afghans – everyone from men, women, students, to peace activists and politicians – tell me they want to bring to an end.

Vast resources are still being thrown into this war, and fighting remains intense. I want to be clear, however, that the UN supports all Afghans when we say that there can be no military solution to the conflict. To put it another way, no one is winning and all of us, especially Afghan civilians, are losing as long as this war drags on.

Indeed, seen through the prism of Afghanistan's ongoing carnage and taking into consideration what I see as a growing popular will for peace, the window for peacemaking has never presented itself so clearly. Please allow me to elaborate:

Despite serious disagreements with the current government, even the Taliban's top representatives have expressed an interest in preserving the sovereignty of Afghanistan from outside factions, and also developing its human and natural resources. In recent statements, the Taliban has even referred to "peace" as the main pillar of an overall policy.

At the same time, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has made clear that he is seeking to include the Taliban in a peace process aimed at putting an end to a devastating war in one of the most brutalized nations on earth. To this end, the Government of Afghanistan has offered the Taliban a seat at the negotiating table if the group makes good on a commitment to peace.

As I explained in my address last week to the UN Security Council, we should not let another fighting season begin without progress on substantive negotiations. If Afghans and the world fail to seize the opportunity this time, a tremendous cost will be paid in Afghan lives and global resources.

This is why I am appealing to countries in the region to reassess and better define their strategic interests in order to renew work on a viable peace process between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban – one which presents an Afghan solution to the conflict.

I am encouraged that, after years of stops and starts mostly outside the borders of Afghanistan, the Afghan-led "Kabul Process" for peace – initiated last June in Kabul by President Ghani alongside key international and regional players – offers a new and inspired opening for peace.

Across the region and around the world, I am seeing a grow-

ing consensus that peace cannot wait. First, the announcement in August by the new US administration of a continuing commitment to Afghanistan has given certainty to its policy and enhanced the Afghan government's own hope for an approach to peace. New regional initiatives by close neighbours are seen. For instance, China is playing an increasingly proactive role. Iran, Pakistan, and India are also on record backing a robust peace process, and, encouragingly, everyone has agreed in principle to work together with Afghans taking the lead. The visit by General Bajwa of Pakistan to Afghanistan signaled an encouraging prospect. I am hopeful that the UN, employing its "good offices" across the region and Afghanistan, can help facilitate a strong and renewed dialogue, not only among leaders, but also among those Afghans disenfranchised by decades of war, including an anxious and vocal young generation.

After so many years, I do not believe that anyone is deluded that the road to peace will be easy. For some Afghans, peace means an end of violence and a path for economic development; while others insist that peace in the absence of justice cannot last. A sustainable and tolerant peace requires an embrace of these differing perspectives.

We should also be clear, however, that – while the building of a proper peace process requires a great deal of thinking and design – the lessening of violence and the protection of civilians must also be an overriding priority, particularly at this moment in time. Families across Afghanistan have been decimated by war as I've witnessed in my own travels. In the country's 90,000 plus villages, citizens are fleeing to escape bombardment, and the war continues to stoke panic and fear. That is why I'm also asking that all concerned parties to the conflict should put Afghanistan's future – its children and its families – ahead of their immediate demands for concessions.

We all owe it to Afghans, who have borne the brunt of four decades of incessant war, to end the fighting, overcome rigid objections, and give peace a fresh chance of taking hold.

At the UN, we recognize that we cannot, on our own, bring about peace or even help maintain a peace that is not first agreed upon by Afghans, their neighbours, and the international community as a whole. Let me reassure you, however, that the United Nations is absolutely determined to help Afghans move peace forward, and to generate momentum for dialogue between warring factions as well as to work with the government to help set the stage for genuine reconciliation. This is why I'm looking forward to the continued work of an inclusive Kabul Process – one in which all efforts to build peace regionally converge to create a new momentum to put an end to this unconscionable war.

Tadamichi Yamamoto is the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and the Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

## The Erosion of Freedom in Human Societies

By Hujjatullah Zia

Freedom is a fundamental right of mankind. All individuals are born free and should be able to exercise their freedoms within the frame of law. However, curtailing one's freedom is widespread around the globe and freedom of thought, expression, religion, etc. is not respected enough.

With the intensification of militancy, people's rights to liberty is violated more than ever before and women and children bear the brunt of it. It is self-explanatory that militant fighters, who either cherish radical ideology or paid to fight, will not care about one's freedom. Ideologues view the freedom of the public through their own criteria and if freedoms do not meet their criteria, they will be deemed profane and deserved to be fought against. Therefore, the militants show no hesitation to harm those who exercise their freedoms unlike the ideologues.

Moreover, megalomania, carnal desire, and lust for power force one to violate the freedoms of others at the cost of their dignity or life. For instance, women fall the victim of rape, children are traded, and men are killed simply for being kind of obstacle before one's self-interests or for satisfying one's desire. Hence, moral corruption and deadly acts bespeak of the fact that ethical code is being eroded in human societies.

The Sunday's attack in Las Vegas which reportedly killed 59 people and wounded 527 others is a flagrant violation of people's rights to liberty. This attack, which was said to be the deadliest US mass shooting in modern history, was highly shocking for the entire world. Indeed, the violation of one's rights – be it rights to life, liberty or property – will outrage the public conscience.

Furthermore, the persistent violation of the Rohingya's freedom in Myanmar has hurt the feelings of the public around the world. Their freedom is curtailed in the worst possible way in modern era which can be called the 21st century apartheid. No mercy is shown to women and children who are the vulnerable layers of human societies. The tragic reports about them will numb one's senses to a great extent. The terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, etc. trample upon the freedoms of thousands of innocent men, women, and children. Warring parties pose serious threats to people's life and liberty. Thus, a large number of individuals suffer from lack of freedom around the globe despite the emphasis placed on respecting one's freedom in

international instruments. There are many heart-rending stories about curtailing one's freedom on day-to-day basis. For instance, a woman's head is bounced to wall, a child's throat is sliced, a girl is raped on the way to school, and a man's arm is amputated in suicide attacks. These stories are shared in national and international media.

There is no absolute freedom. National laws and international instruments have pointed out the realm of one's freedom. You have to respect the freedom of others if you want your own freedom to be respected. For example, people have freedom of religion and should be able to exercise their religious tenets. No one is supposed to impose their own religious tenets on others.

So, we have to be tolerant towards the religious practices of the followers of any religions. After all, individuals must exercise their religions in the frame of law so as not to violate others' rights or liberty.

It is stated in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that "the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people." Freedom is considered an inherent right as the UDHR states in article 1, "All human beings are born free." Article 18 says, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion..." It further points out kinds of freedom such as: freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state, and so on.

Respecting people's freedoms will lead to regional and global peace and stability. Since freedom is a natural right and bestowed by the Creator rather than the government, states and nations will have to respect and protect it.

It is believed that practicing upon the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you) will ensure the freedoms of the public. No one likes their freedoms to be disrespected. So, s/he must not contempt the freedoms of others.

Similarly, states, which are mostly members of the UDHR, must do their best to protect the rights of citizens regardless of their racial or religious backgrounds. Indeed, the widespread violation of one's freedom – no matter whose and where or on which circumstances – will outrage the public conscience.

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