

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



October 08, 2015

## Kunduz Tragedy Taught Us Many Lessons!

Yesterday, people in Ghor province got to the streets for a mass demonstration in the support of the victims of Kunduz. They expressed their condolences for the losses of victims and demanded from the government that the culprits in the government and security forces, whose laziness or negligence gave birth to this incident, should be punished. They also chanted slogans against Taliban and their atrocities.

Kunduz is still not completely cleared from the Taliban militants and our security forces are busy in house-to-house search of Taliban militants. On the other hand, Taliban are exerting all their power to get back the control of the city. In this encounter, once again our forces proved that they are brave and ready to fight and defeat Taliban. On the other hand, role of a number of government officials and high-ranked military officers was doubtful. At night when less than one thousand Taliban captured the city, there were almost 10,000 security forces in the city but they were given orders to leave the city without any resistance. This condition left the innocent civilians on the mercy of ruthless Taliban and later events proved that all the fears from Taliban were very meaningful. Taliban committed different kind of crimes and human rights activists accused them of committing serious crimes against humanity. They tortured the innocent civilians, they looted the houses and businesses, they killed innocent citizens, and set houses on fire. In short, they did everything to prove that they do not believe in any religion or good deeds and their only intention is to harm Afghanistan and its citizens.

This incident did many works at the same time. It increased mass hatred against Taliban and shut the mouths of those who talked in their favor. It showed that they are the enemies of our country and we need to fight them together. Secondly, it brought into light the lack of capacity of President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah and other members of the government are facing the storm of public criticism. It is the time government should think honestly if they can protect their citizens and run the country properly or they should step down to let people elect their true representatives. This incident also fostered the feeling of love and respect for our security forces. Once again, people are expressing their love, admiration and appreciation of the sacrifices of our security forces. Similarly, this incident brought people closer to each other. After the collapse of Kunduz city Afghans felt the need of standing together to fight the menace of Taliban. They have realized that Taliban is the mutual enemy of every Afghan and we need to stand united to fight them.

In the same way, the incident of MSF hospital needs thorough and transparent investigation. Doctors without Borders (MSF) were running the free hospital in the city and it was one of the main hospitals of the city where satisfactory services were given to the patients. The hospital was bombarded by American warplanes when Taliban had left the area and this sad incident left behind more than 20 dead and injured which included of both the patients and the medical staff. The reason of this mistake is still unclear and both American forces and Afghan forces are blaming each other. On the other hand, United Nations has declared it a war crime. A thorough investigation has been ordered by Afghan government. However, MSF has closed down the hospital and it is a big loss for the Afghans as this international organization has been providing quality medical services for long now and they operate at all conditions and under any regime as they are considered to be neutral. We are hopeful that proper investigations will be carried out, the perpetrators of this mistake will be punished and Afghan government should work to persuade the MSF to reopen their hospital and provide them with all the help needed in this regard. Kunduz tragedy also became a reason for the change in the tone of the government. The other day, President Ghani stated that terrorist groups including Taliban, criminals and foreign terrorists, carried out Kunduz attack. It is the change from his previous statements after calling the enemies of Afghanistan terrorists. The crimes committed against humanity by Taliban have changed the viewpoints of many and it is the time that government should stop any effort of negotiations with Taliban as these efforts have not given any result in past and should start a full-fledged operation for the clean-up of Taliban from the country. At the same time, it is also necessary that National Directorate of Security (NDS) should be allowed to arrest those who are among the government lines and are secretly helping the Taliban and other terrorist elements for their petty benefits.

Kunduz incident has given us all an opportunity to get united against terrorism and make all out efforts, be it in the battlefield or the social setup, to reject them, kill and eliminate them so that the dreams of a peaceful and developed Afghanistan should be sought.

## The Shocking Episode of Kunduz

By Hujjatullah Zia

The Taliban's evil practices in Kunduz have outraged the public conscience. They have violated their own ideological claims - i.e. "bring in the Islamic law" and establishing religion tenets on the surface of earth. The shaky faith of the Taliban ideologues and mercenaries easily succumb to worldly temptations. Their fundamental and impious deeds have transcended humanity and ethical codes.

The Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah said that insurgents do not recognize religion, nation or tribe and that they kill people indiscriminately. He further said that no one has the right to justify crimes committed by the Taliban. He accepted the government's shortcomings in the fall of Kunduz, saying that a number of circles within government - knowingly or unknowingly - justify Taliban's crimes. "It will not be allowed to justify the Taliban's crimes. We all know that terrorism does not know religion, nation or tribe. It is unfortunate that their crimes are justified from the government's tribune," Abdullah is quoted as saying.

With the foundation of democratic government, Afghan nation hoped to breathe a sigh of relief in a society void of violence, racial and sexual discriminations and in a free society where they could exercise their rights and dignity without political and social turbulence. In other words, with the fall of the Taliban's regime, Afghans looked ahead to be freed from violence and bloodshed imposed by the Taliban outfit. In a nutshell, they dream to live in a utopia - far from political, social and economic plights.

Ill-fatedly, democracy is highly susceptible to political instability. The "war on terror" was proved abortive. Despite a decade of counterinsurgent strategies, Afghanistan is still embroiled in terrorism and militancy. In another term, a decade and half has past from the collapse of the Taliban's dictatorial regime, however terrorist acts continue unabated. The rights and dignity of Afghan men and women are trampled upon by insurgents in the worst possible way. Reports say that some women, including doctors and prisoners, were raped and children were employed by the Taliban when Kunduz was captured last month - this was a slap not only in the face of democracy and freedom but also in the face of humanity. So, the nascent democracy is not a panacea for the bleeding wounds of our nation.

Kunduz, a city of 300,000 and capital of the eponymous northern province, was the first urban center taken by the Taliban since their ouster by the Americans in 2002. The Taliban's capture of the city has fueled speculation that US-trained Afghan security forces will be unable to secure the country as the remaining 9,800 American troops move toward full withdrawal by 2017. U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter has not reversed his position, however,

that the Afghan military is on track to secure the country. Earlier this year, he described the Afghan security branches, which are composed primarily of army, national police, and informal local police units, as "a powerful force in their own right." He also believes the Afghan military can perform many of the specialized functions needed to secure the country and defend it from a Taliban takeover.

However, the Taliban insurgents have compounded their inroads into the country under the leadership of Mullah Akhtar Mansour. His appointment led to splinter group among the Taliban. He chose fractious attitude towards Afghanistan so as to persuade his opponents to pledge allegiance to him. The Omar's family, which initially disagreed with his appointment as Omar's successor, pronounced loyalty to him but Mullah Dadullah denied doing so. Hence, Dadullah shows tendency to the Islamic State (IS) group - which seeks foothold in Afghanistan and poses a serious threat to the country's security situation.

Afghan officials also believe that the Taliban insurgents are supported in one way or another. Reports say that Police officials in Karachi city of Pakistan have arrested a group of terrorists from a hospital who had fought in Afghanistan.

A local newspaper quoted news published by Pakistan's private news channel on October 5 that Inspector General Sindh Police Ghulam Hyder Jamali has said that several terrorists wounded in Afghanistan were arrested from a hospital in Karachi where they were being treated.

Afghan leaders have said in numerous occasions that terrorists fighting in Afghanistan are being treated in Pakistan. They have asked the country's authorities to stop supporting and treating them. According to the National Directorate of Security, Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Omar was also admitted to a hospital in Karachi where he died in April 2013.

It must be noted that an insecure Afghanistan will pose a threat to the entire region. For instance, if the Islamic State group holds a firm foothold in Afghanistan, the neighboring countries will not be safe from the poison it spews forth. War and militancy is really epidemic, as it is being experienced. As a result, the IS was established to usher in militancy and terrorism in Iraq and Syria, but it is spreading with the passage of time.

Anyhow, the scandals perpetrated by the Taliban insurgents in Kunduz were highly appalling. The rape victims were disgraced and the residents were hurt mentally, physically and emotionally. So, one will conclude that the Taliban follow no moral principle and commit human and humanitarian rights flagrantly. In short, their ideology is empty of ethical mores and social and religious values.

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## Strong Foundation to Real Democracy!

By Asmatyari

Formerly, Taliban launched storming attack on Kunduz province. Following the attack, the northern city fell to Taliban - one of the major urban areas for the first time since the Taliban government toppled. Seeking entry the insurgents closed off the only four access points into the city - effectively preventing troops from entering and civilians from fleeing. In addition to mentioned rampages - mass murder, gang rapes and house-to-house searches by Taliban death squads, implementation of Sharia, chopping up limbs of accused thieves are just some of the traumatic over views of Kunduz city, following the seizure of Taliban.

Amidst the worsening security condition everybody was expecting orders of dispatching fresh army battalion immediately be sent at the combat site. There was contradictory news of troops stationed near the city for more than 12 hours who didn't retaliate on account of not being ordered. Who could have been behind this delay, is uncertain. Similarly, the news of Kunduz city being evacuated of insurgents was dwindling right and wrong. There are numerous queries clinging around the erroneous flow of information through respective public departments. It was perplexing which news was truly depicting the right picture of on ground situation. If the of information was properly disseminated and some media persons could be behind the hype - they should be interrogated.

Following the tactless strategies pursued, earlier a media advocacy group accused the government of concealing the truth and not disseminating information to the people of Afghanistan. "Based on the law, the government must give information to people, otherwise the law is violated. The president's office however insisted that efforts are underway to improve the dissemination of information. Nai's claims come after contradictory reports emerged this week over the retaking of Kunduz by government troops. A number of MPs, meanwhile, concurred saying people are being kept in the dark about the situation in the country. The failure to provide information by officials has caused the nation to lose trust in the government and as a result citizens are relying on unconfirmed reports and propaganda on social media platforms, said officials from Nai - a media supporting organization. They warned that if government continues to hold back information, it will be declared a violation of the Constitution. Though president Ashraf Ghani signed an Access to Information Law for Afghanistan it was for the first time journalists get access to information through state institutions but it is yet to be realized into practice. The ratification of law was a great win for media bodies and advocates working on rationalization of media laws. There are, however, still quite some way to go, given Afghanistan is worst plagued by widespread corruption, and having a great law on paper does not mean much if it is not implemented in practice. Implementation of the law is one of the biggest challenges. A joint working force was developed between presidential office and civil society to monitor the implementation of the law. Following that a nominal

commission was constituted to monitor the aforesaid law. According to this law, the Monitoring Commission on Access to Information can only recommend disciplinary actions against violators of the act and no fines are specified if information is not provided. Consequently, the law should be amended to ensure the information hiders are punished and fined. Imparting a degree of independence to the newly created Commission on Access to Information can be an encouraging step ahead.

There is some underlining reservations pertaining the dispatch of certain sensitive information if shared could equally harm and reverse the developments achieved to the length of time, should be share, isn't obligatory. Nonetheless, the information dealing issues of human rights and use and misuse of public resources should inevitably be shared renders an uncompromising and appealing demand ever made by media bodies.

The facts and figures on ground depicts a degree of restraint exercised by corresponding officials to dispatch information, complicates the work of journalists who find minimal application of the law. Earlier, officials in several provinces said they had been told by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) not to share information with media outlets. In contrary the sources of presidential palace states the Security Council should facilitate the responsible official from each province provide information to the journalists.

The state of affairs reflects a great degree of confusion on working mechanism of flow of information from concerned department to journalists, particularly in the provinces. However, it clearly manifests the toughened course to seek relevant information about governmental affairs. It is therefore; previously some civil society organizations and media-men demanded the president to help amend the relevant law to make access easy to information.

Hence it is suggested that a new draft should be introduced containing a degree of clarification on information flow mechanism, legal actions whether information aren't deliberately concealed and the regulatory principles barring the sensationalism and unfound accusation against any citizen or official. The new draft must contain the formation of an independent and neutral commission to be assigned the task of investigating complaints, lodged against any public official. Moreover, the complaints investigation mechanism should be fair and transparent; to make it sure the complaints are heard and addressed properly devoid of keeping political, social and economical status of person in regard engage in the plot. Even the US forces who conducted ill-informed aerial raids leading to loss of employees of MSF should be brought to justice.

To bare such incidences from recurrence a precise, coordinated and information worth sharing is shared with the media. It is only we can get a well informed citizens that narrows down the gap between government and masses - it undoubtedly serves the unbeatable foundation to real democracy. If the government finds public officials being behind such heinous plot the information should be shared.

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