

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



October 23, 2017

The Continuation of Heartrending Episodes in Afghanistan

The recent successive attacks and suicide bombings carried out by militant fighters in many provinces, mainly in Kabul, indicate that the Taliban will continue their violence and bloodshed despite being called for holding talks and laying their arms on the ground. Terrorists are not political opponents to resolve their issues through negotiation. Their aim is to pressure the government in some ways.

Following the Friday's attack in a Shia Mosque in Kabul, which killed and wounded dozens of people including women and children, a child was cleaning the bloodstain of victims who were killed mercilessly while offering prayer. This issue reflects not only the cruel practices of terrorists against Afghan nation but also the sufferings inflicted upon children. One's senses will go numb to see that a child is cleaning the bloodstain of their parents, playmates, and worshippers.

Those children are most likely to ask themselves the reason behind the death of innocent people. Besides being filled with hatred and disgust due to harsh practices of mankind, such children will be traumatized by the gory pictures and thick bloodstain spilt without guilt. Such nightmarish pictures will haunt children for years. Imagine the small hands of a child cleaning the bloodstain of innocent victims from the surface of walls. In short, kind-hearted children clean the blood which was shed by stone-hearted individuals in mosque.

This incident reflects one more fact; that is to say, the image of virtue against vice. In fact, the hero and villain do not necessarily belong to movies or stories but also in real life. Hence, stereotyping a nation on the basis of their religions, faith, and beliefs will be against a sound conscience. For instance, a number of Muslims are treated with contempt in some countries since religious extremists who claim to be Muslims carry out terrorist attacks. Now it is hoped that the world will know that Muslims bear the brunt of terrorism. They are killed in sacred place (Masjid) while worshipping the Creator. Afghan Ulema Council (the council of religious scholars) condemned the Friday's suicide attack in Shia Mosque and called it against Islam and Islamic tenets. Muslims clergy also come under terrorist attacks in many parts of the country.

Only few months back, some mullahs were targeted and killed in Herat province after their meeting held to condemn the acts of terror. Hence, on the one hand, antagonists, in real life, shed the blood of people, but on the other hand, a number of protagonists - similar to the same child who was cleaning the bloodstain from the mosque - clean the blood or condemn their attacks in the strongest possible term.

The Taliban have intensified their attacks in recent weeks. Saturday's attack on Marshal Fahim Military Academy which killed 15 army trainees, was the second suicide attack in Afghan capital in 24 hours and the seventh major assault in the country since Tuesday, taking the total death toll to more than 200, with hundreds more wounded. The spate of deadly attacks underscores deteriorating security across the country as the resurgent Taliban step up their attacks on civilians and military bases and self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continue to target Shia mosques. The Friday attack was claimed by ISIL and Saturday by the Taliban.

In one of the recent attacks, around 50 Afghan soldiers were killed in a Taliban-claimed assault on a military base in the southern province of Kandahar on Thursday. Afghan soldiers have sustained heavy casualties in combating terrorism since NATO combat forces pulled out of the country at the end of 2014. Casualties leapt by 35 percent in 2016, with 6,800 soldiers and police killed, according to US watchdog SIGAR.

The insurgents have carried out more complex attacks against security forces in 2017, with SIGAR describing troop casualties in the early part of the year as "shockingly high". The attacks included assaults on a military hospital in Kabul in March which may have killed up to 100 people, and on a base in Mazar-i-Sharif in April which left 144 people dead.

On the other hand, the US has intensified its air strike in recent days in the Afghan-Pak border region. The US reportedly carried out at least 70 strikes, both drone and ground, in Afghanistan in the past three weeks. Reports say that the chief of Jammal-ul-Ahrar (JuA) has been killed in a US drone strike. "Chief of our Jamaat-ul-Ahrar Umar Khalid Khorasani, who sustained serious injuries in a recent US drone strike in Afghanistan's Paktia province, succumbed to his injuries Wednesday evening," JuA spokesman Asad Mansoor is cited as saying.

Observers and analysts are of the view that the militants, including the Taliban, will not hold talks and a strong military action will be the only option to bring terrorists into their knees. Peace talks, despite being persisted by Afghanistan and its allies and neighbors, will fall by the wayside since the Taliban continue their attacks without hesitation. The spate of terrorist attacks reflect the Taliban's lukewarm response to the call for peace.



The Outcome of Afghanistan's Membership in UNHRC

By Abdul Nasir Mowahhidi

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located within South Asia and Central Asia. Afghanistan is bordered by Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan in the north; and China in the far northeast. Its territory covers 650,000 square kilometers. With this geographical location, Afghanistan has a particular strategic importance - which drew the attention and intervention of some countries in the past. It is for many decades that Afghanistan is wrestling with civil conflicts and militancy. For many years, Afghan children have been born and bred up amidst war and violence. Hence, the heavy burden of challenges will put pressure on Afghans and put them in unwanted path. Afghan people are traumatized by the deadly nightmare of war. Within the past seventeen years, the violation of people's rights was widespread.

Within the past years, one would hardly ever hear good news. The news were replete with doleful episodes and tragic issues. Despite this fact, it is believed that we are in the right path since we carry out our daily activities hopefully in a time that terrorist groups create catastrophe everyday - inflicting indescribable suffering upon the people of this land - and seek to pose challenges before the National Unity Government (NUG) at national and international level. The membership of Afghanistan in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a major achievement for Afghan nation and state. In short, it is a good news for a country where people's rights were disregarded and violated for many years by powerful individuals. The country's membership in UNHRC has many advantages which will be explained shortly.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) have stressed the rights of mankind such as right to property, education, work, marriage, etc. Human rights include the basic and fundamental rights of mankind that all mankind are entitled inherently on the basis of being human.

It can be said that if the international community debates through the means of a common, moral language in a peaceful atmosphere, this moral language will be human rights. Considering the activities of the Independent Human Rights Commission in Afghanistan, a question will arise in one's mind that what is the UNHRC and why Afghanistan has just got its membership?

The UNHRC is a United Nations System and responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The UNHRC is the successor to the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). Its 47 seats are filled by member states elected for three-year terms. The UN General Assembly established the UNHRC by adopting a resolution on March 15, 2016 in order to replace the previous CHR. The UNHRC addresses human rights-related situations in all

UN member states. The UNHRC also addresses important thematic human rights issues such as freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women's rights, and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities. Afghanistan's membership was discussed at the UN General Assembly last year by Afghan Second Vice President Sarwar Danish, and this year, our country gained the membership by winning 130 votes in favor.

Gaining a positive vote on Afghanistan's membership in the council indicates that the human rights situation in Afghanistan has improved dramatically comparing to previous years.

Distribution of seats in the UNHRC is equal on the basis of geographical presence. Accordingly, there are 13 seats for the African continent, 13 for Asia, 6 for Eastern Europe, 8 for Latin America and the Caribbean, and eight for Western Europe and other states.

The next questions is why membership in this council is important for Afghanistan and what are the benefits?

With the creation of this council and the abolition of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the jurisdiction and work area of the UNHRC increased. Members of this council are elected by the General Assembly and enjoy greater legitimacy and transparency. The council is universal and can better reflect human rights issues. If necessary and important, it will form a special extraordinary session with a majority vote and deal with it seriously. In fact, this council is highly qualified and prevention from human rights violation is also in the realm of its authority.

Each year, the UNHRC holds three sessions in 10 weeks examining human rights situation in the world. Taking into account that investigating human rights violation is the top priority of member states, the membership of Afghanistan in this council will be a great support in terms of ending this issue in the country.

By gaining membership, Afghanistan will be under the scrutiny of this council more than ever before. Hence, the cases of human rights violation will be investigated by UNHRC and I am optimistic enough that an appropriate solution will be found out.

In Afghanistan, we have witnessed and will continue to witness widespread violation of human rights. For example, the right to education, right to freedom of expression, right to life, right to marriage, etc. were violated in the country. Girls are forced to get married, the life of innocent people are lost easily, and millions of children; mainly girls; are deprived from getting education. Thus, Afghanistan's membership in UNHRC will reduce human rights violation. On the other hand, Afghan government will be committed and responsible in protecting human rights.

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Degrading Mankind

By Hujjatullah Zia

The international Humanitarian Law (IHL) seeks to protect the rights and dignity of civilians, wounded soldiers, and war prisoners - whose rights are being violated in one way or another. Based on IHL, warring sides have to observe the rights of those who are not involved in war. They are not supposed to torture prisoners, either. Human dignity is highly significant in both Human Rights Law and IHL. Respecting human dignity is an international, religious, and moral principle. Dishonoring an individual for eliciting confession or torturing one which is against human's dignity are not allowed at all. Dignity is an inherent and inalienable right of mankind and will not be ended even after one's death. In short, one is not allowed to disrespect even a dead body of an individual.

However, people's rights and dignity are violated on a large scale around the globe. Prisoners are tortured, the wounded in action are killed, and civilians are massacred or amputated. The indiscriminate killings of non-combatants are rife in war-torn countries since terrorists neither observe international instruments nor religious or moral principles.

After all, a number of states also violate the rights of prisoners, ethnic minorities, etc. For instance, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that Rwanda military torture prisoners systematically and accuses judges of being complicit in the creation of a culture of impunity for the armed forces. HRW says that victims were beaten until they signed confessions, often on fabricated charges, in a series of centers around Rwanda claiming that Rwandan officials use torture whenever they please.

According to HRW's researcher Lewis Mudge, HRW confirmed 104 cases of people who were illegally detained and in many cases tortured or ill-treated in military detention centers in Rwanda during a seven-year period. He is cited as saying, "Some men spoke of having weights tied to their testicles, others of being handcuffed with their hands behind their backs for days on end." Mudge added, "Beatings, asphyxiations, electric shocks, mock executions ... these were just some of the types of torture used to extract confessions or get detainees to accuse others."

It is said that such degrading acts are used against those suspected of association with groups hostile to Rwanda such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) - an armed group based in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo - and, to a lesser extent, the Rwanda

National Congress (RNC), an opposition group in exile. In spite of the fact that FDLR have carried out, and continue to carry out killings, rapes, and other serious abuses against civilians in eastern Congo, this will not justify Rwanda's humiliating torture. After all, the bulk part of prisoners is simply suspected of having ties to the FDLR.

This is not the first time Rwanda has been accused of torture. The HRW research shows the prisoners' torture continues unabated from 2010 to 2016. In 2012, Sarah Jackson, Amnesty International's acting deputy Africa director, said that though Rwandan military's "human rights record abroad is increasingly scrutinized, their unlawful detention and torture of civilians in Rwanda is shrouded in secrecy." It should be noted that the cruelty of prisoners will not justify violating their dignity. For instance, a country is not allowed to persecute a criminal or humiliate them. However, executing prisoners on the basis of law will not be violation of dignity.

Notwithstanding the IHL principles, the dignity of people are violate in many parts of the world. Women are harassed sexually or raped not only in prisons but in public places and not only by militants but also by simple individuals, passersby, etc. Currently, prisoners in Rwanda and the Rohingya in Myanmar are prone to this issue. Reports say that Rohingya women are raped by Myanmar security forces on the basis of their racial and religious backgrounds.

In many societies, including Afghanistan, people's dignity is deemed more valuable than their blood. They are ready to be killed but not be dishonored, mainly the women of virtue.

In addition, an individual or a group is not allowed to target civilians, the wounded in action, and those who lay their arms to the ground. Indiscriminate killings is not only against international instruments but also against religious tenets and ethical code.

To sum up, human dignity is inalienable and it should be violated under no circumstances. The international community should scrutinize the cases and prevent countries from violating human rights and dignity and humanitarian law - which is deemed war crime. If this trend continues, it is believed that the public will lose their trust in international community and view it as a symbolic body. Therefore, it must not underestimate such issues and take more practical step in preventing countries and groups from violating people's rights and dignity.

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