

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



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Extremism is Causing us Troubles

In Afghanistan, one of the most dominant issues is extremism. It has given rise to intolerance, militancy and ultimately conflicts and wars. Without dealing with the issue of extremism, it would be very difficult to tackle the problem of terrorism and bring about any lasting solution in this regard. As a matter of fact, extremism has been used in different ways by the authoritative people to strengthen their positions in the society and subjugate others. Unfortunately, women are also among those who are dominated through the prevailing extremism.

Highlighting the same issue, Pernille Dahler Kardel, deputy special representative of the secretary-general of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), on Wednesday said that extremism is one of the main challenges for women in Afghanistan. She also said that although steps had been taken in fighting extremism over the past 15 years, to address the problem completely, more work is required.

She also expressed her concerns over the killings and stoning of women by anti-government armed groups. Her statement read, "In Afghanistan, this very important aspect of the agenda tends to disperse, even if all the issues that have been brought up on the complexity of the matter are equally important in the broader picture of women in Afghanistan." Meanwhile, Elzira Sagybeva, head of UN Women in Afghanistan also said that so as to fight extremism in the country, efforts should be done in social, belief, education and economic aspects of the country and peoples' life, in addition of taking security measures.

As a matter of fact extremism has influenced not only the women but many others; and not only in Afghanistan but in different parts of the world. Today the extremists due to their aggressive attitude have foxed the attention of everybody towards them; most of them are merely responsible for every kind of corruption and devastation. Especially the Islamic countries have been castigated for such violence and atrocities.

The Islamic militants have been named terrorists; and the reason is because they are involved in the genocide of uncountable people in Syria, Libya, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is quite sure that extremism is the root cause of terrorism and in all the countries mentioned above as they have been depending on extremism for their political and social causes. In fact, they have been dodged in the name of religion and they do not use their minds to understand what they are taught. All they do is following blindly the teachings and taking the worst possible actions.

There are some so-called clergies who want to disguise the fact by claiming that extremism may lead the humanity towards the spiritual glory, but they intentionally regard the spirits of humanity while concealing their notorious characteristics, which they are applying in many parts of the planet earth. We must know their medieval practices and frustrated religious and tribal system with their obsolete and ill-intended teachings that are nothing except molesting the human beings.

Today we can easily find out the miseries and unsafe conditions which are undoubtedly the ultimate repercussions of extremism. Today the reputation and honor of our religion, and civilization is extremely in immense danger due to extremism. And the approach that is developed in the minds of the most of the people is really a matter of concern; so it is imperative to protest against this ignorance, which has caused us rigid and poignant attitude. We are caught in the worst kind of quagmire of extremism and we do not find any way of getting out of it.

The more we try to get out of it, the more we are sinking in it. We really need to know that the way we are making efforts is wrong and we need to do something else in order to get out of it. We really need to understand this clear fact that extremism has rewarded us the humiliating gift of terrorism, which is of course unacceptable for every sensible, literate and human-loving person. David Cecil had once said, "It is often said that mankind needs a faith if the world is to be improved. In fact, unless the faith is vigilantly and regularly checked by a sense of man's fallibility, it is likely to make the world worse."

From Torquemada to Robespierre and Hitler the men who have made mankind suffer the most have been inspired to do so have been inspired to do so by a strong faith; so strong that it led them to think their crimes were acts of virtue necessary to help them achieve their aim, which was to build some sort of an ideal kingdom on earth."

Therefore, it is important that we keep extremism of every sort, particularly of religious nature, in check so that we are able to start a true fight against extremism, antagonism and wars.

How to Heal the 'Bleeding Wound'?

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghan nation has suffered painfully within present and past war and civil unrests. The regimes which menaced Afghans' religious values, ethical code and cultural norms encountered public resistance and disintegrated. Secular movements, in the traditional society, were hampered by radical resistance. To protect the society from harms, the country was fragmented and streams of blood were spilt. The high sensitivity against secular movements redirected Afghanistan to radicalism which bred horror and terror.

The nation was unaware of the fact that radical mindsets would inflict greater damages on the society. For instance, Taliban's emergence created less sensitivity among the public as it operated under the mask of religion and one could not predict the horrible consequence of its regime. Establishing their reign in the country, the Taliban crossed religion's red line and trampled upon the rights and liberty of the nation in the worst possible way. This dictatorial regime, prolonged the war in Afghanistan and people still suffer from insurgency despite the regime's downfall. Warring factions, which practice upon radical ideology, inflict casualties upon the nation without an iota of humanity. Afghanistan's war against the former Soviet was called "bleeding wound" by Mikhael Gorbachev. Dr. Najib, the chief of Hezb-e-Democratic Khalq, sought to heal the wound through national reconciliation and establishing a coalition state along with opposition faction. He said that it was for a decade that Afghanistan was burning amidst war and violence and some claimed to change the country into bloodbath and then they witnessed the very bloodbath. He added that they would have to protect Afghanistan. In a nutshell, war could do no more than adding insult to the injury.

It is believed that Afghan nation still suffers from the "bleeding wound" and pay heavy sacrifices for peace and prosperity. This time it is not the liberal or secular factions but our religious tenets are violated by the Islamic fundamental groups and our rights and liberty are trampled upon by radical groups such as the Taliban and the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). It is believed that the radical ideology is as threatening to the society as the liberal ideology and both are to be fought. The war against former Soviet was fought under the slogan of threatening the Islamic Sharia and religious beliefs. However, the religious extremists are also a threat to our beliefs and culture. They have spread Islamophobia in Europe and harm our religion through inhuman and immoral practices. Now, the question is that how to heal this "bleeding wound" which has lingered up to date?

Afghan government also seeks to heal this bleeding wound through resuming reconciliation process with warring factions,

mainly the Taliban which carry out the bulk of the operations and inflict heavy casualties upon combatants and non-combatants alike. Recently the government has signed peace agreement with Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who spearheaded many attacks against the former Soviet. However, the insurgency continues unabated since the Taliban led by Haibatullah Akhundzada refused to hold talks. It is said that the Taliban held secret informal talks with Afghan government in Qatar in September. However, there is little hope for the fruition of the talks as it took about a decade without a positive result. Despite this fact, the government intends to practice upon Dr. Najib's mechanism for a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan namely calling upon warring factions to lay their arms and join the peace process.

Contrary to Afghanistan's persistence for negotiation of peace, the Taliban fighters have intensified their attacks and spill the blood of soldiers and civilians indiscriminately. In another term, the high graph of fatalities is a great cause for concern. US Army General John Nicholson said that Afghans suffered high casualties last year and it had been the same or higher this year. "One of the principle factors for the high casualties has been the leadership, the failures of leadership at certain levels. Primarily this has been in the police and to a lesser extent in the (Afghan) army," he is cited as saying. According to him, "the failure is the ability to properly supply them and lead them."

According to the public beliefs, there are many challenges within the government's apparatus besides escalated militancy. For instance, there is a sense of mistrust among the high-ranking officials within the state. The trust issue may affect the soldiers' morale adversely and let the Taliban elements to fish in troubled water. After all, it will be a blow to the leadership and aggravate the challenges. As a result, reports are replete with carnage, corruption, narcotic cultivation, unemployment and human rights violation. So, the country is involved in political syndrome and it is hard to heal this chronic "bleeding wound" which lingered for years. Resolving the within-state issues is the first step toward prosperity.

In addition to combating insurgency, the state should prevent from the spread of radical mentality which might be imposed on our culture through the Taliban's sympathizers. The security is to be tightened on Afghan-Pak porous border and the seminars' text books and their activities will have to be supervised by the government. The "bleeding wound" may be healed if the officials build a strong sense of trust, abolish the hotbed of radical mindsets and continue the counter-insurgency with the aid of its allies and international community.

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Opium Fueling War and Crime in Afghanistan

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Since 2001, the production of opium in the country has increased by 40 times fueling organized war, crime and widespread bloodshed throughout the country. Afghanistan's opium poppy production goes into more than 90% heroin worldwide. Afghanistan has been the world's greatest illicit opium producer, ahead of Burma, and Latin America since 1992. This amounts to an export value of about \$110 billions while less than a quarter being earned by opium farmers and the rest going to district officials, insurgents, warlords, and drug traffickers. In addition to opiates, Afghanistan is also the largest producer of cannabis (mostly as hashish) in the world. However, several fatwas (religious decree) issued by Muslim clergymen claiming that opium production is contrary to the sharia law and that opium producers would face punishments in accordance with the sharia.

According to the latest expression of some parliament members Afghanistan, foreigners are gaining billions of dollars from the drug trade in Afghanistan every year. "They all are engaged in drug smuggling during nights and get \$110 billion a year while they give us only a few billion in charity." Main smugglers are the foreigners; I have documents about [drug] smuggling in Helmand [province]," said MP Obaidullah Barezai. In the meantime, the Interior Minister, Taj Mohammad Jahid, who was called to the house, talked about the problems before government's counter-narcotics mission. "There is a lack of budget; the money allocated by government in this respect is quite different from the money allocated by mafia to promote this trend," Minister of Public Health Ferozuddin Feroz said. "The capacity of our organization is not equivalent to the current challenges. According to statistics, more than three million people are in some way engaged in the drug trade, while we have only 2,500 personnel," added Ahmadi. "Security threats have had a direct role on the increasing level of poppy cultivation [in Afghanistan]," Counter-Narcotics Minister Salam Azimi said.

These statements come a day after the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) announced that based on a new survey of UNODC this year, the total land area that has been cultivated with poppies has increased by 10 percent compared to the last year. Andrey Avetisyan, the UNODC regional representative said on Sunday that based on their new survey, drug production in Afghanistan will surge by 43 percent. The UN representative said maintaining security, overcoming the endemic corruption and economic growth in the country is related to the eradication of poppy fields. "Drugs have direct links with corruption, terrorism and development. Without tackling drug problem and elicit economy, in general, it will not be possible to solve other problems facing Afghanistan," Avetisyan said.

It is also said that there is an important link between drugs and

hawala (informal money transfer system) in Afghanistan. According to some previous analysis had been based on interviews with 54 hawala dealers in the main centers of hawala activity of Afghanistan as well as during a visit to neighboring countries. Likewise, interviews had been conducted with users of the hawala system (drug dealers, businessmen, traders, international aid workers), regulators (government officials, central bank personnel), and formal service providers (bankers, accountants). In addition to hawala, they found protection payments and connections, by which the drug industry had major linkages with local administration as well as high levels of the national government. Different localities by the UNODC give dissimilar views of the laundering of drug funds. It is difficult to get a solid sense of the overall economy. In Faizabad, for example, indicated that during certain times of the year close to 100% of the liquidity of the hawala system in the province is derived from drugs, whereas in Herat, it was estimated that only 30% of the hawala market's overall transaction volume is directly linked to drugs. Analysis of data gathered in places like Herat was complicated by confirmed links between drug money and legitimate imports. The southern region (Helmand and Kandahar provinces) is also a key centre for money laundering in Afghanistan (about 60% of the funds are drug related and 80-90% of the hawala dealers in Kandahar [the former Taliban stronghold] and Helmand are involved in money transfers related to narcotics).

Helmand has emerged as a key facilitator of the opium trade, both between provinces and exports, while overall estimates of the local hawala markets' drug-related component are of a similar order of magnitude to those in Kandahar. This finding adds weight to the notion that the major trading centers in these two neighboring provinces should be treated as essentially one market. It is said that Helmand could account the largest drug-related hawala business while Herat is the second largest contributor in the country.

Furthermore, regional countries appears to be a central clearing house for international hawala activities and major transaction centers. It appears that even in the case of drug shipments, payments for them come into Afghanistan. The hawala system has been key to the deepening and widening of the "informal economy" in Afghanistan, where there is anonymity and the opportunity to launder money. Hawala, however, also contributes positively to the regional economy.

It has been central to the survival of Afghanistan's financial system through war. It also plays an important role in currency exchange. Finally, frequent studies and field facts within past 15 years confirm that there have not been any political will against opium traffic and cultivation in Afghanistan.

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