

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



September 07, 2017

## Accountability is the Key to Good Governance

One of the key requirements of good governance is accountability. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. The institutions in Afghanistan, on the other hand, have lacked this basic factor which has resulted in uncontrolled corruption and mismanagement. Therefore, it can be easily observed that billions of dollars have been spent for the development of the country yet the country is not able to develop as much as it could. As a matter of fact accountability can be achieved when there is transparency and the rule of law.

In a democratic country the ultimate authority lies within the people. And ultimately, the government is answerable to the people. Moreover, to guarantee such accountability the modern states have established and strengthened their political systems in such a way that people have most of the power, though indirectly. However, in our country, Afghanistan, which claims to be democratic, the people are suffering because of the lack of any sort of accountability of the government and the deprivation of participation in the affairs of the state. One of the basic ways the people can participate in the affairs of the state is through elections. Well-established and developed election systems can provide opportunities to all the members of the society to cast their votes and have their say in the making of the government. However, in Afghanistan this basic institution of democracy has not been able to function appropriately. The last presidential elections were vehemently dominated by fraud and corruption. The proper and well-developed election process can play an important role in creating accountable government. A political party or a politician in order to be elected by the votes of the people tries to perform properly so that it gets chance of remaining in authority for a longer period of time. If the political parties and the contestants in the elections come to know that they can win the election even without the consent of the people, through illegal ways, they will never remain accountable to the people and would not care much about the public opinion. Afghan political scenario, at the moment, is facing almost a similar sort of situation.

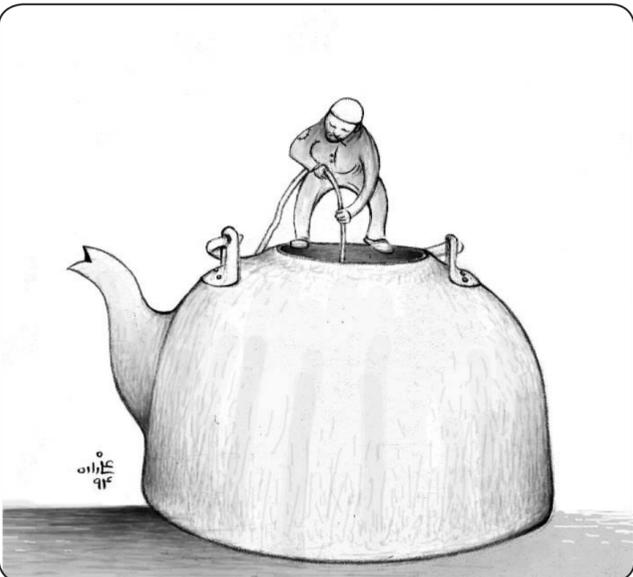
Another issue of unaccountability arises when a system is made personality-oriented, wherein the individuals are prioritized on the basis of their actual or assumed personality traits. This property is mostly found in dictatorial and authoritarian forms of government. Such ideologies are basically the remnants of the monarchies that could be found long ago in human history.

The institutions, which can play a dominant role in establishing democratic culture and accountable system, are underestimated and even ignored in such systems. Our country Afghanistan happens to be a similar country. The democratic institutions are ignored to a great extent while the political system circulates around the personalities. Even the election system is designed in such a way that promotes personality-worship. The absence of political parties and their influence within election system have made many overlook the importance of political parties which happen to be very important institution for the growth and institutionalization of democracy.

It is necessary for accountability that not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Afghan government, on the other hand, has been formed in such a way that it is difficult to hold the government accountable for its policies and actions. As a matter of fact accountability can be achieved when there is transparency and the rule of law. However, both these characteristics seem to be non-existent in Afghan society. Transparency and rule of law can be maintained when there is proper separation of power and the different organs of state can function on their own – independently. In fact, judiciary and law enforcement agencies must be capable to hold the law as the top priority matter. In Afghan political system the separation of powers is not clear and the judiciary is composed of what the government decides.

Moreover, the powerful and the rich are mostly considered above the law and the poor and weak have to go through the 'quagmire of law and order system'. The present rise in corruption, which is now turning out of control, is because of the same fact that the powerful are not made accountable to the rule of law. A thorough analysis of Afghanistan's political scenario will depict that currently the political processes are also being kept aloof of accountability along with the institutions. The current efforts for the reconciliation and reintegration processes are very much non-participatory and non-transparent. As the major stakeholders are being kept away from the processes, a sort of ambiguity and distrust is being generated within different circles and the people of Afghanistan. Moreover, there is a disadvantage of such an approach as well – it is likely to result in improper and incomplete outcomes of the processes, which will further generate controversies.

Afghan authorities have in fact kept on striving to limit the power and authority to themselves and, on certain occasions, have used the same irresponsibly. The need of time is to make the political institutions and processes accountable to the people through proper democratization of the political structure.



## National Anti-Corruption Strategy

By Abdul Hamid Arifi

Administrative corruption in Afghanistan has seriously challenged the government and hindered it from reaching its objectives. The extension of corruption prompted the state to take practical step in reducing this issue. The national strategy for combating administrative corruption was outlined and prioritized by the government. It is an undeniable fact that lack of strategy, supervision and an effective legal system have undermined the sense of responsibility in the society and paved the ground for further corruption. To remedy this problem, the state will have to adopt strict measure so as to implement law, reform and strengthen legal and judicial system based on rule of law, human rights principle, and justice. The national anti-corruption strategy has been drafted with the aim of campaigning strongly against administrative corruption. This is worth saying that a fundamental campaign against the root causes of this phenomenon is of high significance. Furthermore, a strong political determination within the government's body for rooting out administrative corruption is very critical. To mitigate the administrative corruption, implementing law, endorsing proportionate punishment for the perpetrators and monitoring legal and judicial institutions are likely to be effective enough.

In addition, reforming and revising laws are considered instrumental and will smooth the way for justice and transparency. However, decreasing and eliminating corruption in state departments and institutions are far more significant. Disregarding this issue will deteriorate the condition in the country and it will go from bad to worse. Therefore, the government seeks to pay especial heed in this respect so as to meet the needs and demands of the citizens. In short, considering this event will certainly ensure the right implementation of law.

In other words, pay attention to both the aforementioned cases will be important. For instance, reforming law, regulation and legislative documents will remove ambiguities and confusion in laws and legislative documents and will hamper the way for exploitation. As a result, the opportunists will fail to exploit the void of law for their own interests. The significance of supervising the rule of law and regulation is also highly noteworthy. Based on its importance, Afghan government has adopted the national anti-corruption strategy and discussed this issue comprehensively at the meeting of the Supreme Council on the Rule of Law. In the current month of 1396, Afghan calendar, Supreme Council for the Rule of Law and anti-corruption campaign – which was also attended by Second Vice President Sarwar

Danish – led by Afghan President called the national anti-corruption strategy a highly effective and beneficial plan in terms of combating administrative corruption. The solution to the current unsatisfactory situation and backbreaking challenges in several departments were stated in this plan. Additionally, the responsibilities of the government and measurements which are supposed to be adopted by it were noted, too. In short, five issues have been emphasized such as sound leadership, a strong determination for government leadership including transparency in policies, reform in security sector, transparency in recruitment through the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission, legal prosecution of those committing administrative corruption, and sound financial management. All the said issues are important and are believed to play a key role in combating administrative corruption. In connection with this strategy, all institutions and departments are deemed responsible in cooperating with law-enforcing agencies so as to enhance this plan. According to law-enforcing agencies, this strategy is realistic and practicable in real life. Its implementation will be fruitful in mitigating administrative corruption.

This point should be taken serious that implementing this strategy is in need of collective cooperation and national mobilization. The international community and Afghanistan's allies also called this document an important step by Afghan government and declared their support for its implementation. They further underlined the cooperation of all state institutions for enforcing this strategy. It is hoped that justice and the rule of law will be ensured and administrative corruption will be rooted out with the implementation of this national document.

Since the government promised to fight against administrative corruption and reform administrative system, now it is taking satisfactory step in this regard. For instance, maintaining "public law and order" and eliminating "every kind of administrative corruption" is mentioned in the preamble of Afghan Constitution. It is further stated in article 50, "The state shall adopt necessary measures to create a healthy administration and realize reforms in the administrative system of the country. The administration shall perform its duties with complete neutrality and in compliance with the provisions of the laws..."

So, the mentioned strategy is hoped to reduce administrative corruption, bring structural reforms in institutions and pave the ground for transparency in implementing law.

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## The Nonstop Bleeding in Myanmar

By Guy Verhofstadt

The recent indescribable casualties and sufferings inflicted upon Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar have outraged the conscience of scores of people around the globe, including Afghanistan. They are bleeding relentlessly and bear the brunt of atrocities of conflict. The flagrant violation of human rights and dignity and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is an unmistakable fact in Myanmar. Men, women and children are shot indiscriminately – which is against the international instruments and humanity.

The carnage and bloodshed in Myanmar carried out against the ethnic minority group reflects the megalomania of the individuals involved in this act of cruelty. No wonder, scores of bloody wars throughout the history stemmed from claiming racial and religious superiority which led to mammoth debris and countless human fatalities. That is to say, the gory incidents and destructive wars did not only remedy the problems of the human societies but deteriorated the issue and sowed the seeds of revenge among nations.

The merciless and indiscriminate killings of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar will never ever be a panacea for this country. Religious intolerance and racial bigotry, which are the root causes of wars and violence, will compound the challenges in human societies. It is strongly believed that segregating Rohingya Muslims – who are described as "the world's most persecuted minority" – and discriminating them on the basis of their religion will be counterproductive and lead to horrible consequence in the future.

To the world's unmitigated chagrin, the Nobel Prize Laureate and the State Counselor of Myanmar and leader of the ruling National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi has not condemned the flagrant violation of human rights and merciless massacre of Muslims' ethnic group in majority Buddhist country. Condemning the issue, Pakistani Nobel Prize winner Malala Yousafzai said that she waited for the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi to denounce the "shameful treatment" of the Rohingya.

The violence and the exodus started after Myanmar police and paramilitary posts came under the attack of Rohingya militants who intended to protect their ethnic minority from torture by Myanmar security force. The army showed backlash through ushering in indiscriminate offensive called "clearance operations" claiming to root out the militants. Within the last ten days, about 90,000 Rohingya Muslims have reportedly fled to Bangladesh uprooted by reported rapes, murders and acts of arson. Trampling upon the rights and dignity of men, women

and children and killing them in cold blood are highly outrageous. To put it succinctly, it is too hard to articulate the tragic aspect of Myanmar's incident.

"This turn of events is deplorable. It was predicted and could have been prevented. Decades of persistent and systematic human rights violations, including the very violent security responses to the attacks since October 2016, have almost certainly contributed to the nurturing of violent extremism, with everyone ultimately losing," the UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein is cited as saying.

Similarly, the UN, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have consistently decried the treatment of the Rohingya by Myanmar and neighboring countries.

The bloody episode and heart-wrenching stories of Rohingya Muslims have outraged the conscience of large number of people in Afghanistan, too. Posting the riddled bodies with sliced throats of Rohingya women and children in social media, a number of individuals condemned this issue in the strongest possible term and called it a genocide urging Suu Kyi to "return the Noble Prize". Moreover, countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Chechnya, etc. raised concern over the issue.

When innocent Myanmar Muslim women and children are slaughtered, when innocent Christians are killed in terrorist attacks in Manchester, England, when Yazidi women are dishonored by the self-styled Islamic State (IS) in Iraq, etc. that is a stain on collective conscience. Indeed, when an individual's right or dignity is violated in any parts of the world, regardless of their racial, religious or ethnic backgrounds, it will be a disgrace for the entire world.

There will be no peace or stability, unless the world practices religious tolerance and racial acceptance and promote the spirit of brotherhood. It is aptly stated in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

To sum up, the Myanmar state will have to respect international instruments and stop violence and bloodshed. Discriminating the ethnic group of Rohingya on the grounds of their religion will never ensure peace and stability in the country. The bloodbath will further blemish the reputation of this country at international level since the UN, along with many countries, condemned the inhuman rehearsal of Myanmar security forces.

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