

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



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The Ghazni Prison Break

The rising insecurity in various parts of the country are making the headlines in the media frequently nowadays that depicts the fact that the situation is getting really threatening. From now onwards, if security situation is not kept in check, the possibilities of a chaotic and disordered future will turn to reality. It is really gloomy to see that the situation is getting worse even after so much insistence from the national and international authorities.

Taliban every now and then show their strength by making some astonishing attacks in different parts of the country, particularly on Afghan National Security Forces and their facilities.

On Monday morning Taliban insurgents stormed a maximum security prison in the capital of central Ghazni province, releasing 355 prisoners, of which at least 148 are considered to be a serious threat to national security.

According to officials, the prison housed 436 prisoners in total; out of which 355 escaped during the attack.

Ministry of Interior confirmed the attack and said in a statement that the attack happened at about 2am Monday when an insurgent detonated explosives at the entrance to the prison. A group of gunmen then stormed the facility. The MoI said seven security members were killed and seven others were injured. In addition a total of five insurgents died in the incident.

Taliban soon after the incident claimed the responsibility of the attack. This incident shows the level of insecurity looming large in the country. When a high profile prison, which should have such strong security arrangements that thinking of breaking it should never be considered an option by the insurgents, is broken so easily by them, promising the common people security of their lives becomes a very difficult task. How can the forces provide security to others when they cannot provide security to their own selves and their facilities?

Moreover, the major concern is the release of 148 insurgents who are considered threats to national security. They are now at large and will be free to pursue their motive of further debilitating the security situation, not only in the province but in the entire country.

This issue should be taken seriously and the authorities should be questioned about their negligence of duties as without the negligence of responsibilities it would not be possible for the insurgents to carry out such an attack.

Wolesi Jirga in their session on the same day, lambasted the Ministry of Interior (MoI) over the attack, suggesting the Interior Minister be summoned to the lower house. They claimed that National Directorate of Security (NDS) had already provided the information that such an attack might take place but the Ministry was not able to discharge its duty and the house should deal with the authorities concerned in accordance with the law.

Wolesi Jirga Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said the attack had raised multiple questions, because it took place despite top security officials being alerted about the possibility. He tasked the internal affairs commission with summoning the interior minister to the lower house to brief lawmakers on the prison attack. A vote of no confidence should be tabled against the minister if he failed to come up with a satisfactory response.

This gloomy fact shows how insecurity and terrorism have been threatening the lives of the common people in Afghanistan. The common people, after suffering from decades of war and bloodshed deserve a relatively peaceful life. They have given so many sacrifices and now they hope that they would have tranquil life in the times to come. However, there is no guarantee that their hopes would turn into reality.

The people of Afghanistan must worry about the deterioration in security as they are basically the ones who have been suffering and may suffer to a further extent if instability and terrorism prevail in the country. It is really pathetic to see the civilians losing their lives because of the negligence of duty on the part of security officials.

The innocent people of Afghanistan deserve that the Afghan government and security officials must ensure to them a better future. They need to make sure that the post transition period in Afghanistan will be a period that can give poverty stricken Afghan people security and tranquility.

It depends largely on how Afghan authorities will deal with the circumstances ahead. At this crucial juncture, the Afghan government does not have any other option but to be more responsible and deal with the situation with honesty and dedication. Currently there are many concerns about the Afghan government; addressing them is in its total control if other things are out of it.

In addition, for a lasting peace Afghan government must adopt a clear policy regarding the reconciliation process in the country. They have to try to bring back the process on track. Taliban, after the news of the death of Mullah Omar, have denied to take initiative regarding talks with the government. In fact, they, as a response, have continued violence and terrorism, while Afghan government apart from hesitating and waiting has not been able to offer anything else.



The Growing Rift between Warring Parties

By Hujjatullah Zia

Despite rivalries between the self-styled Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Qaeda network, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Egyptian doctor who replaced Osama bin Laden as the head of al-Qaeda four years ago, suggested in an audio message that there may be some room for cooperation between the two groups when it came to combating the West. "Despite the big mistakes (of Islamic State), if I were in Iraq or Syria I would cooperate with them in killing the crusaders and secularists... even though I don't recognize the legitimacy of their state, because the matter is bigger than that," Zawahiri is quoted as saying.

Contrary to suggesting cooperation to fight the West, he accused ISIS top leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of "sedition" and insisted the Iraqi terrorist recluse was not the leader of all Muslims and militant jihad as "caliph" of the Islamic State, as al-Baghdadi had claimed 14 months ago in a Mosul mosque.

The ideological conflicts have triggered a split between the two militant organizations. With the emergence of the ISIS, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri refused to pledge allegiance to the ISIS group on the grounds of its highly fundamental practices - which apparently outweighed al-Qaeda's acts of terror. He called Baghdadi's caliphate illegitimate and prevented his men of swearing allegiance to him.

The ISIS's super fundamentalism is also a bone of contention between ISIS and the Taliban outfits. In other words, their ideological differences sparked skirmish between the two militant groups in some restive parts of the country. Apparently, Jihad-e Nikah and systematic sexual harassments - which are perpetrated by ISIS in Iraq and Syria - are against the Taliban's tenets.

In spite of the mentioned facts, some Taliban hardliners have pledged support to Islamic State (IS) group in Afghanistan and Pakistan and changed their white banner into black one. As a result, Janan Mosazai, Afghan ambassador in Pakistan, said the militants of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are shifting over to the IS group. "An example of this is the attempt by some former TTP militants to infiltrate into Nangarhar province and switch over to the black flag or Daesh, which we have been containing," said Mosazai. He added that the terror group was spreading "its propaganda and obscurantist worldview" also in Pakistan, similar as other parts of the world. Hence, the IS's infiltration in the Taliban's faction has divided them into two opposing categories: the faithful Taliban and the converted ones. Both the ideologue groups share common goal i.e. claim to establish the divine government on the surface of earth, but in different manners. The second dissimilarity is that the legitimate "caliph" for IS and their followers are Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. What about the Taliban's current legitimate caliph?

A wide gap has appeared between the Taliban militants after the death of their charismatic leader Mullah Muhammad Omar. A group of Taliban's council appointed Mullah Akhtar Mansour as Omar's successor and pronounced him the Taliban's legitimate leader. Ayman al-Zawahiri also pledged allegiance to him. However, Omar's family, including his son Mullah Yaqub and his brother Mullah Manan, opposed his appointment - this led to serious dispute among the Taliban. The disagreement between Mansour and Manan's followers is likely to grow hot and hotter with each passing day.

Reports say that in recent weeks, Mansour sent Mullah Jalil, an envoy with good contacts with the Taliban's political leadership, to persuade senior members based in the Middle East to publicly support him instead of a rival faction coalescing around Omar's brother and son.

According to Reuters, one Taliban source said the leadership in the Middle East had been planning to split from Mansour because they feared he was too close to Pakistani intelligence.

"Some senior members of the group such as Tayyab Agha and Mullah Hasan Rahmani ... feel threatened in Pakistan," the source said. "Mullah Mansour is sending a delegation headed by Mullah Jalil to hold talks with them and convince them to pledge allegiance."

Taliban commanders opposing Mansour say he is using threats and incentives to strengthen his position. "Mullah Mansour offered (his opponents) top responsibilities in the Islamic Emirate and huge financial assistance if they pledged allegiance to him, but they rejected all these offers," a senior member of the anti-Mansour faction has said.

Mullah Dadullah, a battlefield commander leading a breakaway faction of the Taliban, accused Mansour of sending fighters to seize territory from his men in Zabul province last month.

"Taliban, with 50 motorcycles, raided our centers and residential areas during the night late in August and tried to establish check points," a furious Dadullah said in a video published last week. "We are trying to solve the problem through the mediation of the Ulema (council) of elders. They may force us to an armed defense," he said.

The ideological differences have led to internal conflicts among the warring parties in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Similarly, the IS has been changed into a serious threat for the Taliban's political interests in the country. It is believed that this conflict provides a golden chance for the Afghan-Pak officials to make use of their weak points and compound their anti-terror combats. If terrorism does not be curbed in this sensitive time, it will change into a great menace for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. For instance, if al-Qaeda and IS and some Taliban militants join forces, the security situation will be deteriorated more than ever before. The Terrorist networks should not be let stand united.

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Syria a Dying Nation

By Manish Rai

Now after more than four years after it began, the full-blown civil war that developed in Syria has killed over 250,000 people, half of them civilians. In addition to the UN estimates nearly 8 million Syrians have been displaced from their homes. When the additional 4 million Syrians who have fled into neighbouring countries are taken into account, it follows that a humanitarian disaster has overtaken more than half of the country's pre-war population of 23 million. In addition to taking a very high toll on humanity the Syrian conflict has devastated every component from which a country stands on its own population, civil society, infrastructure, cultural heritage and economy. Prior to the conflict Syria was a middle-income country with an economy based on agriculture, industry, oil, trade and tourism with good health care and education. But now everything has changed after four years of civil war everything cease to exist. This calamity of war affects all aspects of people's well-being since it was often accompanied by the loss of income and livelihoods with families struggling to meet their basic needs. Let's see how this war has affected different sectors of the country.

Economy- The economic fabric has lost nearly 80% of its productive capacity since the beginning of the civil war. Even if the conflict ceased now and GDP grew at an average rate of five per cent each year, it is estimated that it would take the Syrian economy 30 years to return to the economic level of 2010. The Syrian economy has experienced massive de-industrialisation, dilapidation and degradation as a result of business closure and bankruptcy, capital flight, looting and destruction. Previously the eastern Mediterranean's leading oil and natural gas producer, Syria has seen its production fall to a fraction of pre-conflict levels. Syria is no longer able to export oil, and as a result, government revenues from the energy sector have fallen significantly. Agricultural activities continue at a reduced level increasing the reliance on imported foodstuffs, particularly grain. Many businesses now rely on expensive foreign imports for their stock. The continuously depreciating currency has meant that US dollars are highly sought after, with some traders and businesses refusing to accept Syrian pounds. Because of all this worst impact on the economy 48.8 per cent of the workforce is unemployed. Also, more than half of the Syrian population are living in poverty, with some 4.4 million (or more than a fifth of the population) living in abject poverty.

Infrastructure- Has been damaged as a result of the conflict and

direct targeting by armed groups, with widespread damage to electricity and water infrastructure, oil refineries, education facilities and agricultural infrastructure. Syrian children have already missed out on almost years of schooling. It is estimated by the World Health Organization that 37 percent of Syrian hospitals have been destroyed, and a further 20 percent severely damaged during the civil war. Civilians are forced to go to primitive field hospitals, often run in people's homes and by local volunteers with only the most basic of medicines and training. Electricity and water service in much of the country is sporadic as a result of fighting between government, opposition forces and the Islamic State. Further, the exploration and development of the country's oil and natural gas resources have been delayed indefinitely. Nevertheless, even if the fighting were to subside, it would take years for the Syrian domestic energy system to return to pre-conflict operating status. Syria's domestic pipeline network used to be well-developed, now it has been severely damaged by fighting and sabotage since war broke out.

Cultural/Social Fabric- Numerous archaeological sites of great importance in Syria are being systematically targeted and destroyed by the Islamic State. Museums in Syria are also a cause for concern, and there have been many incidences of looting of valuable cultural property. A large number of museums have also had their infrastructure damaged as a result of being caught in the middle of armed conflict. Syrian cultural property has disappeared from the country to end up on the black market and/or in private collections. The ongoing uncontrolled violence has led to a broad disintegration of Syrian society and created different worlds. Things have changed and there are qualitative variables that left deep scars in the conscience of the people. Once a vibrant and peace loving society is now full of hatred and distrust people of different ethnic group now can't expect to live besides each other.

It is evident, that Syria lost all its gains throughout decades, and that all development indicators are directed towards an abyss, and that not any realistic force can change this trend. Even in the case of a political and developmental miracle, the maximum that can be achieved is a return back to up to two decades or more in development indicators. But the spirit of past Syria no longer exists now. Only time will tell that who win's or who lose this war but one thing is certain that Syria as a country has already lost the struggle of its survival. May be in the future the coming generations of Syria will know in the stories that once a country called Syria existed on the planet.

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