

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



September 21, 2015

Afghan Society, Yet to Strive Embracing Democracy

Every year 15 September is observed as "International Day of Democracy" per resolution of UN General Assembly. This day was first celebrated in 2008. The theme of the ongoing year was "Space for Civil Society". The incumbent secretary general of UN Ban-Ki-Moon terms is oxygen of democracy and catalyst for social progress and economic growth. Whatever the title selected for democracy -Afghan society has yet to strive for an all-encompassing democracy.

Throughout history, democracies have flourished, been threatened or replaced by authoritarian rule only to re-emerge in societies all over the world. The involvement of the people in the public affairs of their countries is more likely than any other form of government to ensure basic freedoms and equality, meet the needs of everyone and preserve or restore peace.

Democracy is a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives. Democracy allows eligible citizens to participate equally, either directly or through elected representatives in the proposal, development, and creation of laws. It encompasses social, economic and cultural conditions that enable the free and equal practice of political self-determination. There is a negligible quantity of such practices traced.

The ultimate goal of democracy is to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice, foster the economic and social development of the community, strengthen the cohesion of society and build a favorable environment for international peace. Democracy, development and human rights are therefore interdependent.

In a democracy, human rights are promoted and protected so that we all, no matter our race, gender, personal belief or style of life, can participate in formulating the laws and policies to which we are subject. These human rights include the right to express ourselves freely, to associate freely with others, and to choose our representatives in free and fair elections.

This system of governance ensures the respect of all citizens -women have important role to play as men. While women make up just over half of the world's population, fewer than one in five members of parliament around the world are women. Societies are more equitable and democracy is stronger when women participate in all aspects of political life.

After Taliban's regime toppled, Afghanistan was put on the way to democracy, the established and wide practiced system of government. The underlined fault remains with delayed understanding of preferential type be applied, having understood the elongated concerns and grievances of people in general and ruling elite in particular. The centralized government brought forth, is perceived as continuation of denied political participation by many stake holder.

The Afghan population currently has few means of expressing dissent regarding policies carried out by the international community and the central government, which operates on a highly centralized patronage model in which power and resources are channeled through personal and political allies. The system lacks the connection, rules, and checks and balances necessary to make leaders truly accountable to the population, which invites corruption, rent-seeking, and a hemorrhaging of domestic legitimacy. Local governmental bodies are the appropriate places for representing Afghans and responding to their needs, but these currently suffer from a lack of capacity, confusion over their roles and authorities, and little legitimacy.

For instance, equality among human beings and acquiring opportunities based on merit are democratic principles. People receive opportunities and gain advantages through their capability, talent and skills in a democratic society. But, all social and political opportunities in Afghanistan's political systems are based on appointment. People have obtained social and political opportunities based on their tribe, ethnicity or other relations of or bribe. Communalism, regionalism, nepotism, favoritism and all such ill-practices are hostile to democracy leading to despondency.

Participatory democracy associate with good Governance program supports the establishment of a broadly accepted national government that promotes national unity and effectively serves the needs of the Afghan people. The international community must help developing the capacity of key institutions including the Independent Electoral Commission, the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, and target ministries and institutions of the executive branch such as the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, and the Civil Service Commission. They should also provide training to Afghan civil society organizations to advocate for society-led reforms.

In that pursuit a democratic institution must be built on structures and processes that are accountable, transparent, decentralized, and able to manage legitimate elections and the administration of justice, and operate under the oversight of the parliament. Furthermore, it should combat exclusion, protect public goods, actively engage civil society and the private sector, promote participation, and strengthen partnerships among sectors, groups, and every levels of government. Revitalizing public administration for people-centered development would require reform efforts that incorporate these characteristics.

Every year we look back on yet another year of remarkable events in the story of democracy, a story that continues to be written by people who yearn for dignity and human rights, for an end to corruption, for glorious future, for jobs, justice and a fair share of political power and stability, the people of Afghanistan waiting for ages. Their story is just begun having comprehended that democracies are not born overnight, nor built in a year, or by holding one or two elections. They require sustained and thorough work.

No Room for Peace Talk

By Hujjatullah Zia

The nascent democracy is unlikely to be a panacea for the Afghans' bleeding wounds. There is a sense of mistrust in the air and our nation suffers from relentless violence and militancy. Ostensibly, the "war on terror" did not only fail to bring peace but paved the way for further hostility. The Taliban insurgents have been reorganized mysteriously and make heavy inroads into the country. After all, the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) group is a new challenge to be dealt with and it is not less threatening than the Taliban. The gleam of hope regarding peace negotiation, between Afghan government and Taliban officials, disappeared following the news released the death of Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Muhammad Omar. His successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour signaled his indication that peace was "the enemy propaganda" and carried out heavy attacks in Kabul within past few weeks which left hundreds of dead and wounded behind. Subsequently, Afghan officials blamed Pakistan's security establishment and its top intelligence agency for the uptick in violence. Hence, the tension between Kabul and Islamabad on the one hand and the pugnacious attitude of Omar's successor on the other hand stalled the peace negotiation.

Similarly, the appointment of Mansour as Omar's successor led to a split within Taliban ranks. Omar's family, including his brother Mullah Abdul Manan and his son Mullah Yaqub, refused to declare allegiance to Mansour. However, reports say that Omar's family has pledged allegiance to Mansour, which has bridged the gap.

"In a meeting Mullah Yaqub (Mullah Omar's son) and Mullah Abdul Mannan (Omar's brother) pledged allegiance to the new leader of Islamic Emirate, Mullah Akhtar Mansour," a statement issued by the Taliban said without saying when the meeting was held.

The statement, however, noted that Mullah Mansour was present on the occasion. The deal was brokered by a panel of clerics and elders, who had been trying for weeks to resolve the dispute that began with the appointment of Mullah Mansour as the group's new chief. The question remains that will this agreement affect peace talk positively?

It is said that Pakistan and the United States have agreed to persuade Afghanistan to revive the stalled reconciliation process with Afghan Taliban in the latest push to restore peace in the war-ravaged country. The prospect of resumption of talks was reportedly discussed during a meeting between Pakistan army Chief General Raheel Sharif and the top US general in Rawalpindi last week.

The Express Tribune quoted a Pakistan's official that the thrust of discussions between the US delegation and the army chief was on how to revive the stalled peace process. The security official is fur-

ther cited that detractors and spoilers were undermining the process of rapprochement as well as efforts for striking a peace deal in Afghanistan.

Although, Pakistan nudges Taliban to sit on the table of negotiation with Afghan authorities, nonetheless, Syed Akbar Agha, a Taliban's high ranking official, was not optimist about negotiation when he was asked in a video conference by a local reporter on Wednesday. He called the foreign forces "occupier" and claimed that the war was forced on the Taliban. He pointed out that Mullah Akhtar Mansour will not hold peace talk with Afghanistan until foreign soldiers fully withdraw.

I always deemed peace talk no more than a political game. The Taliban's practices have constantly been at odds with their preaching. For instance, they continuation to target Afghan police and civilians during the negotiation. After all, it must be noted that the head of Afghan High Peace Council, Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, was assassinated at his home in Kabul on September 20, 2011, by two men posing as Taliban representatives. The suicide bomber claimed to be a Taliban commander and said he wanted to "discuss peace" with Professor Rabbani. Four other members of HPC were also killed in the blast. The Quetta Shura, which is the leadership of the Afghan Taliban hiding in the Quetta City in Pakistan, was blamed for the incident by Afghan officials.

The Afghan High Peace Council was established in 2010 and tasked with contacting the Taliban and convincing them to join the peace process. The members of High Peace Council (HPC) were made tireless efforts in pursuit of brining Taliban's leaders on the table of negotiation. But, all the attempts were proved abortive. In spite of the government's efforts focused on re-integrating Taliban fighters, they did not have a reconciliation strategy.

Currently, the Taliban continue making heavy inroads into Afghanistan and neither years of investments on peace process nor the "war on terror" bore the desired fruit. Now, it is not only the Taliban but also the emergence of self-styled Islamic State group which have deteriorated the security situation across the country. "We are concerned about the situation in Afghanistan. International Security Assistance Force was in this country for a long time, and made some efforts, including the positive work, but in the end, it did not bring the final qualitative improvement of the situation," Russian President Vladimir Putin is quoted as saying at the CSTO summit in Dushanbe last week. He believes that the situation in the country is degrading after the withdrawal of the main part of foreign troops and the territory of the Islamic State went far beyond Iraq and Syria. In a nutshell, the terrorist groups left no room for peace and democracy in the country.

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Zero Tolerance Against Terrorism!

By Asmatyari

It is said that Daesh's quest for establishing Islamic Emirate has earned it adherents in Muslims countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan. Finding the tale of brutality of this group going wild, many splintered Taliban group exploit the name to further their vested interest -some have already vowed to work for Daesh. The once militant outfits of Taliban and other splintered groups have vowed to fight the cause of the group, of international fame. In Afghanistan it is pulling its muscle to establish its rule in remote and loosely governed territories. There are numerous identical tales of ferociousness raveled in videos publicized by the militants. The tale of ruthless atrocities earned them distinction and prominence alike. Consequently, Taliban and Al-Qaida members find it a privilege to work for ISIS. Henceforth, they have started recruiting illiterate people in their ranks and executing indescribable tale of viciousness. According to certain media outlets, Daesh militants have so far killed as many as 600 people over the past four months in Achin district in eastern Nangarhar province. The group - which originated in Iraq and Syria - has also taken nearly 150 people hostage recently, including clerics, tribal elders and government officials, report said.

It is unearthed earlier the militants ISIS terrorist group are recruiting child soldiers and force marriages on young women and girls in eastern Nangarhar province. The said province is stated to be worst affected the heinous crimes of the terror group. According to the local tribal elders the affiliates of the terror group have executed hundreds of people including civilians amidst ongoing violence in parts of Nangarhar province where brutal clash also continue between the ISIS and Taliban militants.

Aggravated with the soaring atrocities of the terror group, the district governor has called for a public uprising against the loyalists of the terror group. The First Vice President Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum is already leading an operation against the loyalists of the terror group in eastern Nangarhar province, as he led operations in Northern provinces. The acting provincial governor of northern Balkh province Ata Mohammad Noor has too followed the First Vice President Gen. Abdul Rashid in leading military operations against the militant groups in northern parts of Afghanistan. The operations were conducted in different parts of northern Balkh, Jawzjan and Sar-e-Pul provinces of Afghanistan, according to the provincial government media office.

The ongoing fight between ISIS or Taliban and government that mostly hurts the unarmed civilians categorically reflects every boundary of decency and humanity will be crossed to rise to power. This is not the first tragedy of this sort we should be regretful of and resort to condemnation only -the whole state of affairs depicts the government warring militants counteract as if all the militants have surrendered to them and vowed to disband armed militancy.

This undoubtedly is an alarming sign in Afghanistan, already sickened by recurrent attacks launched by local insurgents and militants. Moreover, Afghanistan undeniably serve as a fertile land providing with large number of individuals whose trust can easily be earned, subsequent of assurance of virtues, noble deed and dearness in the sight of Creator.

Consequently, it is pretty trouble-free for ISIS, to establish a sound operational ground in this piece of land, hence adding government miseries. The government can not get away unless the roots of terror groups are cut off; simple renunciation of presence of footprints of ISIS, instead a tangible measure should be put into practice, to get out of this menace; else's large number religiously betrayed individuals will respond at the call of Amirul Momineen, by joining the ranks of such militants.

It's repeatedly heard the security personnel warring militants were not aptly supported with needed backup that resulted in their setback -consequently a base had to be fallen to militants. This certainly marks security loophole and lack of coordination between corresponding departments. If the government runs short of 24/7 a standby force stationed a little distance apart from posts, endangering the lives of others security officials seem too awful for words motive.

With exception to fallacy of government displaying ineligibility reversing the attack, Taliban are equally responsible for civilian casualties. The ongoing fight between ISIS and Taliban seeking refuge in nearest village endangers the lives of unarmed civilians did not restricting them doing this, is unjustifiable disposition worthy of loud condemnation with inclusion to Afghan forces led air raid. Significantly, the pursuit of tit-for-tat that made Taliban launch attacks on innocent local or foreign nationals is equally condemnable act. Despite governments largest spending on security and loophole as long as curtailed the human precious lives will go on wasting.

It should be learned, the ISIS pursuing the footsteps of the Taliban that had set Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan pivoted on mass human rights violation, will no better work for the well being of greater majority -Muslim Ummah. The world observed ISIS demolishes the sacred and historic places such as shrines, mosques, and churches, exercises a narrow version of Islam rendering unacceptable for both Muslims and non-Muslims world, alike.

If someone claims to strive for the wellbeing of a cognizable group, it should do away with raison-d'être widening the minute disparity existing between sub factions. Factually speaking the Muslims world suffers the height of intolerance and extremism. Apart from bad governance, there are multiple factors behind the escalating extremism yet it is malicious for being solely responsible for the widened unrest, plaguing the world over. It should be learned that states can be built by a disgruntled group, relying on granted warheads and weapons, but can not be run without clearly laid principles, universally accepted system of governance a profound self-reliance and harmonious coexistence.

Each of the two phenomenon, tend exists with distinct disparity. The establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) renders one of such deception, anchored on the blood of innocents and unarmed citizens. It is said that the throng of terrorists that stationed in Iraq and Syria from across the world, have surpassed the brutality of Al-Qaida; thus sent a shock impulse over the spine of many states, including the US. It is to be drawn that we should demonstrate zero tolerance against the extremists and insurgents who are doing away piece of mind.

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