

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



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## Media and our Society

Media has a vital role in democratic countries. Its role and its influence have been so much tremendous that now it is considered as one of the pillars of the state. It is believed that in modern democracy, media keeps an eye on legislature, judiciary and executive and at the same time scrutinizes their policies and their undertakings. Therefore, they have an opportunity to reconsider their undertakings and try to amend themselves as required. However, for this to happen, it is necessary that media should be independent and must not be dominated by the government.

Apart from scrutinizing the government media has an imperative role in developing public opinion and at the same time providing timely information and knowledge. Today's modernized media has the capacity to reach the people 24 hours and provide them information in real time. There are a large number of people in the world who are influenced by the bewitching effects of media. TV's, computers, newspapers and magazines, radios, mobile phones, tablets and many others, all are the parts of modern media and reach billions of people every day. Therefore, underestimating the role of media would be a fool's errand.

Though media's function in daily life is already significant, its role during the era of instability, conflict, war and different movements becomes paramount. Because of this fact, the different parties to the conflict try to use it for different sorts of propaganda and thus persuade the people to favor their perspectives. The independent and unbiased role of media during such an era will definitely make the whole world see the truth, while its biased role may bring more miseries and injustice.

Considering the influence and the role of media in the modern world, it is really important that it should have a very responsible and wise character. Misinformation and too much sensationalized and dramatic versions of the truth may deviate the people away from the path of the truth and they may start believing untrue as true and may even play a role to further dominate the truth.

Afghanistan has been one of the countries that have been dominated by instability and conflict. The role of media in Afghanistan has been felt to be very much vital, but unfortunately, it has been developed only in the last decade. Today, it is claimed that Afghan media is independent, yet there are many issues that have to be dealt with to really make it free and independent in the true sense of the word. At the same time, the international media active in Afghanistan has also played a role that cannot be neglected at all.

The role of media, both national and international, in the last decade, especially in the era of war against terrorism has been very much important. It has disclosed to the people the real nature of the war and the parties to the conflict. It has brought to the people, the events and the incidents with their details and their horrors. Analyzing these incidents and events, it would not be difficult for the people of Afghanistan to understand their true enemy and friend. It is also crucial that media must make the people know about their true enemies and their true friends so that they must be able to choose the better between them.

The media reports and the analysis have clearly shown to the people of Afghanistan that they have been highly influenced by Taliban and their actions. Though, they have been the victims of the war as a whole, the role and activities of Taliban have proved to be more deadly for them. Recently, the media reports have clearly depicted that most of the civilian casualties have been because of Taliban. It is because of Taliban that Afghanistan has an image of an extremist nation with no respect for moderation and democracy.

However, there is an important aspect of the fact that has not been properly handled by media and that is the truth as a whole. The truth in pieces, promulgated both by national and international media have caused certain misunderstandings as well. They have not been able to declare the war against terrorism as a war against terrorism in true sense. The war against terrorism simply means that there are two parties to the conflict; first party is the moderate Afghan culture and their supporters in international community and the second party is composed of the religious extremists - the Taliban.

Due to certain political compromises and at the same time misunderstandings, Taliban have been divided into certain factions. Yes, definitely, from tactical point of view there are different factions in Taliban, but they are one as a whole. They, as can be observed, are divided into factions, like Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Taliban, but their ideologies have shown that they are not much different at all.

It is important for media to see the truth as a whole and try to understand the political tricks that are played by the politicians. It is not the duty of media to pursue the wills of the politicians, but to provide people with unbiased and complete truth. The complete truth is that both Afghanistan and Pakistan have been influenced by hardliner extremists, who have no respect for moderation and are the real party to the conflict in war against terrorism. It is not important what they are termed as; the important factor is what they do and what they want.

Pursuing the truth as a whole is the only way through which media would be able to support the common people in understanding the scenario around them and their real friends and enemies, which is very important to make better decisions for the country as whole.



# Taliban Regaining Reign!

By Asmatyari

It was the third quarter of night. The city was seemingly ruled by darkened widespread darkness. The people should have fallen asleep hours ago and might have been enjoying sweet dreams prior to that deadening moment. The city observed prevalent silence amidst the unnoticeable footsteps of marching armed men. The countable security officials on duty must have sensed the blowing air past their faces single imminent danger. The all at once deafening gunshots and rockets from all around should have awoken the whole city. The residents subsequent to knowing of Taliban's attack began to flee in the safe direction. It is not the only incident that snatched the sleeps - the truth is for the past three decades Afghans are sleepless.

The picture drawn, describes the tale of city of Kunduz prior the Taliban had launched storming attack on Monday at 3AM local time. Following the attack, involving hundreds of fighters, the northern Afghan city of Kunduz fell to Taliban - one of the major urban areas for the first time since the Taliban government toppled. Seeking entry the insurgents closed off the only four access points into the city - effectively preventing troops from entering and civilians from fleeing. Later it was disclosed with exception to airport, Taliban has seized the provincial council building, the offices of the local High Peace Council, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) building, UNAMA offices and other key official facilities including private Banks. It is reported the Taliban have had overrun the local prison and freed all prisoners, torched the offices of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) - a German organization and other foreign offices in the city. In addition, they reportedly stole a large amount of military equipment. Conforming, the social media footage showed Taliban driving through the streets of Kunduz in official armored vehicles and military tanks and raised their flags at the center of city.

The Taliban multidirectional attack leading to conquest of strategic city of Kunduz came prior to Afghanistan's CEO's address to the UNGA. During his address to the United Nations General Assembly, Abdullah had called for Pakistan to keep its promise to crack down on Islamic extremists blamed for carrying out cross-border attacks and destabilizing the impoverished war-torn country. Abdullah said without external support "this guerrilla-style low intensity warfare would have been history by now." Admitting the Taliban is equipped with latest weaponry, familiar with war tactics and supported by some of states or groups, unless is responded uniformly by all section of Afghan society, may not be weakened.

Earlier Taliban insurgents stormed a prison in the capital of central Ghazni province releasing about 350 prisoners. According to officials, the prison housed 436 prisoners in total of which 355 escaped during the siege. The security officials declared at least 148 to be a serious threat to national security. It was cautioned the Taliban set free would cause serious blow to the already volatile security situation of the country. The seizure of such a city justifies the said reservations.

The incidence reflects the unpreparedness of government to avert any such plot. Indisputably, it is the security forces to avert any such plot prior to its execution. The insurgent's easy access to their high value target (jail break) or seizure of provincial capital depicts lack of concern on security issues. If the said proposition is true then credibility of interior security diminishes otherwise the weakness should be transformed into strength. It's repeatedly heard the security personnel warring militants were not aptly supported with needed backup that resulted in their setback - consequently a city had to fall to militants. This certainly marks security loophole and lack of coordination between consequent departments. If the government runs short of 24/7 a standby force stationed a little distance apart from a high security threat site, then endangering the lives of other security officials and citizens seem too awful for words motive.

Previously the Ministry of Defense (MoD) acknowledged that the lack of strategic coordination among the security forces has been the main reason behind the fall of city. The ministry said Taliban militants would not have taken control of the city if there had been strategic coordination between the security forces. These are underlined security lapses that serve civilian and security casualties. Now it is reported that government has begun airstrikes against the militant who have sought refuge in civilian population. Any unwise move may lead to lose of hundreds of innocents unarmed innocent masses. It was earlier a private news outlet undertook a survey that showed inclining graph of causalities.

A survey conducted on Afghanistan's security situation has found that security threats increased by 13 percent in the former month during which Afghan forces launched more than 600 operations across the country to curb the advance of the Taliban. 1089 terror and anti-terror events were recorded during August with 13 percent of the events similar to the events that were recorded during July. ANSF extended their military campaigns during the said month and launched 666 military operations which show a 26 percent increase compared to the previous month.

The rise in civilian casualties should be matter of great concern not only for humanitarian organizations and but also for Afghan government and security departments, alike. Conversely, it too underscores government's improvised in curbing the militants and terrorists capacity unleashing great deal of attacks. Both a coordinated surveillance security system and apt counter terrorism measure may help war torn land get rid of growing attacks. Stretching fingers out at others might not help us get out of the ongoing dilemma of terrorism.

Taliban following the news of demise of Mullah Omar and selection of Mullah Akhthar Mansoor tries to win their horrific disposition and let Afghan government know Taliban is not weakened and should not be deemed out of race. The series of storming attacks on potential sites is meant to be back to power either through use of force or negotiation inclined to their demands. The government falling short of proper security arrangement and curbing capacity may be left to surrender to majority demands of Taliban if peace talk is staged.

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## ISIS - A Poisonous being

By Hujjatullah Zia

The self-proclaimed Islamic State burst on to the international scene in 2014 when it seized large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. It has become notorious for its brutality, including mass killings, abductions and beheadings. The group though has attracted support elsewhere in the Muslim world - and a US-led coalition has vowed to destroy it.

In June 2014, the group formally declared the establishment of a "caliphate" - a state governed in accordance with Islamic law, or Sharia, by caliph.

It has demanded that Muslims across the world swear allegiance to its leader - Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri al-Samarrai, better known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi - and migrate to territory under its control. IS has also told other jihadist groups worldwide that they must accept its supreme authority.

"IS can trace its roots back to the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian who set up Tawhid wa al-Jihad in 2002. A year after the US-led invasion of Iraq, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden and formed al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which became a major force in the insurgency."

Baghdadi, a former US detainee, became leader in 2010 and began rebuilding IS's capabilities. By 2013, it was once again carrying out dozens of attacks a month in Iraq. It had also joined the rebellion against President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, setting up the al-Nusra Front.

In April 2013, Baghdadi announced the merger of his forces in Iraq and Syria and the creation of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). The leaders of al-Nusra and al-Qaeda rejected the move, but fighters loyal to Baghdadi split from al-Nusra and helped ISIS remain in Syria.

In June 2014, ISIS overran the northern city of Mosul, and then advanced southwards towards Baghdad, massacring its adversaries and threatening to eradicate the country's many ethnic and religious minorities. At the end of the month, after consolidating its hold over dozens of cities and towns, ISIS declared the creation of a caliphate and changed its name to Islamic State.

The militant group is believed to be the world's wealthiest. It initially relied on wealthy private donors and Islamic charities in the Middle East keen to oust Syria's President Assad. Although such funding is still being used to finance the travel of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, the group is now largely self-funding.

"The US Treasury estimates that in 2014, IS may have earned as much as several million dollars per week, or \$100m in total, from the sale of crude oil and refined products to local middlemen, who

in turn smuggled them in Turkey and Iran, or sold them to the Syrian government."

Currently, the ISIS molests a large number of women who belong to religious minority group. As the militant group took over large portions of Syria and Iraq last summer, enslaved numerous religious minority women and killed religious minority men. It has been widely reported that many ISIS female captives commit suicide out of fear of being raped or in the aftermath of rape and abuse.

Religious minority women, some being as young as 8 years old, are passed around, sold, beaten, tortured and shared sexually by multiple ISIS fighters, who claim that it is their Allah-given right to hold infidel women as sex slaves and property. Many ISIS female captives are afraid that even if they are able to escape and reunite with their families, their families will not accept them.

A report released by the Human Rights Watch, which features interviews with women who were sexually enslaved by ISIS and were fortunate enough to escape, states that ISIS militants sometimes hold lottery drawings to determine which girls the fighters will be able to take home as property. Additionally, the report found that ISIS militants beat, torture, underfeed and electrocute enslaved religious minority women.

"Later that day they [ISIS fighters] made a lottery of our names and started to choose women by drawing out the names. The man who selected me, Abu Ghufuran, forced me to bathe, but while I was in the bathroom I tried to kill myself," 31-year-old Rashida is cited as saying. "I had found some poison in the house, and took it with me to the bathroom. I knew it was toxic because of its smell. I distributed it to the rest of the girls and we each mixed some with water in the bathroom and drank it. None of us died but we all got sick, some collapsed."

ISIS has changed into global threat and it is under the world negotiation. Similarly, it seeks foothold in Afghanistan intending to spearhead war across the country. There are reports that IS holds sway in about 25 provinces. No doubt, IS decides to extend its sphere of power in war-torn countries so as to fish in troubled water. Therefore, Afghanistan is one of the targets. It is believed that the mysterious abductions, which are taking place in recent months and deemed a new phenomenon in the country, are carried out by the militants operating under the black flag of IS and aim to spark discriminations on the basis of race, religion, creed, etc. among the nation. So, there is a strong potential for triggering sectarianism in Afghanistan.

The world will have to eradicate ISIS in Iraq and Syria and let not it extend its realm of power in other countries and blackmail the world. In nutshell, the radicalization and toxin it spews forth should be rooted out as soon as possible so as not to poison larger number of people.

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