

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



August 24, 2016

## Tenacious Violence against Women

Afghan society is one of the societies prominently marked with consistent violence against women. There have been efforts to discourage violence against women, mostly after the downfall of Taliban, but success has been only to a limited extent. In fact, the improvements could only be witnessed in the cities, while the rural and backward areas remained as they were. The socio-economic conditions could not alter much and the social and religious patterns in those areas have remained intact, therefore, no major breakthrough could be achieved. And, now when the international community is almost ready to leave Afghanistan, there are fears that the so-called achievements would be in danger.

There have been some very heart-wrenching incidents of violence against women in Afghanistan and unfortunately they continue. Even more unfortunate is the fact that several of such incidents are never brought to the attention of the authorities or media, it is also because of the fear of the system. Many victims fear that even if they bring the incidents to the notice of the police or media, their problems would not be solved and they would not be given justice; therefore, they choose to live with it.

An incident brought to the attention of media on Tuesday, August 23, disclosed that a man killed his wife and mother in law in western Herat province due to domestic violence. Provincial police spokesman Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said the perpetrator has been identified and efforts are underway for his arrest. No further details have been given regarding the main motive behind the murder of the woman and her mother but Ibrahim said the two were shot dead by the man.

Earlier a woman was brutally stabbed to death in broad day light in Pule-Khumri city, the provincial capital of northern Baghlan province. A 20-year-old woman also lost her life few days ago after she was brutally tortured by her husband in this province.

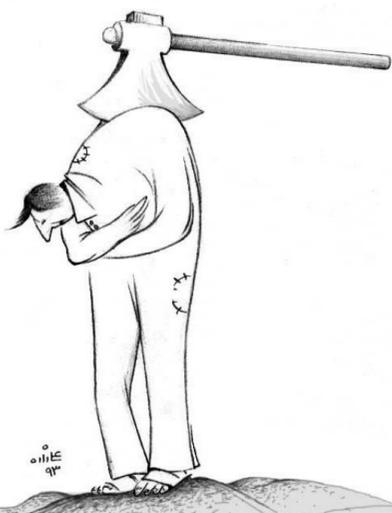
These are only few incidents that we come to know through media in only some parts of the country. In almost all parts of country, such incidents happen, in some way or the other and they are thought to be a part of the routine life. Nothing is weird about such incidents and nothing serious is done about them by the authorities.

There is a clear rise in incidents of violence against women. This is directly linked to the overall security situation. As the security situation in the country has deteriorated the weaker strata seem to be in trouble the most. There were no serious attention to their woes and now with rising insecurity, the authorities have more excuses for less attention to the issues of women. Women and many intellectuals believe that even if the security situation improves there will be serious challenges for women to earn a reputable position within Afghan society. Even if there is a peace deal with Taliban, there are fears that Afghan government may sacrifice some of the achievements that are made regarding the heightened role and position of women. Taliban have never been in favor of active role of women in social and political lives and one of their conditions for peace talks would be limiting their role as much as possible. Keeping the Afghan society in mind, the authorities may accept such a condition.

Afghan social structure has been fervently dominated by religious extremism and tribal partiality. Most of the self-designed religious doctrines and tribal norms are against the women and discriminate their basic rights. Regrettably, these norms and principles have even gone to the extent of aggression and have tortured women physically – even in the public. They, in the name of dignity of women, have in reality dishonored them. Though they have been raising their voices every now and then but in the noise of male shrieks they seem to be negligible and get faded away. In fact, the male-chauvinistic ears are not ready to hear them though they feel their vibrations clearly. Nonetheless, the efforts in this regard must never be given up and they should continue in every possible way.

With such a situation existing around, it is really difficult to see development in condition of women who have been undergoing discriminations since ages. Afghan authorities and all the Afghan people, both women and men, must strive to change the scenario as it would help the society as a whole as women are an essential part of it.

We need to accept that women form an integral part of society and have an imperative role to play. Their representation and participation in different walks of life can help society develop suitably. They cannot be kept on being discriminated and violated without letting up, because it is not only non-religious but at the same time atrocious because above all women are human beings. Unfortunately, this evident fact has not been realized by many in Afghan society.



## When the Rule of Law Disappears

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

According to some studies, almost all articles of the Constitution of Afghanistan have been violated over the past 13 years. According to the findings of the survey, 161 out of the total 162 articles of the Constitution have been contravened over the past few years; the only article which has not been violated so far is Article 21 of the Constitution that reads, "Kabul shall be the capital of Afghanistan". The study has also found out that all three branches of the government (the Judiciary, Legislative and Executive), including the President, have infringed the Constitution. Violation of the provisions of the Constitution on such a large scale is of great concern, and a shameful reality of the rule of the law in the country. If the supreme law, as the source of all other laws, is broken to this extent, the violation of other laws has pretty much become a customary exercise.

Laws are designed and introduced to ensure justice, and protect the rights of citizens in a country. It is the rule of law that draws a distinction between human societies and wildlife, and provides a safe environment for people to live in. Laws on paper and without rule can never help societies. Based on reports, flaws and loopholes in Afghan laws, especially the Constitution, have also contributed to their increased violations. Some ambiguities and deficiencies in the Constitution and other laws have given the transgressors a window to enjoy impunity, and have led to the blatant and rampant corruption in the judicial institutions, where it has practically become a way of life. The main victims of the violations of the Constitution and other laws are the poor Afghans, who no longer can tolerate the trend. Violation on such a massive scale underlines the need to convene the Constitutional Loya Jirga, and address all the existing flaws. Additionally, for the just and equal implementation of laws, the law enforcement agencies should be strengthened, and corruption tackled, because only law amendment cannot suffice. However, enriched and better laws we have, justice cannot be ensured unless there is rule of law. Afghans can no longer endure laws which are only meant to be enforced on the indigent, and which provide for the bribery of law enforcement agencies, and cannot help ensure justice. In particular, human rights and internal conventions widely violated, Threats, intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders continued in a climate of impunity, with the government failing to investigate cases and bring those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice. Human rights defenders suffered bombings, grenade attacks and assassinations by state and non-state actors. Women participating in public life are at greater risk of discrimination and violence than men because of different social and political reasons. According to one report, the Ministry of Women's Affairs registered more than 4,000 cases of violence against women. Violence against women was severely unreported in Afghanistan due to insecurity, lack of a functioning government

or judiciary, and traditional practices which combined to discourage victims and their families from reporting violence. The government committed to take practical steps to improve women's participation in governance but failed.

Overall the unprecedented grow of insecurity with insurgency and criminal activity worsening across the country. According to Amnesty International Organization, The first three months of 2015 were the most violent of any equivalent period on record. Thus, The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded 1,592 civilians killed and 3,329 injured in the first six months of 2015, while 70% of civilian casualties were attributed to Taliban and other armed insurgent groups, and 16% to pro-Afghan government forces. The Taliban increasingly attacked soft and civilian targets. In September the Taliban took control of most of Kunduz province, and the government reported that some 20,000 people were internally displaced due to the conflict. The majority did not receive any humanitarian assistance from the government while in 2016 insecurity challenges, political and social disorders much more increased. Accordingly the labor law, The Afghan Labor Law, adopted in 2007, guarantees Afghan citizens the right to work and receive fair treatment, equitable pay, pensions, and health and safety in the work place. The new Labor Law, adopted by the Parliament and approved by the President in February 2007, explicitly provides broad provisions for the protection of workers as guaranteed by the Constitution. With respect to internationally-recognized labor principles, Afghanistan has ratified three of the eight Core Conventions related to core labor standards (Conventions 100, 105, and 111). Though laws in Afghanistan protect workers from discrimination and children from forced labor practices, the 2007 Afghan Labor Law and internationally-recognized labor standards are not well known among Afghan citizens at the national or provincial levels. This is important responsibilities of MoLSAMD to provide jobs and monitor governmental and non-governmental organizations to strengthen understanding, awareness, implementation, and enforcement of the all laws in Afghanistan. But Afghanistan is one most exploiting, unemployed and misemployed countries in the world. As a final point, most of new generations have realized that it is more dangerous to tolerate worsening conditions of lawlessness, discrimination, misery, violence, hatred and incompetency anymore. It is proven when the Rule of Law disappears; we are ruled by the whims of corrupt men. The more we tolerate, the more we repress. I do not believe that the hungry man should be treated as subservient for expressing his suffering. It is never acceptable that the law can be used to justify tragedy, to keep things as they are, to make us abandon our ideas of a different world. Law is the path of liberty as must as such open the way to progress for everyone.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the newly emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammad-zahirakbari@gmail.com

## My Girls20 Journey

By Simin Haidary

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

It was April 2016 when I received the exciting news that I was selected in the Girls20 delegate representing Afghanistan.

Girls20 is a globally active social enterprise from Canada that cultivates a new generation of female leaders through education, entrepreneurial training, leadership, and global experiences – with one ultimate goal: Increasing female labor force participation around the world.

Designed G20 style, Girls20 brings together one delegate from each G20 country, plus a representative from the European and African Unions, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the MENA region. After a thorough selection process, I was honored to be chosen as the representative of Afghanistan for 2016.

Every year before the Annual G20 Leader's Summit, the Girls20 delegates come together for their own Summit to debate relevant issues, to learn about strategic skills and to prepare an Official Communiqué to the G20 leaders. My journey towards this inspiring summit started on the first day of August and took me all the way to Beijing, China.

On August 3, I met the other delegates and the Girls20 team during the introductory meeting and I can still feel the excitement of talking to them for the first time. There were plenty of other opportunities to get to know each other and share stories mainly during our meals and at the debrief sessions, which was usually my favorite part of the day. At the end of the day, we come together to talk about what we've learned and work on team building and networking. The Girls20 welcome reception was a memorable experience where I met amazing people and some of my role models. The reception was hosted by Ambassador Saint Jacques Canada's Ambassador to the People's Republic of China and we had the honor of meeting the Canadian Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, the Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister of Canada, the UN Global Coalition of Young Women Entrepreneurs, officials from G20 countries as well as representatives of several international companies. It was truly inspiring talking with them and hearing their ideas about bringing more women into the workforce.

Our program in China was multifaceted. We received a number of trainings to gain valuable skills, such as communications and leadership skills and strategic planning, and we heard speeches of many female leaders. One of the speakers I felt particularly inspired by was Ching Tien, the Founder and President of Educating Girls of Rural China. She provides mental and financial support to girls and women in rural China to continue their education, and she gives them the hope and strength to follow their dreams. We

had the pleasure of meeting some of these young girls themselves and to listen to their stories.

We also had the opportunity to discuss our post summit initiatives with Girls20 advisors and seek their comments and advice. My initiative focuses on the empowerment of girls and women in the rural areas of Afghanistan by enriching them with entrepreneurial and leadership skills and English language trainings. My advisors gave me recommendations on taking a step-by-step approach to implement the project.

Coming from Afghanistan, I was often asked questions such as What is your country's current situation? Do you have many schools there? Are you safe? Do the Taliban still exist? Can women leave their homes? etc. I tried to address these questions to the best of my ability and talked about the developments of recent years, the improvements in our education system and the position of women, but I also spoke about the many problems that my country still has to deal with, such as access to education and health clinics in rural areas and the extremely low female labor force participation rate.

I personally believe that the government of Afghanistan should improve access to entrepreneurship trainings in rural areas, to empower women to run their own business and be more financially independent. On August 9, the official part of the summit began with the wise words of the Prime Minister of Canada and self-proclaimed feminist, Justin Trudeau. His opening address was followed by several keynote speeches and panel debates on issues such as male champions of change, understanding our future workforce, the future of jobs and talent, and securing a fair share in growth sectors. The most challenging but also rewarding part of the summit was to define and write a set of key recommendations to the G20 leaders to increase female labor participation. Access to proper education is of great concern to many Afghan citizens and takes a prominent place in the Communiqué. Including the needs of girls and women in education, entrepreneurship and employment policies is integral to providing girls and women with the skills and opportunities to participate and advance in the labor force. In my Girls20 journey, I had the chance to speak about all the challenges girls and women in Afghanistan face, to hear from other delegates about the issues in their respective countries, and most importantly, to combine our ideas to find the best way to tackle these challenges for a better world. In Beijing, I found an international network of young women – future leaders not to forget! – of more than 20 countries; a family that has given me the strength and motivation to pursue my passion to contribute to the empowerment of girls and women and to fight for change in my country Afghanistan.

Simin Haidary is a freelance Afghan columnist. She can be reached shokrullah\_s@auca.kg



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa  
Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari  
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com  
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019  
www.outlookafghanistan.net



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