

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



December 28, 2014

## Life, Liberty and Property – Men’s Inalienable Rights

I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." Martin Luther King, Jr.

Human rights are commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights "to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being," and which are inherent in all human beings regardless of their nation, location, language, religion, ethnic origin or any other status. They are applicable everywhere and at every time in the sense of being universal, and they are egalitarian in the sense of being the same for everyone. They require empathy and the rule of law and impose an obligation on persons to respect the human rights of others. They should not be taken away except as a result of due process based on specific circumstances, and require freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution.

One of the oldest Western philosophies of human rights is that they are a product of a natural law, stemming from different philosophical or religious grounds. Other theories hold that human rights codify moral behavior which is a human social product developed by a process of biological and social evolution. Human rights are also described as a sociological pattern of rule setting. These approaches include the notion that individuals in a society accept rules from legitimate authority in exchange for security and economic advantage – a social contract.

Many of the basic ideas that animated the human rights movement developed in the aftermath of the Second World War and the atrocities of The Holocaust, culminating in the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Ancient peoples did not have the same modern-day conception of universal human rights. The true forerunner of human rights discourse was the concept of natural rights which appeared as part of the medieval natural law tradition that became prominent during the Enlightenment with many philosophers and theorists.

17th-century English philosopher John Locke discussed natural rights in his work, identifying them as being "life, liberty, and estate", and argued that such fundamental rights could not be surrendered in the social contract.

The modern sense of human rights can be traced to Renaissance Europe and the Protestant Reformation, alongside the disappearance of the feudal authoritarianism and religious conservatism that dominated the middle Ages. One theory is that human rights were developed during the early Modern period.

Martin Luther was one of the best-know advocates for non-violent social change and a civil rights pivotal figure – who played a crucial role in the middle age. He fought tooth and nail against discrimination and racial inequality. He strived to overcome injustice and never got tired of trying to end segregation laws – laws that prevented blacks from entering certain places, such as restaurants, hotels, and public schools. He also did all he could to make people realize that "all men are created equal." As a result, he stated in his famous speech "I Have a Dream" as, "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Moreover, he pointed finger at America for defaulting on Declaration of Independence after signing it. This instrument was a promise that all men, including black and white, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life", Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." So, when the Negro suffered strong discrimination and found "himself an exile on his own land", Martin Luther reacted with iron determination. Since, the King's role is prominent in advocating human rights; I deemed it suitable to mention his role.

Anyhow, in the aftermath of the atrocities of World War II, there was increased concern for the social and legal protection of human rights as fundamental freedoms. The foundation of the United Nations and the provisions of the United Nations Charter provided a basis for a comprehensive system of international law and practice for the protection of human rights. Since then, international human rights law has been characterized by a linked system of conventions, treaties, organizations, and political bodies, rather than any single entity or set of laws. However, analyst Pierre Leval suggested that respect for fundamental human rights in the world today is "dismal" within some nations saying, "Despotic regimes murder, mutilate, and rape civilian populations and arbitrarily imprison and torture political opponents. Human traffickers, almost invariably operating with the protection of corrupt local officials and police, enslave children and young women in the sex trade. So long as the regimes that sponsor and protect these criminals remain in power, their crimes go unrecognized."



# Nursing in Afghanistan: Current Challenges

By Shukrullah Ahmadi

The state of nursing in Afghanistan is pointed in a 2011 publication of American journal of nursing titled "Starting from scratch: Training nurses in Afghanistan" by Wielawski, that "Afghan nursing culture is considered to be about 75 years behind nursing culture in the United States". Why does it sound that bad? Of course because of different reasons such as nurses in US or other developing and developed countries perform many roles; they are hospital nurse, leaders, and nurse practitioners holding masters and PhDs in nursing who are shaping the future of communities they serve. The purpose of showing Afghan and US culture is not to compare two dissimilar nursing cultures but to understand the state of our own nursing culture. Before going further, we will first understand nursing as a profession.

What is nursing?

According to International Council of Nurses, nursing encompasses independent and collaborative care of individuals, families, groups and communities, health or sick and in all settings. It also includes health promotion and disease prevention. Advocacy, promotion of a healthy environment, research, involvement in shaping health policy and health systems management, and education are also key nursing functions. This is a global definition of nursing which also indicates the importance of nurses in the society that they are a vital element in promoting health and preventing disease in the settings they work.

According to a 2005 report of International Nursing Review, Nursing has its deep roots in Afghanistan history and formal Nursing education was well established before 1978, before soviet invasion in Afghanistan, but later on, decades of political unrest and civil war destabilized it. However, nursing is making its way through hard times. Since 2001, when Taliban's harsh rule was toppled, the process of health care reconstruction begun, beneath this reconstruction umbrella, nursing was also revived. However much more remains to be done.

Unfortunately in Afghanistan the role of a nurse is not recognized the way it deserves thus it affects the growth of the profession. Some people think nurses are second-rate doctors. Although it is difficult to eliminate such notions in our society but we shouldn't encourage it.

It is also deemed that nurses perform a set of skills only. We need to understand that nursing is not simply an accumulation of simple skills. It is more than that, it is a profession, and it is as intellectually demanding as other professions are. Similarly a nurse is not merely a person trained to execute specific responsibilities but he plays multiple roles such as patient care taker, educator, advocate, decision maker, researcher, collaborator, leader and health promoter. There are certain challenges and obstacles that could be hindering the growth of this profession. Challenges in nursing education

Nursing education is the foundation of practice which means good education is vital for good practice. One of the milestones achieved in nursing education domain is development of standardized nursing and midwifery curriculum in 2003. However its implementation throughout the country is questionable because even in the respected schools, its implementation is not up to the mark.

Competency and educational background among nurse educators varies. Educators vary from poorly trained and conservative styled nurses to competent modern educators. According to a 2005 International Nursing Review publication, there is a need of exposure to international standards and more improvement is needed in areas such as teaching methodologies, technologies, and educational resources.

The nursing educational standards can be improved at a larger scale by building standardized nursing schools throughout the country and uplifting the level of educational programs. Throughout the country, Kabul Medical University (KMU) is probably the only institute that has the baccalaureate-level nursing program in the country. Previously and presently in the country the highest level of nursing education offered is mainly limited to a Diploma. This may create stagnancy in the career of nursing, however improving the standards such as offering more bachelors and masters level study can greatly enhance the overall growth of the profession in the country.

Challenges in nursing practice: Nursing shortage and competency

There is a severe shortage of nurses in Afghanistan. This is indicated by a report of 2006 by National Institute of Health, USA, that there are 2.2 nurses and midwives per 10,000 population in Afghanistan, which is alarming. On the other hand, according to International Nursing Review, surprisingly 1500 physicians are working in nursing posts; 2000 nursing positions are filled by allied health personnel or untrained nurses. Female nurses are also terribly needed because; unlike other countries there is severe shortage of female than male nurses in Afghanistan, claimed by a western publication named "A bold new beginning for midwifery in Afghanistan"

Moreover, nurses are not enough competent. Nurses lack current and scientific knowledge, and critical thinking skills. Similarly, Wielawski in 2011 reported that hospital nurses are mostly dependent on physician orders, which is not a good sign. They need to be competent enough to do their required tasks independently.

It is true that Nursing has achieved many significant milestones such as introducing new nursing curriculum, and upgrading the nursing education to Baccalaureate level in KMU. But still there are challenges to cater and much more is left to be accomplished. There are areas of improvement in all domains of nursing; from practice to education, research and professional image in the society.

Although Afghanistan lacks an independent nursing regulatory body in the country, however national bodies, such as Ministry of Public Health and Afghan Nurses Association; and international community need to show more conscious and transparent efforts in order to advance standards in different domains of

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## The Kazakh Journey to Success: Turning Great Games into Great Gains

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, so said the Chinese philosopher Laozi. He was a wise man. For those who heeded his advice, successful journeys along the famous "Silk Road," the vast trade network started during the Han Dynasty, amassed many fortunes. The thousands of miles across Central Asia provide bountiful opportunities once again for those willing to take the first steps.

"Location, location and location," said a wise woman at a recent event in Washington, DC. She ought to know: after all, Madeline Albright travelled the journey to the pinnacle of success as the UN Ambassador and later the US Secretary of State. Secretary Albright provided lucid arguments backed by undeniable facts about the strategic importance of Kazakhstan – based on her personal experience.

For any journey, you have to start somewhere. The intellectual journey – "Working together for a Secure Future," the theme of the 2nd annual Kazakhstan-US Convention could not have begun at a better place. The historic Willard Intercontinental was the site of the Peace Congress in 1861, where President Abraham Lincoln stayed before the inauguration, where General Ulysses S. Grant hung his hat after the successful effort to preserve the Union and end the bloody Civil War, where Julia Ward Howe wrote the lyrics to the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and where Martin Luther King wrote his "I have a dream" speech.

The dreams and aspirations of a young nation like Kazakhstan were articulated well by Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov in his opening remarks.

"My country remains a staunch supporter of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation," said Ambassador Kairat Umarov in his message entitled "Shared Goals."

Closer and increasingly dynamic are US-Kazakhstan ties. Promoting purpose driven ties is the idea honed well by Fred Kempe, President, the Atlantic Council, who moderated a thoughtful session featuring speakers such as Anne Harrington, Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration and Dan Poneman, former Deputy Secretary of Energy with a deep understanding of both the history of Kazakhstan, the region as well as the challenges and opportunities that exist along every mile.

The reward for good work is more work, said Richard E. Hoagland, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, US Department of State. Stated another way, the journey towards success along the "new Silk Road" will take continuous and unrelenting steps towards progress.

Sidebar conversations provide useful insights often. During a conversation over coffee, a retired US Agency of International Development (USAID) executive said: "President Nazarbayev is a wise man" and went on to explain the wisdom of the decisions taken at the inception – the birth of modern Kazakhstan – and in the subsequent years to steer the country forward with a multi-vectored foreign policy and a domestic policy measured to the conditions in the world economy. "What a difference a year makes," he continued to acknowledge the increase in confidence compared to the conference last year. His words mattered more because he was not selling anything.

Conference speeches are extremely beneficial as they educate us about things we did not know before. Good speakers engage our minds and motivate us but nothing touches our hearts more than a man who physically cannot touch us because he has no arms. If you spoke to Karipbek Kuyukov, the gifted artist who paints with his feet, like I did a couple of years ago in this very building on Kazakhstan's National Day, you would understand the wisdom of President Nazarbayev in taking his country on a path toward progress as long distance travelers cannot afford to be weighed down by distractions or terrible risks to their people.

Talking to the youth is both refreshing and beneficial because through their prism one gets the glimpse of the future. The visiting Rumsfeld scholars from Kazakhstan as well as other Central Asian countries provide us their views of the future from their research papers and conference presentation.

The most useful insight, however, came over a coffee with a bright young Kazakh wrapping up her internship in Washington. Neither the Stalinist era repression faced by her Korean grandparents nor losing her mother at age nine nor the hardships faced by her father of Ukrainian origin left any scars of resentment. Quite the opposite, the cheerful demeanor translates so well in her LinkedIn page with the simple goal "to be a part of an innovative organisation, where I can utilise my scholastic, finance, and analytical background to help people rise out of poverty and become self-sufficient."

The prospects of reaching the journey along the new Silk Road and to reach the goals of Kazakhstan 2050 become brighter by the day with Karipbek Kuyukov and Yelena for they have the fire in the belly that despair cannot extinguish. They are the ones who will keep Kazakhstan linked in – not landlocked. And, they are the foot soldiers who will help turn great games into great gains for Kazakhstan and the region in this journey to success – step by step. (Courtesy The Astana Times)

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