

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



June 17, 2017

Hazaras Attacked Again

Insecurity continues in Afghanistan and keeps on haunting people in different ways. Though all the people suffer as a result of insecurity, the weaker strata within the society are the ones who undergo most of the consequences. Poor civilians and the women in this regard are the most prominent ones. And when these civilians belong to the groups that are marginalized, the situation becomes even more serious. The poor Hazara civilians form one of such groups. They have been victimized in so many ways in the prevailing insecurity and unfortunately the security arrangements to stop all these incidents are not satisfactory.

In a recent incident, Al-Zahra Mosque, situation in Dasht-e-Barchi, where mostly Hazaras reside, was targeted by a suicide bomber.

The attack resulted in the death of at least 6 people and injury to 10 others. However, an eyewitness, Baqer, told that seven people including Kabul businessman Ramazan Husainzada were killed and 18 others were wounded in the attack which according to him was carried out by two suicide bombers.

The attack was carried out at around 8:45 pm on Thursday, when the people were busy in prayers. It is not the first time that an attack has been carried out in a mosque; there have been several such incidents in Afghanistan. Moreover, it is also not the first attack on a mosque situated in a Hazara populated area. Mostly this sort of attacks are claimed by so-called Daesh.

It is believed that Daesh has been active in Afghanistan recently and has carried out some dangerous attacks against Hazaras whom they consider to be non-Muslims. Moreover, as most of ISIS fighters have left Syria and Iraq where the war seems to have calmed a bit or some of them were expelled during the war, there are possibilities that they may get stronger in Afghanistan where they seem to have formed their strongholds.

Only few months ago 27 Hazaras were killed and more than dozens wounded through a suicide attack at the Baqir-ul-uloom mosque in District 6 of capital Kabul, where the people were commemorating 'Arbaeen'. That had in fact followed the tragic attack on the Sakhi Shrine in the capital which was carried out during Ashura procession and had killed 18 people. A similar type of attack was carried out in Balkh province that had also targeted Hazaras who were worshipping during Ashura and had resulted in deaths of 14 innocent people.

In July last year, three attackers with suicide vests attacked the Hazara protestors who were raising their voice for changing Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TUTAP) power project route through Bamyan. Two of the attackers blasted themselves among the protestors while the third one was killed by the security forces. The attack resulted in death of more than 85 people and injury to over 400 others and thus marked one of the most tragic incidents in Afghanistan's history. The attack was also claimed by Daesh.

Moreover, who can forget the tragic incident when seven innocent civilians belonging to Zabul province were kidnapped on a highway and later killed brutally, which included the 9-year old girl Shukria, whose throat was slashed by the kidnappers. Just few months earlier to that incident, at least 13 Hazaras were killed by gunmen in Zari district of Balkh province, while they were travelling in a minibus. And in February same year, 31 Hazara passengers were abducted from Zabul province while they were travelling from Herat to Kabul, most of whom were later released.

Most of these incidents have been linked to Daesh, in some they have even claimed the responsibility but unfortunately, there have not been tangible measures to stop the situation. The government authorities have kept on insisting that the threats of Daesh are not serious and Afghan forces have control over them; however, the claims have not proved to be right until now. And if the security arrangements remain as they are, Hazaras will keep on suffering such brutal attacks.

As the government authorities are not able to secure different parts of the country and important highways, the insurgents create their own check-posts, stop the vehicles, search the passengers and even loot them on various occasions. On some occasions Hazara passengers have been selectively segregated from others and then taken away or later killed.

With such a situation prevailing, it is really tragic to find the government authorities unconcerned. They mostly claim that they make efforts to ensure the security of the civilians without any distinction but different incidents, every now and then, show that they either do not have the capability to do so or they lack the motivation. Their efforts are mostly observed after the incidents take place and the poor civilians are killed.

Thus, the government requires taking practical and tangible measures to control the security situation and ensure the security of everyone without any distinction of ethnicity or race.

There are fears that if the security situation remains fragile another civil war may erupt in the country and may once again push Afghanistan towards a quagmire of instability and chaos.

No Light at the End of the Tunnel

By Hujjatullah Zia

A strong sense of fear and disappointment has filled the air in Afghanistan. The death toll is mounting as a result of escalated insurgency and spate of suicide attacks. People are affected mentally or physically. The militant fighters ushered in stoking sectarian violence, which was not common in Afghanistan, through targeting minority groups on the grounds of their creed. Too many tears are flown and too much blood is shed as terrorists pursue their sinister aims at the cost of countless of civilians' life.

The insurgents have intensified their spring attacks without showing an iota of mercy to non-combatants, mainly women and children. It is an undeniable fact that children have nothing to do with war or religious faith. But they are killed in cold blood perhaps on the basis of their race or caste. Life has no value for terrorist groups.

In other words, the radical ideology of militant fighters feeds on violence and blood. Humanity and ethical code have no room in their vision of the world. Attacking on mourning proceedings and funeral ceremony will make one's senses go numb with fear and chagrin.

The democratic discourse, hotly debated in Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban regime, could not put an end to the bleeding wound of Afghan nation. For instance, the Constitution was approved on the basis of true democracy and the rights and liberty of all citizens were deemed inviolable regardless of their caste, color and creed.

The state was committed to respecting and protecting people's fundamental rights. Similarly, provincial and presidential elections were held for further practice of democracy and people sent their representatives to parliament to raise their voice against injustice and violation of their rights. But political instability and insurgency remained slowed down democracy.

The US former President Barack Obama has aptly stated in his popular speech in Cairo, Egypt, titled "A New Beginning" as, "you must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections alone do not make true democracy".

Only approving a democratic constitution or conducting elections without a strong sanction behind will not ensure democracy. For example, Afghans have both a Constitution approved on the basis of democracy and provincial

and presidential elections, however their rights are trampled under the boots of militant fighters and their freedoms are curtailed. So, can we call such a country democratic?

The recent series of bloodbath has not only shattered the public hope but also filled them with a strong sense of disappointment and confusion. People are not able to exercise their rights freely.

They are not able to hold the funeral of the victims, their mourning ceremony, religious rituals, etc. Mothers are worried about their children when they go to school, children are anxious about their fathers for returning safely from work, and women about their husbands. Everyone tries to survive a suicide attack. In brief, the life has turned to a hell for Afghan nation.

It is self-explanatory that the militant fighters spill the blood of mankind out of radical ideology. There are three main approaches towards religion. First, a group of people have misconstrued religious tenets and practice their self-styled rule and ideology.

The fundamental groups - which are manifested in the frame of violence and bloodshed, such as the Taliban, self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Haqqani-network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, etc. - are the products of radical approach towards religion. Second, a number of people fear and escape religion mostly due to the violent practices of the first group.

In another item, terrorism has not only spread Islamophobia in western countries but also triggered hatred and panic in many Islamic countries, since Muslims bear the brunt of terrorism and insurgency.

The third group practices upon religious tenets with deeper knowledge, tolerance and no inclination towards violence. The first group is highly threatening for the society for killing people and destabilizing the region and the world.

It is believed that modifying their mindset on the basis of true knowledge of religion will be next to impossible. Radicalism has been deeply embedded in their ideology and mindset leaving them unable to broaden their horizons. Perhaps, the only way to stop them from bloodshed is shooting them on the head.

In brief, implementing the policy of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" will suit this group which pursues murder relentlessly. Otherwise, the cycle of violence and bloodshed will not stop and people will be mired in fear and hopelessness.

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Challenges and Opportunities for Youths in Afghanistan

By Sakhi Danish

Youth are the integral part of every society. They are considered as the nation builder and are the biggest force of every society. The youths have potential energy to transform the society. In the course of history revolutions happened by the force of the youths only. Youths have zeal to work, ideas to create and skills to implement.

According to the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) in 2011, 68 per cent of Afghanistan's population of around 26.5 million people was under the age of 25, with people between the ages of 15 to 24 years accounting for 40 per cent of the total population.

However, today's society is a struggle for tomorrow and tomorrow is for the youths. Afghanistan government should not just undermine the power of the youths, but rather utilize it in a good way. Their dreams must not be killed but nourished. They are the greatest force of the society even today. The war that we have inherited from the past generation must not be carried forward any farther. This is the responsibility of the present generation to teach the young generation on why to live in peace and harmony. We must show them in many ways about how the war once destroyed our country. We must build museums of war/destructions/ crimes and show the youths the consequence that the civil war brings. For instance Darul-Aman Palace in front of the Parliament House by itself is a sample of museum of civil war. Afghanistan has already experienced once. There is no need for repetition of the same, but rather a big lesson for the youths.

Perhaps if we are bleeding because of the endless war and the chaos, we must write a message with our blood to the next generation to not come to this path again.

Although majority of the youths in Afghanistan have already realized the consequences of civil wars. They launch anti-war campaigns during political tensions. They give slogans of unity, brotherhood, inviting each other for peace. The numbers of youths give hatred slogans are very few compare to the number of youths believe in peace and harmony. However, if the current politicians of the country cannot lead them in a better future, they at least should not make the situation worse by playing with the sentiments of the youths.

The future of Afghanistan lies in the hands of the youths. The government of Afghanistan must pay attention to the huge number of youth population. The youths are keen to observe everything that is going on with their society. In the first hand, the government must provide quality education to them and provide other facilities for them to grow.

For the future of Afghanistan youths are the best reserve. The government of Afghanistan must invest in youths by

defining the strategic objectives for the youths and figuring out the greater involvement of the youths in the development of the country. The integration of youths in political and other social activities is very crucial. They are the future and they need to take part in their future. Moreover, investment in youth talents will lead to eradication of poverty, peace building, minimizing corruption, declining crimes and they overall helps effectively in the development of the country.

Perhaps this is one of the ways to minimize corruption. Youths are energetic and enthusiastic to work. They are more willing to cope up with the changes. They don't resist change. They are filled with ambitions and dreams. They should be given the chances to exercise their talents and energy.

On the other hand if the youth energy is not utilized in a proper way, they could be misled in a very destructive way. Crime will increase in many ways. For instance, if we take the example of Kabul city, by seeing every clubs such as body building, snookers, swimming pools, game zones and other youth gatherings places, we see all occupied almost 24/7. Of course it is good that they are occupying themselves with sport stuffs but, not forgetting the fact that a vast number of them are there because of unemployment.

This case is just in Kabul. In provinces the case gets a lot worse. In insecure parts of Afghanistan insurgent groups use from this situation, influence them and hire them for far worse. They will be used by insurgent groups to fight against their own country. In other parts of Afghanistan where there are no active insurgent groups, the youths fall into the hands of human traffickers and smugglers. Large numbers of them are leaving the country every year and suffer the harsh environment of immigrations. For some of them reach overseas while others lives are wasted inside the migration camps or some even dies.

Youths can play multifaceted role in a society. They can be heroes if invested, saviors if used in a right way. Yet they can be victims as of today. It is towards the government's advantage to invest and use from the youth talents. Government need to regard them not as a problem but solutions to all other opportunities. Youth talents are the only reliable asset that the government can invest in.

Government must include young people in decision making and development process. Youth perspectives are very important in decision making process. Young people need to be actors and participate in power and other activities that affect their lives. They must contribute to sustainable social, economic and political progress of their country.

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