

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



March 17, 2019

Unmitigated Sufferings of War Victims Should End

People sustain inhuman treatment in times of war and peace across the world and their rights and "inherent dignity" are violated in one way or another. Although there is a set of globally accepted moral and human principles which form the foundation of international instruments, the pain and sufferings of human societies and individuals continue unabated. During the war, civilians; including women and children, war prisoners, the wounded and sick; undergo violence and atrocities. Warring sides hardly observe the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). IHL upholds the rights of the victims of armed conflicts like the soldiers who no more participate in war and civilians who are on the fence.

Warring parties are supposed to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants whose rights to life, liberty and property will have to be immune to attack. Only military bases should be targeted and there are also restrictions in using weapons and military tactics which may result in injuries and "unnecessary sufferings". According to IHL, torturing, wounding or killing the surrendered enemies or those not involved in conflicts are not allowed and their life, physical, and mental health should be respected.

All warring parties, involved in armed conflicts, states and international community are responsible to respect IHL. Hence, warring sides can only target combatants and military bases but locals, particularly women and children, must not be targeted. Military targets include infrastructures, buildings and sites where the enemies reside. However, when local instruments are used as military means such as using local rail road for carrying weapons will be also counted as military targets.

Unluckily, the rule of law is hardly considered in conflicts these days and local places and individuals are targeted intentionally or unintentionally. Women and children are highly vulnerable in international and non-international armed conflicts.

Terrorist networks are one of main war criminals neither accepting the rule of war nor respecting the international laws. They target anywhere with any possible weapons. Targeting locals, including women and children, religious figures, aid groups, instructors, lecturers, holy places, hospitals, schools, universities, local infrastructures, populated sites, etc. are targeted frequently.

Human catastrophes are also seriously horrible in Afghanistan. Nothing is sacred for the militant fighters - particularly for the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Human life does not amount to anything. The nonstop carnage and bloodshed are the ugly face of terrorist activities which result in outpouring of grief.

The spate of terrorist attacks in recent months has added to public disappointment. The tragic story repeats itself on daily basis.

Spilling the blood of civilians - be it in Afghanistan or any other parts of the world - is highly outrageous. Non-combatants should be able to exercise their rights and liberty without a sense of fear or threat. Civilians have nothing to do with wars and conflicts and must be safeguarded against violence regardless of their racial, religious or linguistic backgrounds.

The vacuum of humanity is strongly felt around the human societies and people's rights and dignity are violated in the worst possible way. It should be noted that if the world does not promote the spirit of brotherhood, religious tolerance or racial acceptance, the bleeding will continue unabated and fill people with sense of revenge. The ongoing catastrophes around the globe, which compound human fatalities, are the tragedy of our century. The world needs to fill this vacuum with the spirit of brotherhood and respect the rights and dignity of mankind.

Martin Luther King has aptly said, "Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers."

Indeed, the armed conflicts will continue unless the world learns the 'art of living together as brothers'. Similarly, to mitigate political conflicts and ideological tension, the world needs to respect territorial integrity and exercise religious tolerance.

The world, including the international community, must not remain indifferent to the outrageous violation of human rights. The international community should seek to bridge the gap between nations and place emphasis on non-violent strategy in the event of challenging issues.

We are all 'members of the human family' and have to respect the rights, dignity and liberties of one another so as to promote peace and stability around the globe and stop the relentless cycle of violence and brutality.

Breaking the Chains of Violence

By: Arlene J. Schar and Dr. David Leffler

In the words of New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, today is "one of New Zealand's darkest days." In the aftermath of today's terrorism, 49 are left dead and at least 20 seriously injured by a calculated attack against two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The 70 page manifesto posted online by one of the perpetrators espouses white supremacist views and inspiration from current and past leaders, citing the names of other individuals who have taken part in shootings throughout history to justify their "assault on civilization."

Prime minister Jacinda Ardern states, "These are people that I would describe as having extremist views, that have absolutely no place in New Zealand and in fact have no place in the world." As a civilization, how have we come to this?

So far, our way of addressing terrorist attacks has been to capture the perpetrators and administer justice, which unfortunately does nothing to bring back the victims whose lives have been taken. We have grown so accustomed to terrorist attacks that we have resigned ourselves to a feeling of inevitability that they will occur. Over time, we have created a culture which in many ways condones and promotes terrorism; a culture that is xenophobic, glorifies violence, and instills fear of those who are different from us.

Political commentator Ayesha Hazarik, speaking on CNN Talk, said that as a Muslim, she is "sickened and frightened" by the attacks.

"We have a culture, a media and social media culture, that not only tolerates hatred to Muslims but celebrates it," she said. "Shame on the people who have promoted this."

A culture that promotes hatred will surely continue to foster terrorist attacks. To stop these attacks, we must shift our cultural values to peace and tolerance. A proven way for us to accomplish this is by utilizing a little known means of ending all war and terrorism once and for all: Invincible Defense Technology (IDT).

Invincible Defense Technology: A Non-Religious, Humane and Beneficial Approach

The practical components of IDT are the non-religious Transcendental Meditation (TM) and the more advanced TM-Sidhi programs. When large groups of experts practice these programs together, a powerful field effect of coherence and peace is generated that spills over into the surrounding population. Extensive scientific research has repeatedly confirmed measurable decreases in war deaths, terrorism, and crime when IDT is utilized. Due to this research the non-profit organization Global Union of

Scientists for Peace (GUSP) advocates this simple and cost-effective approach for reducing social stress (see: <https://www.gusp.org/global-peace-summit>).

Invincible Defense Technology is Cost-Effective

For about the cost of a few modern fighter jets, any military could establish a group of warriors trained in this advanced IDT approach. This Prevention Wing of the Military would practice IDT programs twice a day in large groups, defusing societal tensions not only in their country but also globally. The collective consciousness of all populations will rise through the influence of greater harmony and peace. Those who have engaged in violence will no longer do so. Studies have shown repeatedly that this method works—and will continue to work as long as the peace-creating group is maintained.

Implementation

IDT is not restricted to the military; any large groups of experts trained in the advanced IDT techniques can accomplish the same goals of alleviating terror and violence simply by practicing this approach in groups twice a day. These groups could be comprised of congregations at places of worship, prisoners, the elderly in nursing homes, even schoolchildren. The important factor is that the techniques be performed by trained experts consistently in groups twice a day. In this way the chains of violence will finally be broken.

Nothing Else has Worked

At this critical juncture of our history, it is not only enough for governments and militaries to take preventative action; it is up to each of us as individuals to examine our own values and honestly assess whether we are promoting peace and tolerance or fostering hatred in our everyday speech and actions. As individuals, we can each embrace the tenets of Transcendental Meditation and set aside twenty minutes twice a day to practice the techniques that will ultimately shift our culture from hate to love.

It is up to each one of us to now take responsibility for the world we have created by together consciously creating a world without terrorism.

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Challenges of Political Parties in Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Political party is defined as a group of people having similar ideas about a country's policies and commonly seeking to gain political power. The relation between democracy and political party is likened to two wings of a bird or termed as backbone of democracy. No bird can fly without two wings and no democracy can succeed without active political parties. Its main function consist of introducing right election nominees, making general policies, criticizing the government, raising political awareness and bridging between people and government. Therefore, all pioneer democracies are based on strong and lawful political parties.

In the other words, every citizen holds a constitutional right to organize with like-minded citizens to form a political party so as to attain some common political goals. The right to form a political party is derived from the constitutional right of association, free speech, and equal protection. A political party is a voluntary association formed out of the free will and consent of those who created it. A political party upholds certain principles regarding public policies of a government. A political party seeks to attain and maintain political power within a government. So, political parties can play essential roles such as opinion-making, acting as a watchdog, introducing candidates, bridging between government and people, and proposing useful political programs.

In a democracy, all citizens should be involved in political activities. However, a direct democracy where every citizen is directly involved in all political decisions is not possible within modern mass societies. This is why a modern democracy needs institutions and organizations that represent the will and the interests of the citizens as authentically as possible. These can be associations, political parties, informal groups or non-governmental organizations. In particular, the political parties carry out such a representative function. They offer to the citizens the possibility to influence politics and political decisions. They are an important instrument and institution of politics. Hence, without political parties, a modern representative democracy is not conceivable. Only, the parties ensure that the citizens are permanently capable to act politically. They articulate and integrate different interests, visions and opinions. They are also the main source for the recruitment of political elites.

For the first time in history, the new Afghanistan's constitution enabled the political parties to operate openly and they are fully legal but they never have performed their role and function as it is expected. In modern political system, they should exercise an important function in a democratic system as a "watchdog" of government policy and as a political alternative in the future, and expected to express itself on all issues relevant for government. Parties are expected to propose views on domestic and foreign policies, economic and social policies, and youth and civil poli-

cies etc. In order to meet these requirements, each party should have certain platform and programs.

Unfortunately the Afghan political parties could not establish a factual place in the system; This is particularly the case in the parliamentary elections, where candidates are free to identify themselves as members of a certain party (although many do not), parties as such are unable to play an official role. Most significantly, in the current electoral system, which are individual-based, parties cannot field lists of their candidates, there are no parliamentary seats reserved for political parties, as in other countries, and parties are not allowed to establish factions in parliament. The latter provisions, even more paradoxically, have never been laid down in any legislation, yet they are still adhered to.

Usually the leaders of political parties are chosen on the basis of internal election but in Afghanistan it is like a patrimonial property which is passed from one generation to other one and from father to son. They always criticize government for being autocratic and monopolist while they have further monopolized the leadership of political parties. This shows that the political parties which are the central institutions for a modern democracy have not been lawfully formed in Afghanistan yet. Neither people trust on political parties and nor young educated generation are willing to join such parties. They are more likely to a personal business firm which is fighting for their personal interest instead of public interests.

In order to have a successful role, the political parties need to hold internal election and also establish various levels of provincial offices following the structure of the state. The local party organizations are of particular importance for a stable and active party. Here, members can directly be politically active. At this level, they have the deepest contact with their party and politics in general. Local party organizations should conduct regular membership meetings, and support, promote and integrate (new) members. These should be invited to the party and district meetings and social events, as well as to discussions on local politics issues and local initiatives, for instance, residential redevelopment, road building or schools, business settlements etc.

Lastly, without political parties, a modern representative democracy is not conceivable. Only, these parties can ensure that the citizens are permanently capable to act politically. They articulate and integrate different interests, visions and opinions. They are also the main source for the recruitment of political elites. On the other hand, political parties are not able to play a constructive role in the country unless they start the reforms from themselves. Political parties should not be formed on the basis of sectarian criteria but merely on the basis of national and meritocracy.

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