

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



May 04, 2019

The Peace Jirga Resolution as the National Peace Roadmap

The Peace Consultative Jirga aimed to determine the framework for talks with the Taliban was wrapped up today May 3 2014. More than 3200 people from different parts of Afghanistan who represented different ethnic and religious groups had participate in the gathering. These representatives were tasked to identify ways to end war and violence in the country in order to put an end to more than four decades of conflict in the country and suffering of Afghans. To this end, Afghanistan needs to create a unified stance on peace and that the Jirga delegates ere assigned to determine the "direction" of the peace process. A peace deal based on this Jirga must ensure shall to help Afghanistan to develop economically and cut its dependence from foreign aid.

Jirga members as the sole decision makers

In a political environment like Afghanistan, pessimism is natural. Thus, some Afghan politicians and ordinary people distrusted the Afghan government that it will influence the Jirga members for its predetermined agenda. They assumed the Afghan government will use the Peace Consultative Jirga for presidential campaign and even worse to amend the tenure of the National Unity Government. However, Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, head of the Grand Consultative Jirga on Peace, made it clear on the inauguration day that it was the Peace Jirga delegates who would show the government the way towards peace and the government would do what they demanded, and one would impose anything on them. He added that they had not gathered there for support of anyone, not for campaign of anyone. Sayyaf had assured the Peace Jirga delegates that they would see that why the people had gathered there once the statement was releases on Friday and the result would show them that this Jirga was not for anyone's support.

PCJ resolution a clear indication of the will of the Afghans

The Peace Consultative Jirga delegates included their demands in a 23-Article resolution after the Grand Consultative Jirga on Peace ended after five days. Some of the most important points of the resolution include formation of a unified view of Islam by the Taliban and the country's religious scholars, preserving the Islamic Republic system, preserving the Afghanistan's Constitution and if needed, amendments should be brought to it through required legitimate mechanisms, preserving the basic rights of all Afghans, including women's rights and their rights for education, maintaining and empowering the a strong Afghan National Defense and Security Forces to ensure durable peace in the country.

The Peace Consultative Jirga was successfully concluded. The members of the Jirga proved that they can sacrifice their personal and ethnic interests for the sake of national interest of Afghanistan. They could shape a peace road map that has clearly identified the roles and responsibilities of the Afghan people and government towards peace talks. They unanimously called on for a unified approach in peace talks under the leadership and ownership of the Afghan government conditioned to consultations with the nation and putting their recommendation into practice. President Ashraf Ghani, has pledged to implement all the demands mentioned in the resolution by the Afghan government. And the United Nation mission in Afghanistan has voiced it supports of the call of the Grand Consultative Jirga for Peace and has vowed to help parties to end the conflict. As a result, the recommendations of the Peace Consultative Jirga are backed by the Afghan nation and international community. As a result, the Afghan government shall develop the necessary mechanisms to bring peace and prosperity in the country. Finally, the military cooperation of the international community shall be replaced with sustainable economic participation between Afghanistan and the international community to ensure a viable peace.

Statement of the Vice Pres Sarwar Danesh, at the event on the World Press Freedom Day

By: Sarwar Danesh

Distinguished participants, Your Excellency Charge d'affairs of the British Embassy in Kabul, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Governmental and Non-governmental personalities, media activists and journalists, representatives of media institutions, Ladies and Gentlemen, Hello to everyone!

At the beginning, I would like to congratulate on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day to all media institutions and journalists in the world, specially to Afghanistan's brave and devoted journalists, and I would like to thank the British Embassy for holding of this magnificent event. Holding of this event, is in fact a support to freedom of expression in Afghanistan and respect to Afghan journalists and media outlets.

I would also like to thank the UNESCO as a respected international scientific, educational and cultural entity that ratified a declaration on "Promotion of Press Freedom in the world" in Windhoek city, the Capital of Namibia in 1991 and asked and asked the UN General Assembly to name this day as Press Freedom Day. On 20 December 1993 the UN General Assembly, in its 48th session announced 3rd of May as the World Press Freedom Day, and this day in being celebrated throughout the world every year since then.

Using the opportunity, I salute all those who fought for freedom, specially our fellow citizen journalists who fought during years of pain, suffering and difficulties for freedom of expression and public information and made the ultimate sacrifice in this way, specially the 10 journalists who lost their lives in a suicide attack on 30th April last year in Shashdarak area of Kabul and yesterday was the first anniversary of their martyrdom. We commemorate memories of all martyrs of the way of freedom of expression and martyrs of Afghanistan defense and security forces!

I would like to add that today, 1th of May, is the International Workers' Day. I congratulate this day to all workers in the world, specially to Afghan workers, employees and entrepreneurs.

Dear Participants!

Being a media activist represents a kind of fighting for freedom and democracy!

At the same time that being a media activist is conducting a holy job with an aim to promote intellectuality and culture in the society and increasing level of knowledge and awareness of the people, it is also a tough political fight. That is why most of freedom fighters in the world were media activists, or most of journalists were in fact political fighters who fought for holy humane objectives, especially for political freedom and freedom of expression, and many of them lost their lives on this way.

Freedom of expression is a symbol of existence of democracy and freedom in every society. The opposite point of freedom is tyranny and autocracy. Dictatorships don't allow freedom and consider it as contrary to their authority and power. Legal and political scholars say there are seven preconditions for a society to enjoy democracy and the most important from among those seven preconditions, is freedom of expression. This means that all citizens should have the right to express their opinions regarding political issues freely and do not fear punishment for expressing their views. If there is no freedom of expression, there won't be free and fair elections and freedom in casting of votes and in becoming electoral candidates. Also, if there is no freedom of expression, there won't be a basis on which free political activities and establishment of political parties and organizations can be made.

Dear Participants!

Freedom of Expression in Afghanistan

Freedom of expression in Afghanistan has had many ups and downs. Afghan journalists were in the front line of political fight in the past and played an important role in political and cultural reforms. We have three golden periods for freedom of expression and growth of media in Afghanistan. These three periods are in fact the times when democracy, freedom and cultural and social reforms happened in the country. These three periods are: the decade of King Amanullah Khan's rule from 1298 to 1307 (of the Afghan calendar), the decade of Constitution during King Zaher from 1342 to 1352 (of the Afghan calendar), and the third period is the recent 18 years.

After creation of Shamsunnahar magazine during Amir Shiral Khan era, the second magazine named Seraj-ul-akhbar was introduced during Amir Habibullah Khan under management of Mawlavi Abdurraouf Qandahari and its first and last edition was published on 11 January 1906. It was closed for a while and then re-started its publications from 1911 under management of Mahmood Tarzi and its last edition was published on 19 December 1918 and was closed again. These closures are indications of pressures and existence of political problems in the system of the country. During King Amanul-

lah Khan's rule, a Media Law was approved for the first time on 31th December 1924 in 18 Articles and afterwards, more than 20 magazines and publications were started. Most important of all was establishment of Afghanistan Radio in 1927 that 92 years has passed since then. Anis Newspaper, one of the oldest newspapers in the country was also established in the same year as the National Radio and was managed by Ghulam Muhiuddin. Ghulam Muhiuddin is one of the great media activists of Afghanistan and one of the fighters of the way of freedom who was sentenced to jail after collapse of King Amanullah Khan due to pursuit of freedom where he died in 1938. After him, Anis Newspaper was managed by Sarwar Joya, who was also one of the political fighters and a freedom seeker who was sentenced to prison in 1948 and passed away in 1961.

In the current conditions of Afghanistan, we are at the fighting front too! Fight against radicalism, backwardness and prejudice, and terrorism that all are enemies of freedom of expression. Our journalists are at the front line of this difficult fight and therefore, journalists should understand their difficult conditions and their heavy responsibility and we should also respect our journalists as fighters of the way of freedom. Unfortunately, last year was the most dangerous year for Afghan journalists while 20 journalists and media activists were killed and we witnessed numerous cases of threats and violence against journalists.

Problems of Media and Journalists in Afghanistan:

Our media and journalists are facing many problems in the country and we can identify four of the main problems: Violence and insecurity is at the top of other problems that is mostly caused by the armed opposition and terrorists, and sometimes by government and international security forces. Second problem is difficulties caused by lack of access to information that is more related to the government. The other problem is economic challenges for the media. And the fourth problem is the legal rights and privileges of journalists that are not fully respected by owners of media organizations.

Position of the government of Afghanistan towards freedom of expression and freedom of media:

Besides the existing challenges, the Afghan government never had an intentional negative approach towards freedom of expression. We do not deny some of the existing shortcomings, or some inappropriate actions of some governmental entities or officials, but in terms of policies and main approaches and also in our official conduct we have always been supporting growth of media.

I briefly mention some efforts and activities undertaken by the Afghan government in these regards:

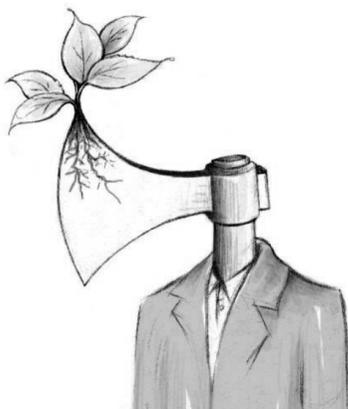
1. Evolutionary and constructive legislation process and ratification of proper Laws and Regulations in support of freedom of expression and improvement of the conditions of media;
2. Establishment of the Government and Journalists' Joint Committee for Safety of Journalists, legal prosecution of the cases of violence against journalists, and provision of a more secure atmosphere in support of journalists' rights;
3. Assistance to the Trust Fund for Support of Journalists, and provision of some other financial facilities for activities of private media;
4. Approval of the Law on Access to Information and establishment of the Independent Commission of Access to Information.

More important of all is that the Afghan government has a firm resolve in support of freedom of expression and activity of free media. The government did not impose any censorship on the media during recent years and no one was prosecuted due to expressing his/her opinion, and the media can freely criticize the government with full freedom. We believe that freedom of expression is the result of Afghan people's fighting for freedom and that all of us have the duty to protect this great achievement. That is why freedom of expression is the red line for the Afghan government and nation in all conditions even in the most pivotal matter, namely the issue of peace with government's opposition, and no one shall be allowed to violate freedoms of the citizens and media and no expedient can cause negligence in this regards.

I should mention that the great achievement regarding freedom of expression during recent 18 years is made by cooperation of the international community with the government of people of Afghanistan. In fact, this is our joint achievement. Therefore, on behalf of myself and the Afghan government, while emphasizing on continuation of this support and cooperation, I sincerely thank our international partners, specially the friendly country of Great Britain.

At the end, I congratulate the World Press Freedom Day once more, and salute the holy souls of the martyrs of the way of freedom.

Thank you for your attention!



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