

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



November 12, 2015

Protests for Zabul Seven

Protesting against the beheading of the seven innocent Hazara civilians, including four women and a child, by the alleged Islamic State (IS) insurgents in southern Zabul province, tens of thousands of people staged a historic protest in the capital Kabul on Wednesday November 11, 2015. There were people from other provinces and civil society members among the protestors and they rallied from Dasht-e-Barchi area of the capital to the Presidential Palace and were chanting slogans against Taliban, Daesh and the government. One of the protestors said, "We are here to raise our voice for justice. The government should respond to the killing of civilians by Daesh and Taliban militants."

Some of the protestors got infuriated and tried to breach the gates of the Presidential Palace during late afternoon; however, they were forced back by the security forces as they opened fire to disperse the people. In the run up to the shooting incident, some of the protestors got injured. According to new sources about 8 people were injured during the incident. However, no ambulances were reportedly in the area to transport the injured to hospital. As tempers started to flare by mid-afternoon, angry protestors demanded government action over the beheading of the seven civilians. They had however, warned earlier that they would try to breach the gates of the Presidential Palace. Currently insecurity has reached to an alarming stage and throughout the country and the civilians have been largely influenced as a result. Afghan government and security forces have not been able to tackle the situation properly and there are fears that the situation may deteriorate further in the coming days. The promises of the government have remained promises alone and no practical measures are taken to face insurgency with iron fist.

If the situation remains as it is, there are possibilities that more people will pour onto the roads to protest against the government. People want justice and the continuous injustice would suffocate them. History has shown that persistent injustice has always led to mass dissatisfaction and protests. That is what happened in Egypt. The protests that started from the Tehrir Square turned into Egyptian Revolution and resulted in the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. The protest in Kabul may also turn into a Tehrir Square episode unless there are steps taken for the restoration of justice in the country.

The protestors also issued a declaration where they called on government as well as the United Nations to ensure justice is served against those behind the beheading of the Zabul Seven and that they ensure the safety of every Afghan.

The declaration included the following demands:

1. Launching proper clearance operations in order to arrest the abductors and killers of the Zabul passengers and to ensure punishing is meted out in accordance with the law.
 2. Establish an active and equipped unit within the Afghan National Army to ensure security in areas where Hazara people live and to establish four units in four zones including Bamiyan, Daikundi, Jaghori in Ghazni and in the greater Ghazni province.
 3. The formation of an independent administrative office for Jaghori and Ghazni province.
 4. Increase the number of police force members in all insecure areas where Taliban militants are active.
 5. In order to respect the martyrs of Zabul, a hill should be named after them and the seven beheaded hostages should be laid to rest there.
- The protestors said that they would continue their protest unless their demands are met.

Responding to the demands of the protestors, President Ashraf Ghani addressed the nation yesterday evening and called for calm and peace. He said that the government was committed to ensuring that justice is served and that those responsible for the beheading of the seven Zabul residents are brought to book. In his address, Ghani also said that he has issued a decree to provide security and safety on highways. He also said the enemy is not able to fight security forces face-to-face and a special investigation unit has been established to find those responsible for the kidnapping and beheading of the Zabul Seven. However, he said this latest incident was a bid on the part of the enemy to divide the nation and the government will show no mercy against the enemy and that it is committed to getting revenge for the latest atrocity.

It will be important to see what the government would do particularly in response to the Kabul protest and generally against the mounting insecurity and unrest in the country. It is now certain that the people would no more accept lethargy and indifference. They are tired of growing terrorism and cannot tolerate another series of wars. They want practical steps from the government and they want it immediately. Promises and lip service would do no good to the people and to the country. It is only through honest, unbiased and determined efforts that the government and security forces can control the insecurity and lead the country towards peace and tranquility; there is no other way out.



Govt. Urged to Act Against Growing Insurgency

By Asmatyari

Life is sacred" is an ideal the human society and civilized world unconditionally subscribe to greater extent. It is most deplorable of crimes killing an innocent, worthy of the harshest possible punishment that tends to tarnish harmonious society. Nonetheless, a part of world is hitherto stained red with blood of innocent by those chasing absolute blindfolded interest, towering human skull. Undoubtedly, the group of individuals driven by evil motives and obsolete ideologies tends to overthrow the dream that leads to formation of a human society, have turned to violence and aggression characterized by innumerable bloodshed, abduction and ruthless killings of fellow countrymen.

The world might not have heard the most recent ruthless crimes perpetrated against innocent and noncombatant citizens where women and children were not even spared. The ferociousness had happened on the war weary land of Afghanistan, with mind jerking beheading of seven innocent civilians included four men, two women and a nine year old sixth grader girl who were kidnapped month ago in Arghandab district of Zabul province. Bearing the brunt of hostility and physical tortures the hostages were dragged to the slaughter point -it was only then the elderly men and women had them beheaded prior to the little "fairy". However, the fearless Shukria after witnessing the brutal and merciless account killings of her beloved ones have had gallantly bore the pain and ache of getting beheaded. It was unparalleled execution of 7 innocent civilian, sufficed to muster mass momentum against ongoing bloodletting.

According to Afghan officials, the seven hostages were captured by ISIL fighters and were beheaded with razor wire -is the height of cold-blooded, rare heard killing. In Afghanistan the masses suffer at the hand of Taliban, Al-Qaida, ISIS and their affiliates -driven mad by the motive of revival of caliphate system in the country -is unlikely to solve the giant problems of Islamic world, they deem. The interesting and common about all of them is; they share same ideology and similar tactics to enforce their stately law and rule of business -is repression and violence. Nevertheless, Taliban previously asserted to have set-back from the very extreme position and had pledged to get in line with democratic changes crystallized in the Afghanistan. Surprisingly, it has too claimed to have gunned down the terrorist behind the decapitation of seven civilian in Zabul. Conversely, the ISIS is endeavoring great deal of atrocities to leverage their political influence. The terrorist groups delayed to admitting, the guiltless Shukrai along six family members had nothing to do with religio-political maneuvering of these groups.

Former to the aforesaid incident, a group of militants uniformed in black from top to toe intercepted a carriage on the Kabul-Kandahar highway, separated 31 ill-fated Hazara after recognition of their identity. It was said the two former Taliban leaders - Mullah Abdullah Kaka and his deputy Mullah Mansur Dadullah, who pledged allegiance to ISIS terrorist group, were

responsible for the abduction. The terrorist released nineteen Hazara abductees following a prisoner exchange -eight were previously released -the fate of rest hitherto, remains undetermined. It was indeed exemplary deal where the government set free the most wanted terrorist having declared its failure to uncover the abductees unharmed. The finalized deal caused to be a turning point behind the endless abductions and insurgency in different parts of the country and lengthened miseries. Unquestionably, its most probably have served the foundation to ruthless decapitation of seven ill-fated harmless civilian.

Having been negated repeatedly over security matters, Tens of thousands of demonstrators carrying coffin marched towards presidential palace and UN office, demanding justice for the deceased souls. The march is historic being highly disciplined and peaceful. Certainly the march is a modern discourse, getting the security issue solved peacefully. Resorting to peaceful sit-in demonstration, have truly exercised democratic passion, -the international community pursue over a decade -demanding salvation to their security concerns in a country where every little problem dragged the people to an endless bloody conflict. Given the persistent worsening security situation and government's apartheid comeback -numerous queries emerge on the core of every sane mind. When will the government ensure the security of unarmed civilians? When will the government clean up the highways of these evil minded insane murderers? Last but not the least -being disposed to a large standing army, if a government fails to safeguard the life and property of people won't it ethically loses the legitimacy to rule?

Following the inexplicable heart wrecking incident President Ashraf Ghani came up with strong condemnation that was profoundly saddening. As usual the government resorted to condemnation and promises -the statement neither contained any clue relative to perpetrators nor plans to hunt them down before they turn wilder.

Despite the daylong demonstration, none of the high ranked government official clicked visiting the marchers in the bid to share their grievances instead preferred discussing the issue behind the close doors then facing the protesting masses. The elected representatives got to learn the people butchered were not armed combatant nor were public or security officials but innocent citizens who are denied to the right to live and pursue their dreams by unchained death avengers, roaming fearlessly in highways and subways. The government either by fallacious policy or unwillingness turned blind eye to the roaming death squads.

Following the brutal incident, UNAMA issued a statement condemning the brutal killing deeming it serious violations of international humanitarian law and synonymous to war crime. Equating the act of beheading tantamount to war crime, the former vicious act committed by Taliban in nineties where hundreds of thousands got killed throughout Afghanistan -justifies them being tried in the international court of justice.

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The Ugly Face of Sectarianism

By Hujjatullah Zia

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has ushered in sectarian violence in Afghanistan. Of late, an upswing in sectarianism is widely felt across the country and the ethnic minority groups suffer in one way or another. One's rights and dignity are trampled upon on the basis of his/her race, sex, beliefs, color or sects. The very basic rights i.e. the rights to life, liberty and property of men and women are violated flagrantly under the nose of a democratic government - which has vowed to "form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights".

The ISIS militants decapitated seven Shia Muslims, including two women, four men and a child on Sunday, after abducting them last month on the way between Ghazni and Zabul provinces. Thousands of Kabul residents staged demonstration against the hate crime on Wednesday. A number of angry protestors accused the government of neglecting the abductees. Similarly, some civil society activists accused the government of not doing enough for the release of the kidnapped passengers. The protests included women and men from Afghanistan's different ethnic groups carried the placards of the victims' pictures and marched on the Presidential Palace to urge the government to take action against rising violence against Afghan civilians.

"We want justice not just for them but for the thousands of other innocent people who are brutally killed this way, almost every day. We don't care if they were Shia Muslims or not. For us they are human and they were killed in the most brutal way. What was their fault?" one of the protestors is quoted as saying.

It is said that President Ashraf Ghani has instructed his second vice president, Sarwar Danish, deputy of executive officer, Muhammad Muhaqiq and ministers of tribal and transport to go to Ghazni province for sharing grief and the funeral of seven hostages.

Sayed Zafar Hashemi Deputy Spokesman of Afghan President has said that eight hostages were released by National Directorate Security (NDS) following an operation. He pointed out that the council decided to punish those who neglected in releasing seven passengers beheaded by ISIS. According to him, efforts are underway to free other abductees from the armed oppositions of the government.

Meanwhile, media outlets reported that the Taliban insurgents have hanged eight members of the ISIS group allegedly being involved in beheading the hostages. In recent months, a skirmish broke out between the Taliban and ISIS insurgents in restive districts of Afghanistan as the Islamic State (IS) militants seek to re-

place the Taliban's emirate into Baghdad's caliphate. "Insecurity continues to grip Afghanistan after the withdrawal of international forces in recent years. Violent clashes between two armed groups in southern Afghanistan erupted last Saturday, resulting in the death of at least 60 fighters from both sides." Although, the Taliban have declared that they hanged the IS's members for being involved in recent hate crime, nonetheless, it would be naïve of one to express optimism over the Taliban's practices. The Taliban's cruelty is no more secret for the world. As a result, the Taliban beheaded a large number of innocent Afghans during their regime on the grounds of their race and beliefs. So, their acts of hanging were for personal revenges.

During the Taliban regime, sectarian violence reached its peak. The minorities suffered heavy casualties as a result of Taliban's fundamental ideology and puissant sense of ethnocentrism. They imposed their warped beliefs on the barrel of gun - as the ISIS do across the Middle East. Their totalitarianism and egotism, which rooted in their spurious faith, resulted in a whole can of worms. The voices, raised for rights or freedom, were repressed. Women lost their spouses and children were orphaned, mostly for having a certain type of beliefs, and many families were left without bread-bringer. Such cruelties are known internationally and the history keeps bleeding with the painful wounds.

However, after the downfall of the Taliban's regime, the nascent democracy seemed a panacea for the problems and Afghans hoped and prayed for the best. The strident discourse for human rights, freedom, etc. reverberated across the country and people exulted over the fall of those who threatened their lives and liberties.

Ill-fatedly, the comfort was fleeting and the public hope did not last long. The militants soon sought to foment sectarianism. Currently, they muddy the water, either under the white flag of Taliban or black flag of ISIS, to make use of the opportunity in their own political interests. Their appetite for turbulence and terror originate in their fundamental ideologies.

The Afghan officials have to adopt an effective strategy to end militancy and sectarian violence and provide security for the citizens irrespective of their race, sex, color, etc. Article 6 of the Afghanistan Constitution declares, "The state shall be obligated to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, preservation of human dignity, protection of human rights, realization of democracy, attainment of national unity as well as equality between all peoples and tribes and balance development of all areas of the country." So, the officials have to practice their legal obligations and secure the environment for the citizens to exercise their rights freely.

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