

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



October 04, 2015

## Fall of Kunduz Underlines Grey Security Areas

Kunduz is one of the 34th provinces with round about 1 million population. It is located in the proximity of Tajikistan – hence one of the potential Northern Province given TAPI gas pipe line project is the one worth billion. Formerly, Taliban launched storming attack on the said province. Following the attack, involving hundreds of fighters, the northern city fell to Taliban – one of the major urban areas for the first time since the Taliban government toppled. Seeking entry the insurgents closed off the only four access points into the city – effectively preventing troops from entering and civilians from fleeing. Later it was disclosed with exception to airport, Taliban had seized the provincial council building, the offices of the local High Peace Council, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) building, UNAMA office and other key official facilities including private Banks. It is reported the Taliban have had overrun the local prison and freed all prisoners, looted all banks, torched the offices of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – a German organization and other foreign offices in the city. In addition, they reportedly stole a large amount of military equipment. Conformingly, the social media footage showed Taliban driving through the streets of Kunduz in official armored vehicles and military tanks and raised their flags at the center of city. It was amazing to know Taliban undergo zero resistance and found it easy to take over the entire city.

In addition to mentioned rampages – mass murder, gang rapes and house-to-house searches by Taliban death squads, implementation of Sharia, chopping up limbs of accused thieves are just some of the traumatic over views of Kunduz city, following the seizure of Taliban. This certainly marks security loophole and lack of coordination between consequent departments. If the government runs short of 24/7 a standby force stationed a little distance apart from a high security threat site, then endangering the lives of others security officials and citizens seem too awful for words motive. It's repeatedly witnessed the security personnel warning militants were not aptly supported with needed backup that causes them a setback – consequently a city had to fall to militants. Many hours past the seizure of Kunduz the combat security forces had not been dispatched to the site. Finally the Afghan forces made attack when Taliban had completely penetrated the civilian enclaves aided by aerial support of US and NATO forces. According to the some estimates more than 300 insurgents, including foreign nationals, have been killed in the Kunduz battle, which is being led by foreign militants, according to local officials. Aerial raids appeared to be unconcerned of civilian population and health workers targeted great number of them. They should have targeted militants with target precision. Such an unintentional execution will definitely give rise to nothing except civilian casualties equally effecting employees of humanitarian organizations. At least three staff from Médecins Sans Frontières' (MSF) Trauma centre in northern Kunduz province is killed in a coalition troop's airstrike early.

Subsequent to overrunning Kunduz, Taliban made resilient victory capturing Baharak district of Badakhshan Province and Kohistanat district of northern Sar-i-Pul province. The Badakhshan provincial council has testified Taliban are making gains in some other parts of the province after taking control of Wardoj and Baharak. Ministry of Defense has confirmed that after a large-scale military operation, Afghan security forces managed to retake Baharak district in the north-eastern Badakhshan province on Saturday morning.

These are underlined security lapses that serve civilian and security casualties. The Ministry of Defense (MoD) earlier acknowledged that the lack of strategic coordination among the security forces has been the main reason behind the fall of city. The ministry said Taliban militants would not have taken control of the city if there had been strategic coordination between the security forces. Now it is reported that government has begun airstrikes against the militant who have sought refuge in civilian population. Any unwise move may lead to lose of hundreds of innocents unarmed innocent masses. It was earlier a private news outlet undertook a survey that showed inclining graph of casualties.

Amidst the worsening security condition everybody was expecting orders of dispatching fresh army battalion immediately be sent at the combat site. Regrettably, the premier stuck to typical strategy of commission formation to trace out the mishaps. Earlier, President Ashraf Ghani announced this very good news of formation three commissions to probe into the Kunduz crisis and affix those responsible for the situation. It has been witnessed the commission formation is technique to put the dilemma into unending delay. This is great to accepting the clandestine hands supporting the security downfall. Touching on the issue of spies within the government – which has lately been referred to as the fifth pillar of government – Ghani said: "I have personally instructed the National Directorate of Security chief to identify those who work as [double agents] within the government." The public officials being behind such heinous plot is alarming as indicated in president's talks. The government must set a tight internal surveillance system to keep a check on those who covertly supporting their paid masters and militants.

## The Scandal and Tragedy in Kunduz

By Hujjatullah Zia

Human rights and dignity are violated to a great extent in the Taliban dominated areas. Life is highly cheap and the rights to liberty and property are trampled upon flagrantly. The people, mainly women and children, suffer mentally and physically in restive parts of the country. As a result, Amnesty International's recent report on the conflict in Kunduz said mass murders, gang rapes and house-to-house searches were carried out by Taliban death squads while they had control of the city.

"The multiple credible reports of killings, rapes and other horrors meted out against the city's residents must prompt the Afghan authorities to do more now to protect civilians, in particular in areas where more fighting appears imminent," said Horia Mosadiq, Afghanistan researcher at Amnesty international in the report.

The Taliban ideologue and mercenary fighters pay no heed to human rights. Afghan people, especially women, were bereft of their basic rights under the Taliban regime. There was no room for freedom of expressions and beliefs and religious tolerance. In other words, sectarian violence and discrimination on the basis of race, religion, creed and sex was practiced on a large scale. Women's role was limited to household chores and schooling and social activities were considered taboo for them. In a nutshell, women took the brunt of discrimination and lacked natural rights and human dignity. The patriarchal mindsets regarding women allowed the regime to treat them as a slave. So, Afghans in particular and the world in general know that Taliban's ideology is in conflict with ethical codes and religious tenets.

Moreover, the humanitarian rights are abused overtly by the Taliban – who claim to "bring in the Islamic law" or establish caliphate on the surface of earth. The hors de combat soldiers are tortured in the worst possible way and killed with no iota of mercy. Similarly, non-combatants, including women and children, receive fatal injuries, get amputated or lose their lives in suicide bombings and terrorist attacks and then the Taliban claim the responsibility without a tinge of guilt.

The Kunduz takeover, which led to tens of dead and wounded, disgrace of some women, release of the prisoners and financial loss, was a hazardous message and an eye-opener for the government. Reports say that Taliban fighters are expanding the fight to other northern provinces after Afghan government troops backed by NATO special forces evicted them from the centre of the strategic city of Kunduz.

Afghan deputy Army Chief Murad Ali Murad said that the Taliban intended to move Mullah Akhtar Mansour to Kunduz after capturing it last week. "Taliban wanted to have control over Kunduz and bring Akhtar Mansour to the province to hold a

press conference there and also show their existence in Afghanistan and that it is through support of Pakistan," the four-star Afghan General is quoted as saying. He added that the insurgents failed to do so after the security forces launched attacks on the city. He confirmed that the Taliban carried out severe brutalities and also looting sprees during their attack on Kunduz.

The Taliban have been waging an armed struggle since a US-led invasion ousted them from power in late 2001, and have stepped up attacks during a summer offensive launched in late April against the Western-backed government in Kabul.

Last week, 13 people were killed and 33 wounded at a volleyball match in the eastern province of Paktika, while a splinter group affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) launched coordinated attacks on police checkpoints in the eastern province of Nangarhar.

The stunning fall of the provincial capital, even temporarily, showcased the stubborn insurgency's potential to expand beyond its rural strongholds in the south of the country.

The Taliban's recent advances in Kunduz and neighboring Takhar and Baghlan provinces highlight that a large and strategic patch of northern Afghanistan is imperiled by a rapidly expanding insurgency.

It is also seen as a game-changer for the fractious militant movement that has been dogged by a leadership crisis since the announcement in July of founder Mullah Omar's death.

"One year into his presidency, Mr. Ghani is facing a crisis of formidable proportions. On the other hand, the newly installed chief of the Afghan Taliban, Akhtar Mansour already has a major victory under his belt, which he would use to bolster not only his standing, but also to overcome any remaining resistance to his authority within the insurgent group," the former interior secretary Rustam Shah Mohmand says.

The recently unmitigated violence and bloodshed – which have led to the exodus of citizens, mass unemployment and economic stagnation – reflect grave challenges in government machineries and put the administration of National Unity Government (NUG) under question. A year has passed from the establishment of NUG, however, ministry of defence and provincial governors, in many provinces, are not introduced and many key positions are vacant – this is a matter of great concern for Afghan nation. Moreover, the government failed to conduct parliamentary election despite the ending term of parliament – this seems a violation of Afghan Constitution but who cares?

On the other hand, the Taliban increase their terrorist attacks and target Afghan combatants and non-combatants alike more than ever before and Mullah Mansour is supported by mysterious hands to wreck further havoc. If this trend continues and the government fails to secure the citizens, the gap between state and nation will widen.

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## Should Facebook be banned in Afghanistan?

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Since last couple of days that are rumors about banning Facebook in Afghanistan. Many politicians who are being strictly criticized by public are of the view that Facebook is not only creating a lot of frustration among public but it has become a major source of provoking hatred against different ethnic groups of the country. Although such an idea can never be supported as it will be against the freedom of speech and would deprive people of an important platform to easily express their ideas, but recent events also showed that uncontrolled, heedless and careless use of Facebook and other social sites can harm the national solidarity and unity among different ethnic groups of the country.

Facebook has become an important tool in the hands of Afghans after the facility of internet was widely and easily made available by mobile communication companies across the country. As Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites that can be easily managed by an illiterate person as well so large numbers of Afghans, both in rural and urban areas, opened their Facebook accounts and started using it to stay in touch with friends and families, get entertainment and news and also post different videos or posts of their own choice. Facebook had and has many advantages. People could easily criticize the government officials, their illegal or improper acts could be posted and exposed and public voice could easily be transmitted to the government officials.

During the floods of North and land sliding in Badakhshan, it was Facebook that spurred a wave of support to the victims and people from all parts of the country ran for their help. On the occasions of severe terrorist attacks in a number of cities like Jalalabad, Kunar, Kabul and other cities, it was Facebook that made the people feel the same pain together.

At the same time, it was used improperly that harmed the government, national solidarity, respect for humanity and many other aspects of our lives in direct and indirect ways.

During the controversy of whether the ethnic groups should be mentioned or not in the computerized Identity Cards, Facebook became the battleground between the members of different ethnic groups. They openly wrote in favor of their opinion and against the opposites. Expressing differing opinions is a sign of freedom of speech but it must be done keeping in mind the delicacy and needed carefulness. In these discussions or arguments, different groups crossed all the limits of civility and vulgar language was excessively used.

Facebook was also misused when the sad incident of Kunduz took place. It is yet to be confirmed if the tragic incidents of looting, rap-

ping, lashing, torturing and killing of innocent citizens were actually perpetrated by Taliban or it was the wave of propaganda that has become much common these days. However, without the confirmation of these incidents, different ethnic groups started expressing their anger against other groups on Facebook and once again, the Facebook became the battleground for uncivilized and careless war of words.

Same was the case when Kabul became the victim of a wave of bomb and suicide attacks in the month of August. Pakistan was accused of these attacks and a wave of anti-Pakistan sentiments flew on social networking sites, especially Facebook. Many pages were made to boycott Pakistani products without realizing the actual impacts of this demand. I have talked to many shopkeepers and traders and they are of the view that this heedless campaign badly affected their business. This had also negative impacts on our already faltering economy. Similarly, some people even went far in this regard and so many unnecessary and bad words were used.

Another dangerous factor in use of Facebook is all those videos that are spreading terror, uncertainty and fear in public. In these videos, Taliban, ISIS or other terrorist groups are shown to be beheading the people or badly torturing them. Many videos are also in move that are about the brutalities in Kunduz.

In all these issues that are harming the national unity and feelings of empathy among different ethnic groups of the country, it must be kept in mind that large numbers of foreign agents are working to spread hate among different groups of the country on Facebook and other social networking sites. They may call themselves Pashtoons, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbek and others but in fact, their mission is to make the people hate each other and widen the drift of divide between them. Though a common person might not be able to understand such groups or individuals but the educated and sensible members of society have already recognized them and try to keep distance from them.

In this regard, we can do few things to quell these factors and strengthen our national unity. We should never talk against anyone; let the government do this filthy job. If we will use bad language against any group, bad language will be used against us as well.

Secondly, It is very dangerous when someone express their lame ideas without having absolute knowledge or the sense of expressing their ideas. In the same way, the educated and responsible members of society should come forward and guide others to be careful in giving remarks or expressing their views. Facebook is good or bad depending on how we use it and we need to show sensibility for the sake of our country and our coming generations.

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