

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



September 06, 2016

## Insecurity Haunts Afghanistan Consistently

Twin blasts hit Kabul on Monday, September 05, and resulted in the death of at least 24 people and injury to around 91 others. The blasts took place outside the Ministry of Defense, one after the other. It is more tragic to know that among the dead there are high-ranking security officials as well. Sayed Zaman, the police chief for PD2, and Razaq, the deputy chief of support for the Afghan National Army's (ANA) Regiment Unit, Zaman's deputy, head of the intelligence unit for PD2 and a number of other senior police officials are among them.

According to security officials the first bomb was detonated remotely while the second had been a suicide bomber. Officials also said the suicide bomber had been wearing an ANA uniform. Taliban has claimed the responsibility of the blasts.

Security personnel have been attacked several times in Afghanistan and sometimes even in the capital Kabul. They have really given some great sacrifices; however, the important thing is that their sacrifices should bear some fruit and Afghanistan should see the sun of peace and tranquility dawn quickly.

However, that does not seem to be near as the rise in insecurity seems to be consistent and it has been taking the lives of numerous people. Though security officials lose their lives in the war against terrorism every day, civilians also make a large number of casualties. The suicide bombs and the assaults by Taliban that try to target the security officials, in some way or the other, target the civilians as well. In certain cases, they even target the civilians directly.

This has made the life miserable for the people in Afghanistan. Since Afghan security forces took the responsibilities of the security on their own, the challenges have increased for them and Taliban and other insurgents have also intensified their attacks. They were able to threaten security to a large extent in different parts of the country, particularly, in Kunduz, Badakhshan, Nangarhar, Helmand, Faryab, and even in the capital Kabul.

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission's (AIHRC) report for 1394 showed that civilian casualties in Afghanistan increased by 17 percent in that year. Based on the report, the violence scale in Afghanistan was unprecedented and more than 3,000 civilians were killed. Fifty percent of those civilians killed died in suicide attacks and roadside bombings. Among those killed or wounded 4,642 were men while 775 were women and 1,116 were children.

These figures clearly show how the poor civilians are targeted mercilessly. They had to be given their basic rights and facilities; however, they are being denied not only those but their right to life is also being denied. It is worthwhile to note that the insurgents are mostly responsible for the casualties though they claim that they do not target the civilians. According to AIHRC, armed opponents were responsible for 72 percent of the casualties while nine percent was at the hands of government forces. This means that the claims of Taliban insurgents that they do not target the civilians is a false one.

They have been indiscriminate in their attacks and in certain cases they have even targeted the civilians intentionally so as to spread terror among the people. Though they claim to be the defender of Islam but they are not familiar with its true teachings. Islam prohibits to take the life of innocent people and it says that if a person kills a single person guiltlessly, he, in a sense, kills the entire humanity. However, Taliban insurgents seem to neglect this important teaching.

It is imperative to understand that it is not only the death toll. Besides the death toll, the ongoing conflict has also forced thousands of Afghans to evacuate their homes. More than 149,000 Afghans fled their homes in the first six months of the year due to ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. According to a UN report that was released earlier in the year. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said had mentioned that many of those affected were farmers who were missing critical sowing and harvest times.

It is really difficult for the people to leave their homes and their birthplaces. The new places are always unknown to them and it is really difficult for them to adjust at such places. Moreover, the new places do not always welcome them with open arms. The people already living at that place may not be happy by the arrival of new people and may not be ready to share the limited resources that they have.

Few among them may be economically sound and they may have travelled because of insecurity. Only they are able to start their lives anew, while most of them suffer from poverty and thus they have no other option but to find support in one way or the other.

In some cases, the government or private support may reach to them but that also proves to be insufficient or ill-managed. With the rising waves of terrorism and misery, Afghan government and authorities must strive to do their best in fulfilling their responsibilities and must make endeavors to ensure for the people a lasting peace and tranquility. People deserve a secure life, and they should be provided that in every possible manner.

## Unique Sacrifices Made for Obtaining Democracy

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghan nation passed a myriad of historical ups and downs and made great sacrifices to enjoy their rights and freedom without barrier. The civil unrests and bloody wars took their toll on Afghan men and women. People suffered severely under dictatorial regimes and their blood was spilled without an iota of mercy. The minority groups suffered on the grounds of their race, color and creed and the systematic discriminations marginalized them from political arena. Moreover, Afghan nation fought battles against foreign colony to safeguard their territorial integrity, religious tenets, ethical code and national values and preferred an honorable death to degraded life. Afghanistan has a glorious history and the nation's bravery and sacrifices brought great honor for the country. Despite this fact, the dark side of civil unrests and wars on the basis of political interests and ethnocentrism, which inflicted heavy casualties upon the individuals, outraged the collective conscience and had a damaging effect on national reputation. Both the bright and dark sides of our history should be an eye-opener for the nation so that the bloody scenario does not repeat.

To view the history, Afghan kings have ruled the country under the sacred halo of religion and called themselves the divine caliphs. They claimed to revive social norms and prevent from the erosion of religious tenets. Under such terms, however, they engaged in violence and bloodshed and pursued their self-interests. The kings' wrath was deemed as divine wrath which could justify their acts of violence. This political chicanery was used as a mechanism to keep their regime steady. Their strict rule, mainly regarding women, was somewhat acceptable in the traditional society of Afghanistan.

The Taliban also gained foothold in Afghanistan and established their dictatorial regime under the same term. They claimed to spread the divine rule on the surface of earth and protect the faith of the public from moral corruption. The Taliban's founder Mullah Muhammad Omar called himself "caliph" and alleged to set up a religious state - which should have been empty of violence. Currently, the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) led by Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi declares to establish a government under religious sharia. More radical than the Taliban, they shed the blood of men and women and resort to inhuman acts and moral crimes flagrantly. The ISIL seeks to rule the people through the old mechanism and justify their acts of horror and terror through their self-made ideology. Ill-fatedly, Afghan nation is not immune to the ISIL group either as it has gained foothold in some parts of the country. The nation, which has largely sacrificed to pave the way for exercising their rights and freedom, has yet to get rid of insurgency and make sacrifices for obtaining peace and stability in the country.

Since the individuals still lose their lives and fall victim to militancy to ensure democracy gaining democracy seems to be a pyrrhic victory for Afghan nation. In the post-Taliban Afghanistan, efforts were made to establish a democratic administration and high steps were taken in this regard. As a result, the constitution of Afghanistan was approved by Afghan Loya Jirga (Grand National Assembly), presidential and provincial elections were held, parliament was formed, the Independent Human Commission was founded and civil society activists ushered in voicing in favor of people's rights and freedom. Based on the Constitution, which was approved by nation's representatives, the men and women's rights were considered equal and any kinds of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color and creed were banned. The government 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".

Despite the establishment of a democratic administration, the nascent democracy yet to be strengthened by implementation of law and counterinsurgency. In other words, Afghanistan is wrestling with two major challenges namely corruption, mainly within the government apparatus, and terrorism - they hamper the process of democratization. The law in Afghanistan is approved immaculately and to the international level, however, it is not implemented so. The legislative, judicial and executive powers are balanced and move to different directions. Afghanistan is still ranked as most corrupt countries - which is a great cause for concern and damage the country's reputation seriously. Thus, corruption is a major barrier before the implementation of law and takes its toll on citizens.

Secondly, the Taliban seek to impose their warped mind on Afghan nation with the barrel of gun through outdated chicanery of caliphate and spill the blood of men and women for turning down their ideology. Since Afghan nation has grown far mature politically and radical ideology of the insurgents is no more acceptable, they resort to violence and bloodshed to put pressure on the public and government. The insurgency, indeed, slows down the flow of democracy and curtails the rights and dignity of Afghan nation. The old terms of caliphate and sultanate will not be in accord with the democratic structure of Afghan society - no matter if such terms still victimize the nation.

The government will have to deal with the two aforementioned challenges: First, the administrative corruption should be rooted out from the state's machinery, which will catalyze the implementation of law. Secondly, the counterinsurgency is to be reinforced.

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## Let's Vaccinate Our Children for Violence

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Many developed countries, including France, Germany and Norway, have provided universal preschool programs for three and four-year-olds for decades. More recently, the UK and New Zealand have made moves to join them. East Asian countries that consistently are in top educational performance lists are rapidly gearing towards universal access for three and four-year-olds. But Afghanistan with 10 millions uneducated people has the lowest level of participation in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the world. However, some private schools have newly started to provide access to one year of preschool education but it is beyond the fiscal ability of most families. In order to decrease the number of jails and endless social violence, Afghanistan has to change its mindset and invest more on education and in fact, vaccinate the future generations for violence with preschool programs.

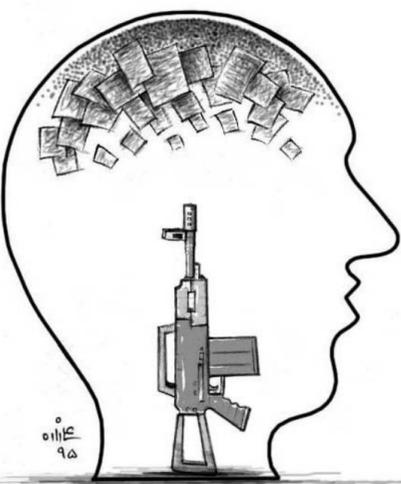
Preschool programs (also known as kindergarten) provide a friendly environment for children to develop their skills, capabilities, interests and talents. Preschool is about helping children learn to get along with others, to be creative and collaborative problem solvers, to understand and talk about their emotions, as well as supporting the foundations of literacy, numeracy and science. Skilled educators use teaching strategies that are appropriate for the age of the child. They extend children's thinking, encourage them to ask questions, engage them in conversations about things that excite them, and integrate learning into play and exploration. Research shows that attending two years of preschool improves children's readiness for school more than one year's attendance, with particular impacts on their early literacy and social and emotional skills. And 16-year-olds who attended at least two years of preschool were three times more likely to take a higher academic pathway in post secondary school. Preschool has benefits for all children, but the biggest impacts are with the children who need extra support as a large number of children in Afghanistan are mentally retarded due to experience of chronic malnourishment in first three years. The universal evidence shows that one year of preschool is not usually enough for these children to catch up. Increasing access to early education, especially for the children who will benefit most, is not a light undertaking. Many countries face challenges maintaining or increasing quality and managing affordability (for both families and the government). Even so, the clear trend internationally is to invest in preschool for three-year-olds, and provide it universally - for all children - not just a small proportion with high levels of need. The UK established an entitlement to subsidised early education for four-year-olds in 2000. This was expanded to three-year-olds in 2005, and more recently to disadvantaged Two-year-olds. There is near-universal attendance in part-time programs from all three and four-year-olds. New Zealand introduced 20 hours of free early education for all three-year-olds in 2007 and also has near universal attendance. The introduction of a free entitlement increased overall participation slightly, and number of hours attended significantly. Many European nations introduced free or highly subsidised preschool programs for children, starting at least at age three, decades ago. These programs are very high quality, and they are both good for children and helpful for families going back to work. Norway has near universal attendance in preschool from age three and for around 30

hours per week. They introduced preschool for three-year-olds nearly 30 years ago, and participation has been steadily increasing. By 2010, 97 percent of three-year-olds were attending, largely because there are enough places for all children and fees are low enough that all families can afford to send their children. France has a long-standing universal preschool platform for all children aged three to six. The program is free, integrated with the school system, supports full or part day attendance, and runs in three age-based classes. Since 1980, all three-year-olds have had a legislated right to an early education place, and attendance is near-universal.

The countries at the forefront of global education innovation that perform highly in international education benchmarking exercises, such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Korea, are rapidly moving towards universal early education for all children from age three. China currently has two-thirds of four-year-old children attending preschool programs, and is aiming to subsidise universal access to two years of preschool by 2020. National education strategies identify early childhood education as priority for lifting human capital and educational participation and outcomes. Korea currently has nearly 75 percent of three-year-olds in preschool programs, with universal access to early education for three to five-year-olds. All three to five-year-olds receive a subsidy to attend early education. Consequently the preschool education program has many outcomes and can benefit from many ways: it can enhance strong sense of identity, connects and contributes to their world, improves the sense of wellbeing, raises the confidence and involves learners and helps them become effective learners and communicators. Thus, well-trained educators understand how to engage and promote children's learning with interesting games; various game programs are their brain's favorite way of learning and effective developing tools for mind. They can talk with families and communities to make locally based decisions, relevant to each child needs and their community. They can raise awareness, give a strong sense of wellbeing and provide children with confidence and optimism which maximize their learning potential. It encourages the development of children's innate exploratory drive, a sense of agency and a desire to interact with responsive others. Wellbeing is correlated with resilience, providing children with the capacity to cope with day-to-day stress and challenges. The readiness to persevere when faced with unfamiliar and challenging learning situations creates the opportunity for success and achievement. Children's learning and physical development is evident through their movement patterns from physical dependence and reflex actions at birth, to the integration of sensory, motor and cognitive systems for organized, controlled physical activity for both purpose and enjoyment. Children's wellbeing can be affected by all their experiences within and outside of their early childhood settings. To support children's learning, it is essential that educators attend to children's wellbeing by providing warm, trusting relationships, predictable and safe environments, affirmation and respect for all aspects of their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, linguistic, creative and spiritual being. "Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom"

George Washington Carver

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