Taliban should stop violence & join peace process

Today, Taliban's mediator asking the group for ceasefire in Afghanistan is the world's superpower, entering Afghanistan to root out international terrorism, but now wants to withdraw from the country by dealing with a terrorist group. What is true is that Taliban has no excuse for continuation of war and violence in the country. With full US and NATO troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, no pretext for continued for war and violence in the country.

If Taliban's war is for engagement in political power and partnership, they should respect all international values, agree on creation of a peace government and end violence in the country. Otherwise, fighting to capture Kabul will be merely a dream which won't come true. Continued war of the Taliban group to get power will result in a civil war in the country and Taliban will be responsible for it.

Fighting against Afghanistan government is considered as the worst option of the Taliban group after full US and NATO troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Taliban's chance for militarily win the war is almost zero. Continued fighting of Taliban will further harm the group's current political position for Afghanistan future.

Afghanistan government from the perspective of military force is in a better position comparing to the Taliban group. This superiority can be seen in all sections as training, skills, equipment and arms of the Afghan security forces. Implementation of peace in Afghanistan is facing with lots of perplexities as postponement in the intra-Afghan talks between Taliban and Afghanistan government has caused that a range of factors or countries seeking their interests in Afghanistan war and peace have entered the process. If the interests of these countries are addressed, the country's peace process will succeed.

Valid international documents from the UN agencies to the UNSC member countries particularly US Department of State, all world countries and media have known that the root of most terrorist attacks in Kabul and other provinces of the country is in Pakistan. The country has changed to a safe haven for international terrorist groups planning terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. Currently, dozens of terrorist groups most of which are in the UN and US blacklists are operating in Pakistan, where they are supported, equipped and armed by the country's ISI. The Pakistani government and its servants have perpetrated heavy crimes in Afghanistan. In the continued undeclared war, Pakistan is considered as the first and main factor of Afghanistan's deadly tragedy. It is time that the country should end its continued undeclared war against Afghanistan and honestly cooperate with Afghans to reach lasting peace and stability. The more insecurities and war increase, the more need for stability and peace is felt. The people of Afghanistan have experienced the war for the past 40 years as they have witnessed worst consequences of the continued war in their lives. Afghans have been tired of violence, war and insecurities and are asking for peace and stability in their country. As Afghanistan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib in his recent remarks has said that Pakistan should stop relations with terrorist groups to cooperate with Afghanistan in peace process, it is time to prove to the world that Afghans have a common heart which is Afghanistan and they're ready to defend regardless of any tribal, religious and language considerations.

Lailuma Noori

Renewed commitment needed to support displaced Afghans, their hosts: UN

KABUL: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is calling for a renewed commitment from the international community to stand in solidarity with millions of Afghans who are anxious about their future, and with the host countries that have provided safety to millions of Afghan refugees fleeing successive waves of violence over more than four decades.

"Now more than ever, we need to stand by displaced Afghans who have borne the cost of years of conflict, and assure them that they have not been forgotten," said Indrika Ratwatte, UNHCR's Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, who concluded a week-long visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran. "It is the responsibility of all international actors to continue working with Afghanistan to secure a lasting peace, and to continue supporting countries hosting Afghan refugees."

Iran hosts almost one million Afghan refugees, in addition to some 2.6 million undocumented or Afghan passport holders living in the country. Despite their own challenges, the Government of Iran has shown exemplary humanity and solidarity with refugees.

"The world must not forget contributions that Iran has made for millions of Afghan refugees, for over 40 years. The government has led by example by including refugees in their national education and health systems, and allowing refugees to work and access bank services. UNHCR also appreciates the government's commendable efforts to include refugees in the national COVID response," added Ratwatte, as quoted in a statement from the agency. "Iran, through its inclusive approach to refugees has empowered Afghans who will one day be able to rebuild their home country."

Afghanistan today has a population of some 35 million people. Millions are internally displaced within the country – with 100,000 people having been displaced in the past four months of this year alone. Millions more have had to seek safety across borders over the years, with the majority living in Iran and Pakistan as refugees. Urgent humanitarian assistance to the millions of Afghan refugees and their host communities is imperative to stabilize these communities that have being affected by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNHCR is concerned that a further increase in violence in Afghanistan will lead to exponential internal displacement and potentially lead to more Afghans being forced to seek safety in neighbouring countries and beyond.

"Afghan refugees have witnessed many twists and turns within Afghanistan during the last four decades but have not given up hope that they will one day be able to return home in safety and dignity. Over the years they have built resilience and resolve to stand on their own feet."

UNHCR said was committed to continue its support to Afghans, both inside and outside of Afghanistan.

The lack of resources and funding has, however, constrained the ability of UNHCR and the Government of Iran to maintain and increase their humanitarian efforts. UNHCR's funding appeal for Iran of US$97.9 million for 2021 is, so far, only 8 per cent funded.

The Kabul Times

Taliban have lost ability to fight Afghan National Defense & Security Forces

As Taliban have increased their attacks and violence against Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), a number of Afghan military experts believe that Taliban have lost ability to fight the country's security forces. Taliban have made continued efforts to capture a number of districts and provinces, but Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) have repulsed all their attacks in Balkh, Kunduz, Helmand, Ghazni, Maidan Wardak, Baghlan and Laghman provinces by organized air strikes and ground military operation.

Meanwhile, Afghan security officials say Taliban do not believe in peace and that the group by launching widespread attacks wants to capture districts and provinces, stressing that terrorists won't be allowed to disrupt peaceful life of the people.

Praising the ANDSF for suppressing Taliban in the respective provinces, Afghan military experts, citizens and civil society activists say the country's security forces with their increasing capabilities can defend the country. "In recent military operations, Afghan Defense and Security Forces have inflicted heavy casualties to the Taliban group in various provinces of the country," said Mustafa Nadim, a former ANA office and military expert.

Meanwhile, the country's civil society activists believe that capturing some districts and areas by the Taliban group does not show their strength.

"Taliban is the main factor of continued war in the country as bilateral violence can disrupt peace talks; therefore, it is necessary that all sides to the ongoing conflict should share their programs to reach peace and stability in the country," said Kamal, an Afghan civil society activist.

On the other hand, Afghanistan Ministry of Defense (MoD) says a particular security plan is underway, stressing that by implementing the plan, security situation will get improvment.

"MoD in close coordination with security organs has launched and set a particular security plan for 16 provinces of the country and it is determined that military operations are launched in areas which are under serious threat from the Taliban side," said Fawad Aman, a deputy spokesperson to the ministry of defense. He said that by implementing the security plan in the respective provinces security situation would get betterness. Meanwhile, former ANA army chief of staff Shir Mohammad Karimi says Taliban has recently made efforts to capture more areas in the country, but the country's defense and security forces have repulsed their attacks without asking close air support from the foreign forces. He stressed that the country's defense and are security forces were well-trained and experienced and ready to defend the people and country with high national morale.

It is worth mentioning that since the start of US and NATO troops withdrawal process from Afghanistan on 1 May, Taliban have started large-scale attacks on a number of provinces and districts in Helmand, Kandahar, Laghman, Baghlan, Ghazni, Maidan Wardak, Kunduz and Balkh, but they failed to capture areas and their all attacks have been repulsed by Afghan defense and security forces. Now, the country's defense and security forces are working to implement their particular security plan to clear areas from the presence of Taliban fighters in various provinces of the country. **Suraya Raiszada**

Increasing concerns over spike in new COVID-19 cases

KABUL: The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) reports on precautious measures to prevent 3rd wave of COVID-19 at a time that in the last 24 hours 1,566 cases have been recorded and 30 people died in Afghanistan while 181 patients have recovered.

As a precautious measure, the MoPH has recently opened the 2nd Covid-19 hospital in Kabul with 100 beds in Qasaba area, PD-15 Kabul city, equipped with modern facilities. Prior to this Afghan-Japan hospital was allocated for this purpose.

During the opening function, acting minister of Public Health, Dr. Waheed Majroh strongly warned about potential risk of COVID-19 third wave and necessity of observing medial instructions.

It has been said that the 3rd wave may reach to its peak in two weeks in Afghanistan. MoPH official data clearly show that the 3rd wave has taken ascending course. Based on last week data, every day in average 660 new patients of covid-19 were indentified and registered. While in the wake of increasing violences, Covid-19 cases have also peaked, the mortality rate due to Covid-19 has been registered 20 people on daily basis. Kabul situation is chaotic as at present there are over 4000 active Covid-19 patients exist in capital city and according to mortality rate, also Kabul tops other provinces with more deaths and thus the capital city has accommodated one third of affected and deaths. At present more occasions particularly wedding parties are being organized here despite of medical instructions.

On Thursday May 27.2021 Kabul municipality declared that owners of wedding halls are not allowed to reserve their halls for more than one week and wedding parties will be stopped in the capital city from the next week.

Mortality and affection data have also increased in Nangarhar and Kandahar due to close bordering with Pakistan.

Although the presidential palace has returned Covid-19 to agenda of its meetings but no decisive decision has been taken yet. MoPH spokesman Dastagir Nazari confirms that on Monday the highest daily Covid-19 data was recorded since the outbreak and thus the alarm has been ringing.

MoPH says that imposing restriction and quarantine is part of their plan. Proportionate to the situation, the officials in charge present their suggestions to Arg and then measures are implemented.

According to ministry, data on corona cases are increasing and in two weeks the 3rd wave will approach its peak.

MoPH officials said that they would receive Chinese committed vaccines in coming days but receiving of 16 million doses of COVAX vaccines is time consuming and the world community has promised it for Aug 2021.

Shukria Kohistani

Will the Taliban reverse the right to education for Afghan women?

By: Eileen Walsh

Foreign ministers and envoys from across the globe continue peace talks in Doha to establish a cease-fire between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Concurrently, the Biden administration's withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan remains on track to finish by September 11, if not sooner. That means time is running out to influence a post-US withdrawal Afghanistan, especially with regard to the role of women. During their 1996-2001 rule, the Taliban prohibited most girls' education and limited women's movement. Those who did not comply faced beatings or execution. Former President George W. Bush's recent comments cut to the chase: "These girls are going to have real trouble with the Taliban… When they had the run of the place, they were brutal," he said.

The Taliban have promised to ensure the right of girls to education, but the devil is in the details: Their statement qualified that rights would be "provided under Islamic law" but their interpretation of such law is draconian, even by Islamist standards.

A recent Director of National Intelligence report stated that the Taliban is likely to maintain "its restrictive approach to women's rights, and would roll back much of the past two decades' progress" if the group retakes the country.

In 2017, Human Rights Watch reported that the Taliban's 2001 removal from power allowed millions of Afghan girls "who would not have received any education under the Taliban… [to] have had some schooling." Afghan women today work in medicine, media, the military, and as teachers, entrepreneurs and parliamentarians. As significant is the transformation of everyday Afghans' views on education: an increase in urbanization and connection to the West has led many to view education not only as beneficial to society, but also in alignment with Islam. Indeed, 87 percent of Afghans now believe women should have the same educational opportunities as men.

Fear of a return to the pre-2001 years is legitimate. Since the American withdrawal began, the Taliban has seized more territory and increased attacks. In areas already under Taliban control, girls have been forbidden to attend school for years, and risk everything to continue learning. As recent as May 8, 2021, terrorists bombed a girl's school in Kabul, killing at least 90 and wounding over 140. While the Taliban did not take responsibility for the attack, the event underscores how extremist groups target girls' education.

On April 27, 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that "an Afghanistan that does not respect [women's] rights, that does not sustain the gains we've made, will be a pariah." Policy substance, however, does not match the opprobrium.

Anchoring women's future to the Taliban's sense of shame is insufficient. Rather, diplomats convening to discuss Afghanistan's future in Doha, Istanbul, and perhaps other cities should tie girls' access to education not only to US and UN assistance to Afghanistan, but also to Pakistan, the Taliban's chief sponsor. They should demand the Taliban detail the status of such opportunities under their interpretation of Islamic law now. Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad should necessitate that his Taliban counterparts clarify the issue given both how he has insisted the movement has changed and because the group has had two decades to develop its interpretations. Congress might now require that the White House submit semi-annual reports about the status of women in Afghanistan and their access to education.

The Taliban may not care what the world thinks of them but, on one issue, Blinken is right. Fifty percent of the Afghan population was born after the Taliban's 2001 fall from power.

The Taliban may seek to repress Afghanistan with an iron fist, but even if the group has changed little since the pre-2001 period, the society they seek to dominate has changed greatly. Reasserting control over Kabul or Herat and crushing the aspirations of the youth and women will be met with far more civil resistance now than before.

The question for Blinken is whether the US has any plan to forestall the worst case scenario beyond reprimanding the Taliban from Washington.

If the answer is no, then the legacy of the Biden administration regarding Afghanistan may be anything but success.