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**Editorial****Intensified violence & media responsibility**

The officials of the Ministries of Information and Culture, Justice, Higher Education and Attorney General Office held a meeting to assess media activities and access to information situation during the ongoing Taliban's intensification of violence. The officials asked Afghan mass media to harmonize their publications within the framework of the country's laws and national interests.

Criticizing the activities of certain media in war condition, the participants said that a number of media undertakes breaking and publishing news in favor of Taliban. These expressions of government authorities have faced reaction of a number of certain media activists and professionals.

Officials of a number of media said that their outlets' activities and free circulation of information was guaranteed in the constitution and due to this reason, they have harmonized their publications according to the principle of impartiality and support none of the warring parties.

But in such a circumstance that Taliban and other enemies are targeting Afghan masses and bringing about bloodshed and violence in the country, the activities of media outlets can be criticized. They usually focus on war, bloodshed and Taliban's takeover of some districts, but undermining the development process and the bravery of the Afghan forces, which is indeed not logical, because Afghanistan is not in normal condition, and media should do more to curb the ongoing psychological war.

The country's media should only observe impartiality when there would be political difference between the government and the politicians. The government and its political oppositions both believe in constitutional values, including freedom of expression and the principle of media impartiality and both sides' activities being carried out within the constitution, and in such case media are obliged to observe the principle of impartiality.

While as one of the warring parties, the Taliban believe neither to consultation nor to the principle of freedom of opinion and media activities. This goes practically intending to disintegrate and eliminate these values. The officials of certain media criticize the government that as if it imposes restriction on their activities and freedoms, but they never think on the other side of the issue that in case of ruling and overruling of the country, and disintegration of the system, how would be the situation of freedom of expression and the principle of neutrality?

The media officials and activists are well aware that how is the situation of media in areas under the Taliban control?

Right now, when the Taliban occupy an area or region, they either stop media activities or arrange it according to their interests. For example, when Taliban occupied Balkh district, Balkh province, they took over control of Radio Noohabar and broadcast their own news thought it.

On the other hand, the officials of Afghan media should notice that their position differ comparing foreign media. If foreign media like BBC or Aljazeera claim that observe impartiality in reporting of Afghanistan war news, could be justifiable, because foreign media don't act according to Afghanistan laws and their publications are based on laws and policies of their own countries. But the position of Afghan media is different.

Beside sharing of information on war incidents, the Afghan media bear heavy responsibility on their shoulders. Afghan media should be attentive that they are one of the main pillars of the republic and democratic system.

Whenever the whole system is under serious threats, it's obvious that media, freedom of speech and democratic values are posed to danger too immediately.

Therefore, it's necessary that the publication of media in current momentous situation be harmonized according to our system and our noble national interests.

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**Taliban forcibly displace civilians in Afghanistan**

Taliban forces on the offensive across northern Afghanistan have forcibly displaced residents and burned homes as apparent retaliation for cooperating with the Afghan government, Human Rights Watch said today. Since May 2021, the Taliban have captured scores of districts across throughout the country, including an estimated 50 districts in Kandahar and other northern provinces.

Residents of Daqubei, Shekari in Kandahar province and that from June 21 to June 25, Taliban forces ordered residents to evacuate and threatened those who had paid no-aid post support to the Afghan government. Taliban fighters looted and burned down homes. The Taliban claimed that they had ordered people to leave "for their own safety" and denied responsibility for looting or burning houses, but they have frequently committed abuses against civilians for allegedly assisting the government.

"The Taliban's retaliatory attacks against civilians deemed to have supported the government are an obvious warning about the risk of future atrocities," said Patricia Gossman, associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The Taliban leadership has the power to stop these abuses by their forces but haven't shown that they are willing to do so."

Human Rights Watch interviewed former residents of Daqubei, Shekari by phone in early July.

Taliban forces captured Daqubei, Shekari and, with loudspeakers, ordered residents to vacate their homes in two hours. About 400 families fled the town, some going to Taloqan, 70 kilometers east, and about 200 fled to Farahbad, Badkhash province, 230 kilometers east.

Sirajuddin, a 43-year-old elder, told Human Rights Watch that when he heard the Taliban announcement he had because he knew they would be looking for him. In 2015, when the Taliban took control of Kandahar city for about two weeks, an Afghan National Army (ANA) commander had ordered him to organize food for soldiers fighting the Taliban.

"The commander said, 'You have to help us - tell the villagers to bring food,'" he said. "We collected food and money for the soldiers. Now the Taliban say I have to leave because I helped the ANA."

Sirajuddin said that shortly after the Taliban announced the deadline for residents to leave, some fighters began searching homes and looting property. "We finally left our homes and then they burned it with everything in it," he said. Other villagers said that the Taliban shot and killed two civilians, Abdul Salam, a shopkeeper, and Habibullah, a former member of the local militia force, apparently because of their association with the government. Human Rights Watch could not confirm these claims.

A 45-year-old woman said that after the Taliban announcement, fighters came down-to-door to search the houses. "I told them, 'I'm a widow. Why are you searching here?' and they said I had to leave because we had helped 'the infidels.' I lived in that village 30 years. Now I am in Farahbad living in a tent."

A 34-year-old woman said that Taliban ordered her house demanding to know "Where is the immunity?" and warning her family of being government supporters. She said, "We helped the government and they left us to the Taliban. The Taliban have burned our homes. We are as scared - both sides force us to help them. We are poor people - we don't have any choice." International human rights

as law prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian property, including looting and burning. Taliban attacks on civilians are war crimes. The forced displacement of civilians is unlawful unless required for the security of the affected area or is absolutely necessary for military reasons. Retaliatory attacks are a form of collective punishment and are also prohibited.

The International Criminal Court is currently weighing whether or to move forward in an investigation into war crimes and serious human rights abuses in Afghanistan by all parties to the conflict, including the Taliban.

Taliban commanders, who know or should have known about abuses by forces under their control and took no action to prevent or stop them are culpable as a matter of command responsibility, Human Rights Watch said.

"Crimes of revenge have fueled insecurity killings in the past, particularly in northern Afghanistan," Gossman said. "The Taliban should cease all attacks on civilians, and the United Nations and governments pushing for a resumption of peace negotiations should press them to do so."

**Monitoring Desk**

