Continued violence catastrophic for Afghan people

Following surge in Taliban attacks and increasing violence by the group in a number of the country's provinces, the United Nations human rights commissioner considered continued violence as catastrophic for the people of Afghanistan, stressing on ending the violence in the country.

The United Nations rights chief has expressed alarm over the rising violence and perpetration of human rights violations in Afghanistan, saying they are having disastrous consequences on the people. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has expressed her concern as civilian casualties continue to mount and reports of violations that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity continued to emerge.

"Parties to the conflict must stop fighting to prevent more bloodshed. The Taliban must cease their military operations in cities," Bachelet stressed. She warned that "unless all parties return to the negotiating table and reach a peaceful settlement, the already atrocious situation for so many Afghans will become much worse".

She particularly drew attention to the high number of casualties in urban areas. Since July 9, in four cities alone – Lashkar Gah, Kandahar, Herat and Kunduz at least 183 civilians have been killed and 1,181 injured, warning that even before the latest Taliban military offensives on urban centres, the UN had documented a steep increase in civilian casualties.

Reports by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the UN Human Rights Office, show that most of the civilian harm is being caused by ground engagements. In addition, since the start of the May Taliban offensive, at least 241,000 people have been displaced, and the protracted fighting in the cities has resulted in damage to essential infrastructures like roads and bridges, and other civilian objects.

Disturbing reports of Taliban violence against communities now under their control in Afghanistan have been condemned by UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet, who backed a return to peace negotiations in Doha. The High Commissioner for Human Rights said that there was "fear and dread" across Afghanistan, which had driven people to flee their homes. Women have been flogged and killed in areas overrun by the extremists, while journalists and human rights defenders had also been attacked and killed, Ms. Bachelet said.

Repeating the High Commissioner's condemnation of reported Taliban violence against communities, including women, rights defenders and journalists, she told correspondents that "women are already being killed and shot for breaching rules," whilst "some radio stations have stopped broadcasting".

In Balkh Province, "a women's rights activist was shot and killed for breaching the rules", the commissioner said. The UN human rights commission had also been receiving reports of "summary executions, attacks against current and former government officials and their family members, destruction of homes, schools and clinics and the laying of large numbers of IEDs (improvised explosive devices)," in areas already captured by the Taliban and in contested areas, she said.

Meanwhile, newly appointed UN Humanitarian Affairs chief and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, also joined UN Secretary-General António Guterres and members of the Security Council in condemning attacks against civilians and called for a ceasefire. In a statement, Griffiths said, "Fighting across the country, which has claimed the lives of over 40,000 people since 2009 when UN reporting began, needs to stop." "People have suffered enough," he added. More than 1,000 people were been killed or injured due to indiscriminate attacks against civilians in Helmand, Kandahar and Herat provinces in July alone.

A number of civil society activists and lawmakers in their interviews with The Kabul Times have considered expedition in peace process and exerting necessary pressures on countries supporting terrorism as key that help prevent from civilian casualties. In the meantime, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has asked all parties to the ongoing conflict to not use civilians as shield and tool for political goals, stressing that all sides to the war should observe humanitarian laws to prevent civilian casualties in the country.

By Suraya Raiszada

Displaced families in dire need of humanitarian aid

Dozens of families in unsecured provinces have fled their homes due to the Taliban's military advancements in several Afghan districts and capitals. The displaced are trying to find refuge in safer provinces, having lost their shelters.

Nowadays, Kabul's parks and roads are crowded with families, vulnerable women and children amongst them, who escaped the Taliban's violence and have to reside in the capital of Afghanistan.

The displaced families have been facing with lack of food, water, and many other basic needs since they fled their homes in unsecured provinces, having lost everything, including their family members, and hoping to be safe with their family members and rushed into Kabul. They are more than 10.000 displaced families in and around the Afghan big cities.

Besides Kabul, many large cities of Afghanistan such as Herat, Kandahar, Balkh, and Helmand are hosting migrants from other provinces in which Taliban's violence is extremely increasing. They complain about the Afghan government's inability to help them.

The displaced families escaped from Kuduz and Takhar provinces and residing in Sara-e-Shamali local park saying: "Neither the government nor any other aid organizations have helped us yet."

The displaced families should be reached out and helped. The governmental related organizations should do whatever they can in order to help the displaced families all around the country. The Afghan government is responsible to gather funds for the displaced families. In addition, the Ministry of Repatriation and Refugees (MORR), Office of State Minister for Disaster Management, and Afghan Red Crescent Society should be responsibly active in gathering humanitarian aid in coordination with the Afghan government to reach and help out the displaced families. The Afghan national merchants should also start their humanitarian assistance campaigns for the families in need.

Helping the poor, displaced families should be a collective responsibility. Otherwise, if nobody paid attention to this crucial situation, it is likely for Afghanistan to face a humanitarian crisis.

The Kabul Times

Afghans women say Taliban crimes should be documented

Afghan Women Voice Group in Peace-making Policy say Taliban's steps in connection with 'jihadul Nikah' (marriage) should be exposed internationally and their crimes against women are documented with close cooperation of human rights organizations.

Members of the group the other day in a news meeting declared that the voice of Afghan women should be shared with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). In a statement released by the group, it has been stressed that protective steps and facilities should be created for defenders of the women rights in support of the human rights defenders committee in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Herat Times in a telegram canal writes that based on information from the Taliban group in Herat's Kurkh district, a number of women 'widowers' has been brought in a location in pretext that they would be helped.

"A number of married women have also attended the program to get assistance when they saw mullahs and fighters who wanted to forcefully marry women attending the program.

Those having husbands by shouting that they have husbands have saved themselves from mullahs and fighters, while some others have been taken by mullahs," the Herat Times said.

The Herat Times further said that based on another report, Taliban fighters in Herat's west in Sayed Fakoor town have forcefully taken two young daughters after entering a house and beating other members of a family in the area.

There are reports that Taliban are promising the Afghan defense and security forces personnel that they will not harm them if surrendering to them, but those surrendering to the Taliban are taken out from their homes and are killed brutally during nighttime.

Halima Sadaf Karimi, a member of Afghanistan parliament says Taliban have enacted a law in the areas under their control, especially in the north, that every house should marry a girl to a mujahideen fighter, saying that it is their mujahideen's right. It is said that after marrying girls, they take them to Waziristan to receive Islamic studies.

Ms. Karimi added that the Taliban in Jawzjan province had beaten women who left their homes out in several valleys of the province. Meanwhile, the Afghan women group also asked meaningful presence of Afghan women in peace talks. According to members of the group, so far role of Afghan women has been symbolic as no meaningful role has been given to them in decision-making level of the peace talks.

Members of the group asked for documentation of Taliban's crimes after local officials said that Taliban started imposing limitations on women with capturing areas in the country's north. The Taliban are not equal in the standards of humanity, Islam and Afghanism. They had previously said that people would later introduce their 14-year-old daughters and widows to the Cultural and Religious Commission in order to marry them to the group's fighters. Human rights watch groups have criticized the Taliban for numerous human rights abuses in the wake of their recent attacks on cities, calling many of the Taliban's actions as war crimes.

By Lailuma Noori

42 small water dams completed across Afghanistan

Afghanistan National Water Affairs Regulatory Authority (NWARA) has declared that a feasibility study and design sketch of more than 42 small water dams have been completed across the country.

Technical deputy of the country's national water affairs regulatory authority Ahmad Wais Basiri has told the media that a feasibility study and design sketch of more than 42 water dams have been completed in the country.

According to NWARA, the main goal of the country's national water affair regulatory authority is to manage the country water resources and absorption of strategic investment of the private sector and international organizations.

"Technical study and document to fund transferring project of Panjshir river's water to Kabul has been completed," Basiri said, adding that the project is determined to be implemented by the Asian Development Bank.

With the completion of the project, 100-million-meter cubic water will be transferred from Panjshir river to Kabul. According to Basiri, more than 2.2 million people will be benefited from the project.

Basiri further said that total 228 monitoring station of surface waters and 800 monitoring stations of under ground waters have been activated in 27 provinces of the country to manage the country's water resources.

Technical deputy of the country's water affairs regulatory authority added that construction work on 69 small and big canals including big canals of first phase of Kamal Khan dam, second phase of Laghman's Nahr-e-Shahi, first and second phases of Helmand's Nahr-e-Saraj is underway.

On the other hand, the Asian Development Bank has invested 700,000 USD for digitalization of the country's national water affairs regulatory authority. It is said that plan for privatization of water distribution and modernization of tradition water distribution system are some key activities of the authority.

Meanwhile, technical deputy of the country's national water affairs regulatory authority has asked the people to be careful in spending water as the country is facing with drought, climate change, increasing population and reduction in water resources.

According to the country's national water affairs regulatory authority, protection of national projects is the responsibility of all and armed insurgent groups with their negative role in this regard should stop destruction of the country's public infrastructures.

The authority has said that a number of the country's big projects particularly Salma, Kamal Khan, Kajaki, Shah wa Orus dams and other dams have been completed and should be protected as public infrastructures.

Head of finance and technical for national water affairs regulatory authority Ahmad Rashad Hakim has also said that all the people including the armed opponent groups are responsible for the protection of the country's public infrastructures.

He said that efforts were underway to manage the country's water resources; therefore, water supply canals were planned to be constructed in various provinces of the country.

By Shukrya Kohistani