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Brussels Summit on Afghanistan and Human Rights

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The upcoming Brussels Summit would be pivotal for Afghanistan; not only because of its importance regarding the upcoming nature of the support and assistance for Afghanistan but also for highlighting some major issues that Afghanistan face and what sorts of decisions are made that may influence those issues. One of the major issues in Afghanistan has been the violation of human rights; particularly women rights and there has to be serious discussion in the Summit on the issue and there should be more support and assistance for Afghanistan so that it can play a better role in this regard. However, the performance of the current government has not been satisfactory regarding the efforts for elimination of discrimination of human rights and violence and injustice against women.

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) along with some women rights protection institutions currently raised concerns over the rising violence against women in the country. They reaffirmed the determination to raise the issue at the summit in order to spotlight the main reasons behind the trend. A 14-member delegation comprising representatives from the Afghan human rights commission, the High Peace Council (HPC) and women's rights associations will report on the violation of human rights in Afghanistan and the surge in violence against women in the country at the summit. According to AIHRC, up to 10,000 cases of violence against women in Afghanistan have been recorded this year with the majority of incidents happening in the nation's remote and volatile regions.

Unfortunately, with such a situation at hand, the authoritative institutions and individuals in the society are not doing much. From the government, there are just promises while in reality there are no practical measures. On its starting days, NUG came up with strong promises to deal with the issue of human rights and particularly women rights. It promised that the issue would be among its top-priority considerations; however, nothing tangible could be witnessed afterwards. Even the lawmakers are not ready to take action in this regard. It is unfortunate to note that Afghan authorities and many important personalities themselves have favored the recommendations and suggestions to limit the participation of women in social and political lives. As most of these authorities are themselves nourished in an extremist patriarchal society and do not have much consideration regarding the role and empowerment of women and consider it against their tribal values that they come out of their houses, they would never follow a movement to save women from violence and make them achieve their due place in Afghan society.

The human rights commission has also accused tribal elders of interfering in the affairs of the Afghan legal and judicial institutions. Rafiullah Bedar, AIHRC spokesperson said in a statement, "In some cases, there are interferences into the jobs of our legal and judicial institutions so that lenient punishments are handed down to perpetrators, at the same time, we also face problems in the structures, in 34 provinces, special tribunals for dealing with violence against women cases are still not operational."

It is of immense importance that the authorities must fulfill their responsibilities with honesty and determination and must play their part in bringing about positive changes as it would be in the favor of the people of Afghanistan and at the same time it would help in fulfilling the conditions of the international community as it would never continue supporting Afghanistan unless it makes considerable strides in this regard.

For the policy makers in Afghanistan the guideline is clear, all they require is a commitment. They can make a difference if they ensure that the policies that they form meet the international concept of human rights that is developed on the basis of the United Nations Charter and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 1 of the UDHR says, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Its preamble also emphasizes on the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. The objective for Afghan government to play a tremendous role can be what is set forth in Article 55 of United Nations Charter which suggests for '(a) higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; b) solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; c) international cultural and educational cooperation; d) universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion'. To be very much realistic about Afghanistan, one can say that guidelines are many; the only missing factor is practical measure. There is a wide gap between the guidelines/commitments and actions, and this gap becomes wider once the intentions and honesty are doubted; and in case of Afghanistan this gap is really wide.