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## Bleeding Amidst War and Violence

October 24, 2016

Despite the fall of the Taliban's regime in 2001 and establishment of democracy, Afghan civilians are still bleeding as a result of war and insurgency. Disregarding human rights and humanitarian law, the Taliban guerilla fighters inflicted heavy casualties upon the nation following the "spring offensive" and "Omari Operation". The peace talks, which are in conflicts with the Taliban's radical ideology, did not bear the desired fruit and came to a standstill after the death of Omar and his successor.

Reports say that the Taliban and Afghan government have resumed peace talks in Qatar last month, which was later denied by the Taliban's spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid. The escalated militancy shows there is no resumption of peace talks and the Taliban fighters continue their offensives without hesitation. It is most likely that there is no formal negotiation in Qatar to represent the Taliban's central office and if any local Taliban from splinter group have ushered in talks, it will be no more than a waste of time. Similarly, the Taliban's newly appointed leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada does not seem to be in mood of negotiation. The protracted war and Taliban's heavy offensive increased the death toll. The UN reports that war has caused more than 8,000 civilian casualties, including nearly 2,600 deaths, in the first nine months of 2016. "In the first nine months of 2016, UNAMA documented 2,461 child casualties, a 15 percent increase on the same period in 2015. Ground engagements caused more than half of all child casualties in 2016," said the report blaming Taliban-led anti-government forces for causing 61 percent of all civilian casualties. It further added that air strikes by pro-government forces caused 72 per cent increase in civilian fatalities; one third was caused by the

international military forces. The UNAMA documented more than 11,000 conflict-related civilian casualties in 2015, marking the highest number of fatalities since 2009. The militancy is estimated to have caused 70,000 civilian casualties, including over 25,000 deaths since 2009. “Increased fighting in densely populated areas makes it imperative for parties to take immediate steps to ensure all feasible precautions are being taken to spare civilians from harm,” UNAMA Chief Tadamichi Yamamoto is cited as saying.

The lurid reports about civilian casualties fill the air with fear and disappointment and reveal the escalated militancy in the country. In other words, Afghans, including women and children, are bleeding amid war and violence. Although democracy was established in the post-Taliban Afghanistan to protect the rights and liberty of the nation and alleviate its pain and sufferings, the dream for a peaceful Afghanistan is yet to come true and the nascent democracy is to be strengthened. Constitutionally, the state will have to “establish an order based on the peoples’ will and democracy; 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; strengthen political, social, economic as well as defense institutions”.

It is believed that the frequently gruesome reports about the high graph of combatant and noncombatant fatalities will demoralize the soldiers who are devoted to fight against the insurgents. Therefore, a large number of soldiers desert from military. Moreover, the heavy casualties and unmitigated insurgency will be a stain on the National Unity Government (NUG) and besmirch its reputation at national and international level. It is feared that if the same trend continues and counter insurgency does not t be intensified, Afghanistan will be changed into second Iraq. In a nutshell, since Afghanistan is deemed the “Heart of Asia”, it is vulnerable to the regional war and insecurity and members of warring parties may infiltrate the country. Why have members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group gained foothold in the country? Following the death of Mullah Omar, the appointment of Mullah Akhtar Mansour led to splinter group. The splinter party under Mullah Mansour Dadullah and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) allegedly shifted allegiance to the ISIL group and paved the way for their foothold in the country. Dadullah refused to pledge loyalty to Akhtar Mansour. Despite the fact that the radical ideology of the Taliban and ISIL is somewhat contradictory and ISIL has surpassed the Taliban’s mindset and practices more fundamentally, some members of the Taliban, mainly the splinter group, still show inclination to ISIL. To undermine the terrorist networks and alleviate the pain and sufferings of the nation, the government must reinforce the soldiers, strengthen the intelligence service and tighten border control. Moreover, targeting the Taliban’s high ranking officials and increasing air strikes will demoralize the Taliban fighters.

It is hoped that the international community and Afghanistan’s allies will not let the country to be changed into Iraq through pursuing the Taliban elements inside and across the border and continuing the drone strikes so as to eliminate their hubs wherever they are.