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Why the Badistans Are Right to be Angry

By Asheel Qayum

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Sitting in a restaurant in Kabul, I was introduced to an American journalist. As usual, the first thing I asked him was whether it was his first time in this part of the world. Unsurprisingly, his answer was very derogatory. "No, I have been to a couple Badistans before," he answered, referring to the countries whose names ending with -istan. Unfortunately the western media has given such a bad image of Afghanistan and other Badistans that it is difficult for most of the westerners to imagine that there is a good Afghan or Badistani in this world. If Westerners always consider us evil how can they expect us to respect them? There is an old saying among Afghans: "You pay respect, you get respect."

If today, Afghans or Pakistanis or any other Badistanis are fundamentalists, extremists, and terrorists it is because the West wanted them to be that way so that they can be easily used against the communist forces during the occupation of Afghanistan by Soviets. I can't find the right words to explain my feelings when I read comments of the readership of some of the American newspapers. You call us cockroaches, crooks, savage, uncivilized, and so on. But have you ever asked yourself what caused the Badistanis to be bad and savage, or why we are uncivilized?

It was the U.S and its western and Asian allies who suppressed every single enlightening and democratic movement by the very people that the U.S-led coalition forces are engaged in the 9-year-old war in Afghanistan and Pakistan right now. They needed to do so because their ultimate goal was to defeat the Red Army and save the so-called free

world from communism, not to free Afghanistan. The very people who kill your sons and daughters in Afghanistan are the people that your governments trained and supported three decades ago. You are not the only people paying for your government's mistakes. How many Americans or Europeans have been the victims of international terrorism so far? A few thousand? We have lost over 2 millions people as a result of your governments' foreign policies, and your soldiers still continue to slaughter my people today. How many of us should die until your politicians' thirst for killing my people is quenched?

If the death of an American or European soldier makes you frustrated, remember that we feel the same grief when your soldiers slaughter our women and children. We are human beings too. We also have feelings and love our families and countrymen. An American's tears are not worth more than an Afghan's. And let's stop making this mistake: perpetuating the myth that so-called terrorism and extremism -- or what ever you call it -- is our problem. It is West's mess and it is obligated to fix it, but unfortunately it is too late for that.

You sit in U.S. or in Europe, in sterile government buildings, and you judge us from there but do you have a clue what is going on the ground? The reality is different from what you have been told by your mean stream media. Before making any judgment you should come to Afghanistan and see how your soldiers and diplomats treat people. If your soldiers behave like occupying forces, keeping human body parts for trophies, how can you expect us to respect them and treat them as our guardians?

I have frequently read in the western papers that Afghans don't like foreigners and they are very xenophobic. Who likes foreigners? What would an American do if Afghan soldiers establish a base next to a school in New York City? What would for example, a Brit would do if Afghan soldiers raid his house in the middle of night and kill his pregnant wife and small children. It is common sense, isn't it? I am sure the very people who call themselves the civilized human beings, the Americans and European, will do exactly what the Afghans do if they were forced to suffer the the occupation that Afghans endure.

Your soldiers are not here to make life better for us. There are to protect your countries' interests, not to improve human rights and democracy in Afghanistan. Unless your governments' interests are in endangered why would they care about 100,000 residents of Kabul slaughtered by your governments' trained dogs during the civil war, or tens of thousands of Hazaras massacred by the Taliban. How can you expect us to be civilized and behave like normal human beings after your governments were paying the extremists and Islamists to burn down schools, and kill teachers, school kids and government employees in the 1980s. How can you expect my people to treat their woman like humans after your spy agencies were given hundreds of thousands of dollars to fundamentalists to throw acid on women's faces?

If you still think that burning schools, killing school kids and teachers and women rights violation started with the Taliban, I have to tell you that you are wrong. It started with the

first group of U.S trained and U.S backed fundamentalist in 80s and it still continues. The very people that your governments call terrorists and extremist were once the holy warriors of the United States and Europe. Some Americans even went so far as to liken them to the founding fathers of the United States. Isn't that funny? You should ask yourself what happened? Why yesterday's friends are today's enemies? For your government, yesterday's friends are today's enemies, and today's friends are tomorrow enemies. They have to stick to this policy otherwise American war profiteers can not steal billions of tax payers money.

You can call us extremist, fundamentalist, savage, uncivilized or what ever you think suits us and treat us like dogs and animals, but remember one thing: Unlike the United States Afghanistan was not founded fundamentalists and fanatics. Our civilization is much, much more older than yours. Today's America came to existence 500 years ago while as Afghanistan has a history of 5000 years. We are fundamentalist and conservative because you governments wanted us to be this way. And that is the greatest shame of all to our people.

I agree that Afghanistan is one of the most uber-conservative countries in the world. But this is what you get when you toy with people's religious beliefs and convictions. I don't blame the ordinary westerners because they have been deliberately kept in dark by their governments. Your governments tell you that they have spent billions of your tax money in Afghanistan make life better for the Badistanis. If things have not changed in Badistan it is because the Afghans don't want to change or they will tell you that it is in the nature of the Afghans to oppose civilized life. The truth is that Afghans want to be civilized but the problem is that your governments are not honest with what they say. They never have been.

You want us to change? Fine. But you cannot change us overnight. If you attained your civilized society now, after hundreds of years of struggle, how can you expect us to get it in 5 or 10 years? The Afghan society can be changed but this change should come from within the society, not by imposing it on it. No one can change Afghanistan but Afghans. Maybe the western democracy works in U.S. and Europe but it is not a good recipe for Afghanistan. We need your support and help there is no doubt about it but allow the Afghan people the autonomy to decide what is good and what bad for Afghanistan.