**Afghan Money Heist**

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Afghanistan has been the victim of the biggest heist of money and resources at the hands of the US after 9/11. Since the Taliban took control of Kabul, the US has held seven billion USD already stashed in its banks. When the US faced global criticism for holding Afghan money and acting complicit in worsening humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan, the US President, Joe Biden, issued an executive decree to split the funds into humanitarian aid and compensation for victim families of 9/11.

There has been a global outcry on this unjust decision because the Afghan interim government would get its funds in the form of aid. It is the sovereign right of the interim Afghan government to use the resources for public welfare instead of NGOs doing it with American intervention. This money belongs to the Afghan people who have suffered the brunt of war for 20 long years of conflict and humanitarian crises due to the US invasion. Whether the US recognizes the incumbent Taliban government or not, the question is the catastrophic humanitarian crisis killing innocent children, women, and men because of hunger, poverty, and disease.

Afghan people deserve to have their money back at their disposal to use because they have nothing to do with the horrific incidents of 9/11 and the aftermath, which has already put them back to the Stone Age. According to one projection by the UN World Food Program, nearly 23 million Afghans face severe hunger and starvation in the country, with children and women facing the wrath of this unjust war and cruel decisions unilaterally led by the US.

After the fall of the Afghan government in the aftermath of US withdrawal last year in August, the top officials and treasury fled the country to seek fortune in Western countries with the blessings of the US. Ashraf Ghani’s government made seven billion in the central bank assets deposited at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York to be used later. However, when the Taliban government took charge of Kabul, they asked for the money, but the US government first froze these assets and later refused to release them in a hasty move.

One of the reasons for this was that the US government did not recognize the incumbent government and claimed that the funds could not be transferred but would be split between Afghan humanitarian aid and the families of 9/11. According to a statement from the White House, regardless of what happens in courts, there will be a split of these assets for 9/11 families. This move will further paralyze the Afghan’s economic condition. Most of the Afghan bank’s capital is in Germany, Switzerland, UAE, and Britain, and there is less chance that this money will resume its operations.

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Since the Taliban took over Kabul in August 2022, Afghanistan has plunged into a humanitarian crisis amid economic instability. The Central Bank of Afghanistan had no reserves to keep the national economy afloat and carry out day-to-day administrative operations, let alone public welfare. Taliban found themselves off-guard with zero net reserves when they took control of the government.

With time, the international community adhered and came forward for the help of Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan still faces immense governance challenges, counter-terrorism, and human development. Although it is an opportunity for Afghans to shape their future according to their aspirations, they need more understanding and support from the international community.

It is important to note that the earlier Ghani government had most of the funds from the international community’s support. Now the budget and economy for the interim government are crippled because of the significant cuts in funding and lack of capital available. The schools, hospitals, factories, and government ministries are on a standstill waiting for funds.

In efforts to normalize the foreign and domestic conditions facing Afghanistan, the interim government of the Taliban needs the funds to feed the people, fuel the economy and create sustainability in administrative affairs. Only then will they demonstrate openness, inclusiveness, and moderation in their policy and actions.

Pakistan and other countries offered the required humanitarian assistance to the interim government to rebuild the country. Pakistan has been hosting millions of Afghans on its soil, but it is only blamed for all the ills and never compensated. The US-led NATO has shaped the Afghan financial institutions in a manner that they cannot survive without liquidity. The seizure of cash flow and creating the shortage of currency is the worst the US could do with the already suffering Afghans. There should be international pressure from the global civil society and community to support Afghanistan in these challenging times.

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