**Taliban have Surrendered**

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The world knew what was coming. It was about time the Taliban’s empire fell on their face as the blessings of the trio–no-policy, no-manifesto and no plan–started showing its true colours. What were they thinking? They probably might not have thought once before taking hold of country in August that this time around, they wouldn’t be treated as good as they were treated in past while they had backing up from non-state actors. They tried to behave like the same obstinate child who wanted a bar of expensive chocolate while his parents were finding it hard to put food on the table.

The fact of the matter is that the Taliban has surrendered, technically. With 90 percent of Afghan households resorting to just a one-time meal, the damage done is beyond imagination. They are going nowhere with the kind of circumstances they’re facing right now and without the help of the international community, The Taliban, who bombed the statues in March 2001 on orders from leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, have suddenly pacified and tamed. At the moment, on their downtrodden airports, they’re greeting international donors and NGOs with open arms and wanting to reboot all technological, economical and financial systems they’ve no idea about.

The writing is on the wall, they have no choice. The straits are dire and imminent consequences are appalling. Millions of Afghan children are on the verge of starvation as hunger is wreaking havoc on them. True as it may sound, ever since the Taliban seized power on the heels of a US withdrawal in August, more than half of the country is facing “acute” food shortages, a whopping 22.8 million figure! The economic freefall of the war-ridden state portrays a copybook example of the aftermath of what happens after the war ends, a “forever-war” to be precise.

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In less than five months of the Taliban’s take over, all hell has broken loose. World-leading agencies have been persistently raising alarm about the countdown to catastrophe in Afghanistan by underscoring that more than half the country is facing acute food shortages. The UN World Food Program states that people are at an immediate peril of facing potentially life-threatening food insecurity this winter–and mind you the latest pictures of Kabul and suburbs surfacing the internet are fearsome as dense snow has engulfed everything visible. This snow-sighting might serve as an overture to joyous diversions any other time but it is holding a different connotation here–hunger, health crises and death!

By the way, hunger is not the only problem. The miseries have doubled down as health issues are looming proportionally and medical emergencies aren’t being facilitated. The medical staff mostly recruited and funded by foreign NGOs has increasingly become incapacitated to continue work without long-due wages. There are fewer medicines available in stores and surgical instruments do not exist in most medical facilities. That’s perhaps the last straw for most of the Afghans as they have been caught between the devil and deep sea, literally. Now many of us could conveniently relate those moments featuring young men chasing a US plane on the runway to catch up.

Afghan children are ravenous. The dilapidating healthcare system, the economic meltdown of the aid-dependent economy, pandemic, food insecurity worsened by famine and harsh winter all combine to stage a full-fledged episode for killing more Afghans with hunger than bullets in war.

Foreign aids have entirely evaporated and sanctions imposed on Afghanistan’s financial infrastructure from the rest of the world are bringing ruins on the economy. These aids would make up about three-quarters of the government budget previously and now its absence means financial carnage; tens of thousands of downtrodden families sold out their flocks and fled, seeking shelter and assistance in packed temporary camps near major cities. Afghan currency has tumbled to the bottom rungs whereupon edibles have been made out of reach. Intensifying the wretchedness, one of the toughest droughts in decades has withered fields, starved farm animals and dried irrigation channels.

The executive director of the World Food Program David Beasley warned: “we’re now looking at the worst humanitarian crisis on Earth as 23 million people are marching towards starvation and the next six months are going to be catastrophic. It is going to be hell on Earth.” Meanwhile UN special representative to Afghanistan Deborah Lyons raised the further alarm by stating that Afghanistan is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe while urging the international community to find ways to provide financial support to the Afghan people. Ironically many human rights champions are seemingly oblivious of the impending tragedies.

The Prestigious international prints stated the crises as unprecedented. According to “The Guardian”: “The west must not stand by and allow a million children to die of starvation this winter.” “New York Times,” wrote: “Another A Million Afghan Children Could Die in ‘Most Perilous Hour,’ U.N. Warns. The international community pledged more than $1 billion in emergency aid as millions of Afghans risk running out of food just as winter sets in.” The Economist stated: “Afghanistan’s economy is collapsing. More than half its people may go hungry this winter.”

Ironically, as war-ravaged Afghanistan rushes towards help and is about to fall into the hands of monetary breakdown, global leaders bank on reviewing the circumstance from political and strategic lens rather than from philanthropic and humanity perspectives, and which is why Mary-Ellen McGroarty, the World Food Program’s country chief for Afghanistan, had to say: “The millions of women, children, men in the current crisis in Afghanistan are innocent people who are being condemned to a winter of absolute desperation and potentially death.”

While the deepening humanitarian crisis of Afghanistan stages the most precarious hour for the entire humanity and the prospect of freezing winter is raising the phantasm of mass starvation and migration, Pakistan has taken the honour of hosting the summit of foreign ministers from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to address the looming humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. It welcomed the initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — the Summit Chair of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) – by setting up the extraordinary convention. It is worth mentioning that this OIC led global moot on Afghanistan is the largest international gathering on Afghanistan since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban.

Despite the fact I am myself pretty ticked off upon seeing the juggernauts of inflation, chaos and anarchy quashing poor, I believe there are some credits I cannot take away from the contemporary government. Prime Minister Imran Khan periodically reminded the international community about its moral obligation towards the Afghan people while reiterating Pakistan`s enduring commitment towards Afghans. During his reign, Islamabad has been relentlessly advocating stability in Afghanistan. The international relations Pakistan has been trying to work out in recent years have certainly brought forth conducive results. From Pakistan’s foreign minister’s visits to four neighbouring countries of Afghanistan (Iran, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan) to the establishment of the six neighbouring countries’ platform at Pakistan’s initiative; from participation in the Moscow format meetings to the impactful performance on UN’s leading platforms, the current government gets due credit for its intense diplomatic outreach. At the moment, Pakistan counts on the full support of the OIC member states and the international community to extend all possible support to the Afghan people in this hour of dire need.

Just like always, the silver lining is always available, and which is that recent disaster is preventable, by all means. Its primary driver is monetary assents on the Taliban which have incapacitated the financial framework, influencing each part of the economy. Propping up Afghanistan’s banking system would do here. Anything contrary shall only add to the miseries while piling up more individuals failing to repay loans. Taliban just couldn’t nip it in the bud and results are appalling. If the free-falling economy shall not be bolstered up, the recent money liquidity crunch could make the monetary framework break down in no time.

Right now, Afghans are feeling deserted, neglected and without a doubt rebuffed by conditions that are not their fault and leaving them in the lurch would be a mistake of historic sense. Pakistan, on the other hand, hopes that continued engagement of the international community with Afghanistan is imperative, and the OIC can lead the way in helping Afghans to brave out these unprecedented dire circumstances.

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