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Preface

After a postponement of several years, the distribution process of Electronic ID Cards (or E-Tazkira) started. The president took this step in the time where there are still controversies regarding this type of distribution. Jamiat-i-Islam announced the position of opposition against this, and there were opponents and proponents of this process in Wolesi Jirga as well.

Although the authorities responsible for E-Tazkira distribution agency say that due to political differences, this process will not be delayed and it will be started several months later in provinces as well; but besides other problems, there are some concerns about this process due to political disputes. What is the fate of these differences? And whether these differences will threaten this process or not? These are the questions that Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS), along with other questions, try to analyze them in the first part of Weekly Analysis.

The second part of the Analysis is allocated for high rate of poverty and unemployment issue in the country. Last week, the CSO resealed a survey which indicates that more than half of Afghans live below poverty line. Poverty and unemployment are those challenges that Afghans have been faced with and thus, a lot of Afghans have been traveled to Europe in these last years. The concerns over every day rise in poverty and unemployment and their solutions are analyzed here.

Electronic ID Cards and the Future of Present Disputes



By **Hekmatullah Zaland** / CSRS

Distribution of Electronic Identity Cards (E-IDs), also known as E-Tazkira, had become delayed for three years just to have transparent and fraud-free elections in Afghanistan; however, besides this postponement, the election process became initiated without distribution of E-IDs and widespread fraud is being continued as the Paper Identity Cards (P-IDs) are distributed now.

Besides the issue of elections, this process might have been started already due to other rationale reasons; however, this process encountered barriers in past years and has faced with challenging obstacles now as well.

On May 3, President Ashraf Ghani officially inaugurated the E-ID distribution process by receiving first E-Tazkira, but an hour later, Chief Executive of Afghanistan, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah appeared in a press conference and opposed this action of the President.

The need and importance of E-IDs (E-Tazkira), the disputes in the process and the fate of the course of E-IDs are discussed here.

Need and Importance of Electronic Identity Cards

The E-ID distribution process in Afghanistan is considered as an initiative on regional level and it's so important due to need and importance stated below:

- Prevention of fraud in elections;
- Saving in expenditure of voting-cards distribution;
- Determining the exact number of country's population;
- International Standard and benefits of E-ID as a standard ID-Card in abroad;
- Facilitation in passport, driving license, car license, marriage letter and other services;
- Preventing foreign citizens from receiving Afghan ID-Cards;
- Preventing people from having multiple Tazkira and other frauds and corruption;
- Controlling criminal offense and helping in identifying criminals;
- Etc.

The abovementioned points are so important and needed when it comes providing service based of electronic government (E-government), paying and collecting taxes, economic growth and development, policy-making and etc.

The Delayed Distribution Process of Electronic Identity Cards

For the first time, practical work on E-ID project started in December 2010 as a result of contract that became signed between the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and a private company named "GTR", and it was planned to initiate the E-ID distribution process within eight month; however, this process did not became instigated due to unidentified reasons.¹

¹ See online: <http://mcit.gov.af/fa/news/273>

In March 2012, then, for the purpose of partially starting this process, an agreement became signed between MCIT and Ministry of Interior (MoI), where it was specified that the E-ID distribution process will be started within six months; however, this process also did not begin due to unknown reasons.

Apparently, one of the barriers behind implementation of this project was differences in the Population Registration Law which, however, had been approved by Wolesi Jirga [Lower House of Parliament] but former president did not sign it and left it to next president.

After formation of National Unity Government (NUG), President Ghani signed the Population Registration Law in December 2014; however, as the provision of article 6, ethnicity and nationality were not stated in Tazkira, so it faced disagreements and thus the process became more controversial.

At the end, President Ghani, after a lot of consults, ratified the adjusted version of this law as result of a legislative decree in March 2, 2017, where ethnicity, nationality and religion were included in Tazkira. Wolesi Jirga rejected this legislative decree and Meshrano Jirga [Upper House of Parliament] approved this decree and so a joint commission of both Jirgas became established which eventually approved this law; however, this problem is yet to become fully solved.

The Reasons behind Disputes on Electronic ID Cards

Mentioning or not mentioning nationality and ethnicity in E-IDs is an issue that has, apparently, encountered the distribution of E-IDs with delay and obstruction in Afghanistan. The opponents of writing of nationality argue that “Afghan” originally means Pashtun and writing Afghan as nationality for the entire people is fiction of identity. Considering the official position of Jamiat-e Islami Party, there is no need from writing ethnical identity and distraction of ID Cards under the banner of “Islamic Republic of Afghanistan” is enough.²

² See online: <http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-44003572>

On the other hand, Clause 4 of Article 4 of the Afghan constitution clearly states that “The word “Afghan” shall apply to every citizen of Afghanistan”. Therefore, the proponents of enshrining the word “Afghan” in Tazkira say that this process has not got any juridical and/or legal problem and there is no need for consults in this regard. Thus, a day after the inauguration of this process, President Ghani told to a conference: “we do not discuss what kind of constitution should we have, but we argue to implement the constitution”.³

Another reason based on which the proponents of enshrining nationality in ID cards argue is that people living in the geography of Afghanistan are officially called “Afghan” since hundreds of years and everyone who live in the geography of Afghanistan is called “Afghan” on international level; hence, promoting the nationality of Afghanistani or Khurasani is a job “impossible”. Furthermore, different ethnics are identified with one identity in different various countries; i.e. different ethnics in Uzbekistan are identified as Uzbek, in Tajikistan as Tajik and in Turkmenistan as Turkmen and etc.

The Chief Executive of government, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, during expressing his opposition against this measure, however, said that he is proud of his identity as “Afghan” and “Muslim”; but as there is no national consensus on this issue and the agreement is not made with him, so he called this process “illegitimate” and warned that continuation of this process will take the country into “crisis”.

Meanwhile, some politicians want to exploit ethnic and linguistic prejudice, especially this issue to order to campaign for themselves and increase their supporters. Therefore political leaders, in both sides, give provocative speeches.

Nevertheless, there is not any fear of anarchy or conflict seen due to the continuation of this process because there were many senior officials and national-political leaders; like chairmen of Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga, Batoor Dostum the son First Vice President Gen. Dostum, Faizullah Zaki minister of labor, social affairs, Second Vice President Sarwar Danish, Chief of the High Peace Council Karim Khalili, First Deputy of the Chief Executive, Engineer

³ See online: <http://www.bbc.com/pashto/afghanistan-44030913>

Muhammad Khan and some other important officials present in the inauguration ceremony of this process.

Looking at the social media, it looks the public opinion of ordinary Afghans, to a large extent, has changed in this regards and they do not want this issue to be discussed anymore and the difference to become deeper.

The Future of Disputes

However, the E-IDs will not be used in the upcoming Parliamentary Elections, but considering the importance of these ID Cards, besides its distribution process became initiated after several years of delay and many problems, it is counted as an important achievement.

For now, the distribution process of Paper and Electronic ID Cards will be parallel and perhaps, the end date for cancellation of P-IDs will be announced after the upcoming elections. It looks like that this problem will become solved and in next few months, the people will have to take these ID Cards.

As the Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority (ACCRA) also said, it looks like this process will not be stopped due to political disputes and stations for distributing E-Tazkira will start to operate in centers of big cities; however, it would be accompanied by challenges anyway.

The disputes in this regard now need more decisive positions; because the activities of some circles have made the peaceful resolution of this process almost impossible. For example, some people, benefiting the issues of enshrining nationality and ethnicity in E-Tazkira, talk about changing the name of “Afghanistan” into “Khurasan”, which have a possibility of making these disputes and controversies more deeper, and if this issue was led to other discourses, its elucidation would become dreadful.

Poverty and Unemployment; Consequence of the Political and Security Instability in Afghanistan



By **Zia ul Islam Shirani** / CSRS

After the US attack on Afghanistan's soil, with the establishment of new system and the presence of foreign forces in the country, thousands of institutions, corporations and other domestic and foreign private organizations began to operate in the country, and the work opportunity, then, was provided to many Afghans; but with the exit of large portion of foreign troops in 2014, as well as the increase in political and security instability in the country, the level of poverty and unemployment also became increased.

The Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan, with the technical assistance of the ICON Institute, conducted a survey of the living conditions of the Afghan people in 1395. The poll, which was distributed to the media last week (16 Sawr 1397), said that 54.5% of the population of Afghanistan is living below the poverty line, up from 16.2% in 2012. According to the survey, in 1395, the unemployment rate in Afghanistan has increased from 22% to 24%.

However, the Afghan Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has promised Afghans to create more than two million jobs in the next three years, but Afghans do not trust the fulfillment of these promises in view of the country's deteriorating situation.

The rising pace of poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan, its determinants and the strategies for reducing poverty and unemployment in the country are issues that have been addressed in this Analysis.

Rising Pace of Poverty and Unemployment

With attack of the Soviet Union on the territory of Afghanistan and the continuation of decades of war in the country, millions of Afghans have been forced to leave their country and, as a result, lost their capital, and poverty and unemployment among Afghans sharply became increased, especially during the civil war in the country.

In 2001, with the arrival of international troops in Afghanistan, billions of dollars also flowed into the country, and progress has been made in some sectors, but according to World Bank figures, poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan are not only declined in compare to poverty and unemployment in the world, but it has also been in rise.

In 2007 and 2008, 36.3% of the population of Afghanistan lived below the poverty line, but in 2011 and 2012, according to the World Bank, this percentage fell to 35.8%, which is not a significant decline. A further report by the World Bank and the Afghan government, which was scheduled for 2013 and 2014, the situation had deteriorated again, with poverty rates rose again from 35.8 percent to 39.1 percent in those years.⁴

After 2014 and the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG), considering the recent findings of the Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan (CSO), the social crisis in Afghanistan has grown since the findings of

⁴ The world bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/05/08/poverty-afghanistan-rose-amidst-troop-withdrawal-poverty-update-2017>

this survey indicate that the people's living conditions have deteriorated, and more than half of the population of Afghanistan live below the poverty line.

On the other hand, job creation efforts in the country that are directly related to poverty have failed or are at their lowest level. According to World Bank statistics, of the total workforce in Afghanistan, 4.6% of them were unemployed in 2001. In 2002 and 2003, this figure reached 4.6 and 4.9 percent. In 2004, the percentage of unemployment in the country had declined to 4.5, but in 2005 it rose again to 8.5%, after which the unemployment rate in Afghanistan has been on rise.

According to World Bank statistics, the unemployment rate in the country was 23 percent⁵ in 2014 where 2 million of the total number of work force was unemployed; however, it is 40 percent today, according to the National Labor Organization's statistics.⁶ However, the findings of the Central Statistics Organization's survey in relation to 1395 indicate that 24 percent of Afghanistan's workforce is unemployed. According to the agency's report, it is expected that 3.9 million young Afghans will reach the working age over the next five years, of which 1.6 million will enter the labor market, and according to the current level of labor participation and unemployment, around 540 thousand people will, then, be unemployed.

Why Afghans are living under Poverty and Unemployment?

Deteriorated Security Situation: Insecurities and continuation of war are one of the major factors that have faced the country with a crisis of poverty and unemployment. In addition to the escape of capital and investors from Afghanistan, the deteriorating security situation also blocked the use of funds from the Afghan ministries. Thus, the lack of investment in infrastructure sectors that have the power of recruiting the work force has encountered Afghanistan with a crisis of unemployment and poverty.

⁵For further information: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview>

⁶ For further information: <https://www.darivoa.com/a/thirty-nine-percent-of-afghans-are-jobless/4371996.html>

Political Instability: political instability and the persistence of internal disputes between the leaders of the government have led to a lack of attention to the emergence of programs and the adoption of practical measures and preventive measures to combat the phenomena of poverty and unemployment. After 2014, the leaders of NUG, despite the social crisis and the living conditions of the people of Afghanistan, were struggling with the division of government departments and political power that had a negative impact on people's living conditions.

Corruption: Political instability and internal disputes of the Afghan government have led to further corruption in governmental departments. Corruption has caused hundreds of thousands of young educated people to become unemployed and there are tens of thousands of vacancies in the government departments, or there are imaginary employees.

Decrease in Assistances of International Community: One of the other important factors in increasing poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan is the reduction of international community assistance. Over the past one a half decade, millions of dollars have been donated by the international community to Afghanistan, and it has been proven to be useful in terms of job creation and fight against poverty and unemployment, but as it was not used to provide long-term occupations, so by its declination, unemployment and poverty also rose again.

The findings of the CSO survey also indicate that insecurity, the decline in the presence of international community in Afghanistan, the influx of returnees and the reduction of international assistance with Afghanistan are among the factors that has increased poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan.⁷

Struggle against Poverty and Unemployment

Unemployment and poverty have a direct link with the adoption of practical measures, comprehensive and ideal policies and programs that create long-term employment. Afghanistan, with its rich natural resources and strategic location, is a country with many capacities and potential opportunities that can provide a good panorama for Afghans' hope and prosperity.

⁷For further information <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Surveys/ALCS/Final%20Dari%20%20ALCS%20Highlights.pdf>

Reinforcing economic growth is considered as one of the key factors in combating poverty and unemployment, which has a direct bearing on the development of industry. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to provide the appropriate conditions and environment for private sector investments and to provide job creation and employment opportunities that the Afghan government has not yet succeeded in.

On the other hand, Afghanistan is an agricultural country and its agriculture plays vital role in its economy. In a recent survey by the Afghan Central Statistics Organization, 44 percent of Afghanistan's agricultural labor force is engaged in agriculture and earns revenue from that sector. If the government paid attention to farmers for agricultural products in the country in terms of transit, finding suitable markets, raising the quality, processing and packaging, distributing fertilizers and improved agricultural seeds, and taking steps to support domestic production, the agricultural sector would contribute to economic growth and would play an important role in combating unemployment and poverty.

Generally, if a country has more economic growth, it can, in addition to creating jobs, income, and social welfare improvements in that country, also has impact on other issues such as security and peace, good governance, fighting corruption and political stability.

On the other hand, the problem of unemployment and poverty in the country, like any other program, requires peace in the country, and as long as there is no peace and security, efforts in the economic field will not have remarkable results.

The End

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