

IMRAN KHAN'S VISIT OF KABUL; GOALS AND OUTCOMES

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On November 2019, Prime Minister Imran Khan visited Kabul upon official invitation of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Pakistan's special representative for Afghanistan Sadiq Khan and ISI chief Faiz Hamid.

The visit took place as there has been an uptick in violence at national level, while no sign of an agreement between Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban in the intra-Afghan dialogue.

In this article, CSRS analyzes the impacts of Imran Khan's Visit on bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and Afghan peace process.

Purpose of the Visit

Imran Khan visited Kabul while violence has escalated at national level, and roadside bombs are targeting dozens of Afghan civilian lives every day. On the other hand, negotiations parties in Doha are yet to agree on a framework for intra-Afghan negotiations.

While the security crisis persists, Khan had a one-day visit of Afghanistan upon an official invitation of President Ashraf Ghani. Before that, Razzaq Dawood, Imran Khan's advisor of commerce and investment has discussed wide range of issues pertaining to bilateral trade facilitation and economic integration with senior

Afghan officials during his three-day visit.

As stated in Khan Agenda that the focus of visit was facilitation of Afghan peace talks with the Taliban, as well as extension of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in terms of political, security, and economic integration. As Pakistan has been struggling with serious economic problems, it is essential to increase their export to Afghanistan, which can be facilitated through this official visit. On the other hand, Pakistan is worried about India influence in Afghanistan. In his recent interview SHPAIGL, Pakistan PM Imran Khan said that he has shared his concern with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Chairman High Council for National Reconciliation Dr. Abdullah Abdullah about India's influence in Afghanistan and ask them to protect Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan by not allowing India to use Afghan soil against his country.

Pakistan side tried to get an official promise on that from Afghan official which was later jointly issued as a 'Shared vision between Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Islamic Republic of Pakistan to support peace and stability in both countries and the wider region'. The jointly issued document stated that any alignment of Afghanistan with other nations should create opportunity for the two countries that ensures interests and prevents any threat.

Afghan Peace the Main Agenda

Currently, the Afghan government and the Taliban are working on framework for peace process in Doha. On the other side, violence has been escalating absence of ceasefire has raised concerns among public. Not only that, recent attacks carried out by ISIS also threaten the peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

From the beginning of intra-Afghan peace negotiation, the Afghan government is persistently demanding a comprehensive ceasefire. However, the Taliban side are yet to agree ceasefire, while its absence has paved way for further violence in different forms, targeting only Afghan civilians. The increased violence has helped Afghan government to attract international attention, which could be used as manse pressure on Taliban to push for ceasefire. Few months ago, President Ghani shared his concern on increasing violence in Afghanistan with Imran Khan

though a telephonic conversation and asked him to use Pakistan influence over Taliban for reduction of violence.

On his visit, Mr. Khan asked from Afghan officials to let him know if there is anything that Pakistan could do in elimination of any obstacles facing Afghan peace process. Khan expressed his confidence that Pakistan will further contribute to bring peace to Afghanistan. Even though Khan's promises can strengthen the relationship between the two countries but will hardly pave the way for comprehensive ceasefire as Taliban are reluctant to do so.

During Ashraf Ghani's first visit to Pakistan in 2014, Pakistani officials strongly promised to contribute to Afghan peace. Later however, the Taliban increased their attacks on Afghan forces and even after a few years, there is no remarkable development in intra-Afghan negotiations. After Imran Khan's statements about his support from the Afghan peace, level of violence kept rising. Two days after his recent visit of Kabul, the city witnessed rocket attacks causing casualties to civilians. In addition, 17 civilians were killed and wounded on 24th November, 2020, due to a bomb blast in Bamyán Province.

Outcomes

In addition to its effects on the Afghan peace, the bilateral agreement between both countries can facilitate improvement in bilateral relations. The agreement states that officials of both countries will increase visits in order to sustain constructive relations. In this regard, Prime minister Imran Khan invited President Ghani to visit Pakistan, which will take place in the first three months of the next year. Such actions can reconstruct the bilateral relations between both countries.

Additionally, coordination between the intelligence agencies of both countries so that the enemies of peace can be prevented through mutual cooperation. Also, in order to resolve immigrants' related matters according to interests of both countries, several meetings will be conducted between officials of both countries in January, 2021. Furthermore, Although US Special Representative Zalmi Khalilzad has expressed about establishing a special fund in south and middle Asia in order to attract investments for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, but considering the current circumstances, it seems improbable. However, its

occurrence can help the peace process and can consequently have a positive impact on the region. Overall, improvement in bilateral links between both countries can not only help the peace process, but can be profitable for economic development of the region. Meanwhile, Pakistan needs stay committed to the bilateral agreement in order to reduce its economic problems.

Reference

1. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1591240/pakistan-will-do-everything-possible-to-reduce-violence-in-afghanistan-says-pm-imran-on-maiden-kabul-visit>
2. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1591523/us-to-launch-regional-funds-for-pakistan-afghanistan-and-uzbekistan>



AFGHANISTAN AND INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



International day of persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is celebrated on 3rd December every year since 1992. The day aims to support laws, rights and well-being of disabled people. In addition, it seeks to increase awareness of gains and inclusion of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. The United Nations presents a theme for the IDPD every year, under which, all operations related to support of disabled people are carried out. The theme this year is “Building Back Better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World”, which is inspired UN’s agenda of sustainable development 2015-2030.¹

Condition of Persons with Disability in Afghanistan

Disabled or handicapped people are those who have a condition that restrict their ability to function physically and mentally (come about before or after birth), making them incapable to arrange necessities of life for themselves. It is estimated that around 500 million people experience some form of disability².

On 23rd January, 2020, the International Committee of Red cross (ICRC)P of Afghanistan announced that more than one million people suffer from disability

¹ <https://www.imna.ir/news/399266>

² <https://www.imna.ir/news/399266/%D8%B1%B2-%D8%A2%B0%D8%B1-%D8%B1>

in Afghanistan and thousands more are added to the number each year. A bulletin of the United Nations has stated that 10% of disabilities in Afghanistan are caused by injuries of war, while the remaining 90% are the result of birth defect, and post-birth diseases and occurrences. Recently, the number of disabilities caused by wounds of war have elevated remarkably. In 2019, Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz, former minister of Public Health declared that level of disabilities has increased in the country, and 3% to 5% people of Afghanistan are suffering from some type of disability. He added that war, diseases, accidents and birth defects are the main the main causes of disabilities in Afghanistan³.

Disability affects individuals and families socially, economically, and mentally. The ICRC works along with the government and other establishments in order to reduce effects of disability on the lives of people in the country. It is among the largest organizations of the world serving to trigger rise in living standards of disabled people in Afghanistan and other countries. The organization provides more than 100 thousand disabled people with various equipment every year.

The Independent commission of Human rights and Independent Administrative Reforms and Civil Service Commission has developed new procedures for recruiting persons with disability, as at least 3% of the public servants should be persons with disability, according to the Constitution of Afghanistan⁴. Unfortunately, governmental bodies are rarely willing to hire disabled people. Despite the fact that discrimination of any sort is prohibited by the constitution, but discrimination towards persons with disability exists in most of the governmental and private establishments, either deliberately or inadvertently. One of the main problems of people with disability is absence of educational opportunities. Negligence of relative governmental bodies has made them incompetent of occupying positions, consequently, pulling them back from competing with others.

Challenges and Obstacles

The following are among the challenges for disabled people in the country:

³ <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/Persian/Afghanistan-46973600/amp>

⁴ <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/Persian/Afghanistan-50622937/amp>

- Problem of Movement and transportation: it is one of the main challenges for disabled people, as they move or get transported for one part of city to another with difficulty. The public transport does not provide essential help for them, while cost of private transporting vehicles i.e. Taxis and others is higher than what they can afford.
- Unemployment: according to the constitution of Afghanistan, at least 3% of employees of the government should be disabled people. However, the law has not been implemented due to discrimination, corruption, lack of awareness in society.
- Conduct of society: caused by some poor traditions of society when it comes to dealing with people with disability, disabled people shows lesser vitality in society. Lack of attention of the government and the people has destroyed their self-confidence and is holding them back from developing their skills.
- Rising number of beggars is another problem among the persons with disability. Due to indigence, their own interest, or via premeditated planning of mafias, most of the disabled people keep begging. As a result, it has reduced their respect and dignity in the society and are therefore considered as burden on shoulders of society.
- In addition, persons with disability are facing financial difficulties and absence of a source of income. Most of them are deprived from education and opportunities of capacity and personality development. Although the State Ministry of martyrs and disabled affairs serves disabled people by providing them with a stipend amount, but that too is for those who have been disabled due to war. It does not include maternal and incidental disabilities.

- Lack of access to educational institutions and deprivation from scholarship opportunities are other problems facing persons with disabilities. According to article 43 of the constitution of Afghanistan, attaining at least bachelor degree is the right of every citizen. In addition, article 19 of the law of rights and opportunities for disables has predicted that 7% of participants of government scholarships and 7% of students of private institutions should be disabled people. However, they have been provided with very little of the percentage due to various undesirable reasons.⁵
- Lastly, women in girls with disability are living comparatively more challenging lives. Being women and disables doubles their challenges in society.

Recommended Solutions:

In order to reduce challenges for person with disabilities, a lot of work and longstanding support of the government and cooperation of the people is required. The following can be considered as basic points in this regard:

1. Public Awareness

Problems and challenges being faced by disabled can be reduced with public awareness and acculturation. To do so, the media should play a key role by consistently sharing awareness messages in order to increase awareness and improve public's conduct towards persons with disability. Additionally, schools and mosques can also play a constructive role in this regard.

2. Government's Support

The Afghan government should increase the stipend amount allocated for disabled people. In addition, the government should be able to provide financial assistance for war-affected and all other type of persons with disability in long-run. Disabled people should also be provided with discount cards, facilitated

⁵ <http://www.dailyafghanistan.com/national-detail.php?post-id=141544>

transportation, education and other needs for living. They should be assured of their legal rights of employment and scholarship opportunities.

3. Capacity Development

Opportunities of skills development for disabled people should be provided by considering all of their relative activities. In this regard, various trainings and educational programs should be conducted, which should include elaboration through pictures and sign language. In addition, sports centers should be established for physical training of disabled people.

4. Establishing Peaceful Environment in the Country

The war has affected all people of our country. However, it has comparatively higher impact on persons with disability. Persistence of war and insecurities will not only increase the number of disabled people, but will cease opportunities to support disabled people to attain their rights. As long as there is war in the country, improvement in the lives of people with disabilities cannot be expected. Therefore, end of war and national reconciliation is the key for all types of development and prosperity for the people of Afghanistan.



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