Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan: Need for Regional and Global Responses

A profound humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is emerging primarily from long-standing armed conflict, massive population migration and devastating food insecurity. For the last many decades, the country has been seen as an undeveloped and poor nation. The economy, governance, and healthcare system seem to be a mare’s nest. Currently, as many as 5 million Afghans are displaced either as refugees in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Iran or as Internally Displaced Persons within Afghanistan. The needs of a large number of refugees that may remain in Pakistan and Iran cannot be ignored. However, with low or no humanitarian consensus and space in Afghanistan due to the ongoing conflict even within ranks of the Taliban and other key stakeholders, the civilian population is at risk.

There is a need to respect the dignity of the people of Afghanistan in terms of providing them health and education facilities coupled with other civic amenities. Moreover, they need to live in peace and harmony while earning their livelihoods. Immediately amid ensuing harsh winters, they need humanitarian assistance, medical care, food, shelter and security against impending fears of violence and terrorism.

While the global community may not be recognising the Taliban regime in Kabul due to geopolitical interests, it needs to come forward to help almost two-third of the Afghan population facing marginalisation, extreme poverty, and multiple humanitarian crises. The global community should realize that it is NOT the fault of millions of Afghans that the Taliban have captured power; and hence, the people of Afghanistan should not be forced to suffer due to the undeclared but de facto sanctions against the Taliban regime. Failing the people of Afghanistan while (rightly) taking a hard stance against the Taliban regime may not dent the latter’s position, but it will certainly hit the local people hard. The West should seriously think about how best they can save the Afghan people from the impacts of such de facto sanctions which include:

- ‘The freezing by the United States of nearly $9.5 billion in assets and bank accounts that Afghanistan has abroad;
- The de-linking of Afghan banking system from the rest of the world;
- The deferment of foreign aid and loans for development activities; and
- The refusal by Poland and France to print Afghanistan’s currency, Afghani, which they were doing before the Taliban takeover’ (Suleri and Khan 2021).

To ease the situation, the Taliban regime also needs to take action to exhibit to the world what it had promised in terms of establishing an inclusive Afghan government and respecting human rights.

Pakistan has been stressing that stability in Afghanistan is essential for security and stability of the region. In fact, both Pakistan and China have the leverage to fill in some of the gaps by supporting the Taliban and taking others on board to save the people of Afghanistan from the harsh winter and food insecurity.

To understand the state of humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, its impact on the Afghans, the region
and regional and global responses to improve the humanitarian situation in the war-torn country, in this session, experts and diplomats from key countries will address the following questions:

- What is the current humanitarian situation in Afghanistan amid the harsh winter; and how can global humanitarian actors and donors offer the people of Afghanistan security, medical care, schooling, and other civic amenities?
- Can the de facto sanctions - freezing of bank accounts, etc. - work to force Taliban to fulfill their pledges on an inclusive and multi-ethnic mix in the government?
- What can the global community offer to the people of Afghanistan to protect them from the humanitarian crisis without recognising the Taliban regime?
- What could work best in terms of Pakistan’s Afghan policy that bridges the gap between the stances of the Taliban and global powers?
- How can countries in the region handle the refugee crisis under humanitarian measures?

Reference

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