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## Harsh winter is deadly for Afghan poor masses but the govt neglect is too irksome

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The winter season is going on, but the poor Afghan masses have no capacity to eke out daily needs, while in the past a number of children were killed among the families and those who are living in camps.

Several Afghan poor masses are living in mud-made shelters and lacking firewood's in freezing temperatures outside their shelters that usually leads to the death of children, and women.

Winter season is more devastating than suicide bombings as it claims several lives of refugees in camps every year.

The last winter was ended up with killing of 100 children in numerous refugee camps in the outskirts of Kabul, while this year cold weather claimed 17 Afghan lives across the country. It does mean the government and the international humanitarian bodies delivered winter packages on time or came up measures to overcome the incidents taken place in the past year, but actually this time around the nature was a bit kind to them as this winter was not that much chillier as compare to the previous one.

Some of the families living in make-shift arrangements in Kabul and Herat provinces lost their children and girls to the winter. In Afghanistan, currently, there are half a million internally displaced people, said Amnesty International in Afghanistan.

Though, the winter throw a defense blanket around the country as in chilly weather militants hardly dare to attack as many of the insurgents die while en route to biggest cities in their way because of extreme cold. But the harsh cold spell usually take a heavy toll on civilian as well as snowfall, avalanches and continued freezing weather have claimed the lives of around thousands of people across the country.

Just look around at the refugee camps and you will easily find out small mud-made shelters covered only with a tattered tarpaulin roof that a family can hardly endure living in, having small dingy rooms with no mattress or cushions.

Ajmal Nasim, a resident in a refugee camp in the capital Kabul said that last year due to meager resource and extreme cold several children were killed and several others were hit by chronic diseases.

“During the winter, we are facing shortages of food items as we have no food to eat and we are bound to starve for days”.

The last winter, there was a refugee, who lost his son and a brother, but due to extreme poverty the dead bodies remained at home for days as he was not finding the means for their funeral and burial, he added.

He worried about the current winter, pointed that if aid is not delivered in time by the government and non-governmental organizations, or well-off Afghans, its feared more children will die this year.

In the past 15 years the last year’s winter was the worst one as officials concerned recorded 41 deaths only in IDPs camps Kabul, Ghoar, and Badakhshan provinces due to freezing cold. Most of the IDPs have fled their native villages for fear of insecurity, Taliban’s intimidations and the ongoing military operations against militants. For shelter they go to relatively safer places where they are hit by a plethora of other challenges including starvation, diseases, joblessness and extreme cold.

According to UN refugee agency, there are 460,000 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in the country. Nearly 35,000 of them live in the 54 IDPs camps in Kabul, the capital city.

As previously UN High Commissioner for Refugee Protection Officer said that Afghanistan continues to be challenged by conflict, poverty and lack of development, but despite that there is a criminal inertia on the part of the government organizations supposed to be working for the welfare of the IDPs.

The health condition of the IDPs and returnees very dilapidated as there is no proper health care mechanism and as well as no proper food aid. So, in the absence of medical care and balanced food, they are faced with a number of health challenges where some of them are the deadliest ones.

The last year due to dehydration and diarrhea illnesses several of IDPs lost their lives in the camps. Children, women and elderly were the worst victims.

Here is a striking point in IDPs conflict. Among the IDPs some of them are the Taliban as well who usually come to live in make-shit camps in provinces and at nighttimes, the Taliban kill those who goes against their wishes. They have shown no mercy even to children, and women. Taliban violence is inescapable that's why there has been a sharp increase in the number of IDPs who usually turn their face to Kabul. They Taliban has placed bombs in children's toys within camps as well as cut off women's hands for their jewelry.

The government and international donors should make serious efforts to make sure that aid is delivered to the needy families, while there are reports that in Herat province the provincial government had extended no aid to the IDPs. In response to the reports the officials concerned said they didn't give any aid to the IDPs for fear of their prolong stay in the camps and if aid is kept continue they will never return to their respective areas. Here, the officials seem to have taken an inhuman course while knowing not what it is to be an IDP and what is to face the harsh winter while without no firewood and no edibles at camps.

What happened in the past could be called the disregard of the government and concerned officials. Yes, precious human lives could be saved but given that there is aid and other packages. Sans any support and aid hundreds of lives lost are prone to loss in the extreme winter in the country. When suicide bombings, militancy and other evils have already turned our life into an inferno at least the lives of IDPs should be made somehow comfortable as unlike tackling with militancy, dealing with the issue of IDPs is not that much a challenging job.

The government should take concrete steps in a bid to prevent casualties during the cold weather, and it would be a shame for wealthy Afghans and concerned officials if loss lives of Afghan poor masses did not stop during cold winters. They should provide humanitarian assistance to the IDPs and other needy poor masses nationwide.

Some of the Afghan traders usually leave Kabul due to harsh winter and opt to live in Dubai, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan and other countries to spend their winter holidays. Spending thousands of dollars without while never think about those left in IDPs camps. Then, at least, who will think about their fate? Are they the children of a lesser God?

They don't have knowledge that they can save lives of those who are in camps by providing humanitarian aid to them. Today if you save other lives don't forget that tomorrow in emergency situation there would be someone, you helped, would save yours.