



The Unfortunate Reality of the Afghan Widows

The Afghan Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) said on 23th June 2019 that more than 500 thousand widows are living right now in Afghanistan. Among them are 70 thousand, who are their family's breadwinner. About 50 % of them do handicraft and 37 % working in offices as cleaners or kitchens helpers. These women are treated unfairly in their workplaces and are also still poorly paid. Most of the Afghan widows lose their husbands as a result of the current endless war in their country.

The United Nations (UN) observes the 23rd of June as the International Widows Day. They want allegedly to draw attention to the voices and experiences of widows and to galvanize the unique support that they need. Just the UN forgets to mention that vast numbers of women are widowed due to armed conflict and thanks to the colonial wars which are led by the United States and their supporters and helpers. According to the Loomba Foundation's World Widows Report 2015, there are an estimated 258 million widows around the world with 584 million children (including adult children). The number is likely to have risen until today. The biggest jump has been in the Middle East and North Africa where the estimated number of widows rose 24 % between 2010 and 2015, due to the Syrian war and other conflicts.

Worldwide widows struggle to care for themselves and their children in their own countries, refugee camps or countries of asylum. In the war areas, many women experienced the horror on earth before they become widows. They see their husbands tortured, mutilated or suffering other cruel and inhuman treatment. Widows often become themselves the subject to conflict-related violence, including sexual violence as a tactic of war.

In addition to the problem of women losing their husbands during the war conflicts, they continue to experience other discomforts due to their new living conditions and cultural customs which make their life even more difficult than it already is.

According to the Loomba Foundation's World Widows Report 2015, one in seven widows globally (38 million) is living in extreme poverty. In Afghanistan poverty forces widows to withdraw their children from school, exposing them to exploitation in child labor, prostitution, forced marriage, trafficking, and sale. Most of the widows in Afghanistan are illiterate. They are ill-equipped for gainful employment and remain for years without access to adequate food and shelter. Afghan widows and their children often suffer ill health and malnutrition, lacking the means to obtain appropriate health care or other forms of support.

Sometimes these poor women are labeled as "bad guys" because they often do not have the guards to protect them and so they are exposed to many kinds of violence. According to the United Nations report 2014, more than a quarter of Afghanistan's widowed women interviewed after the deaths of their husbands have experienced violence. The difficult life of a wife after her husband's death causes widows to face many mental problems. Livelihood pressures, breeding children, re-marriage, family pressure, and sexual abuse sometimes lead widows to commit suicide. According to Afghanistan's Human Rights Commission studies, 32 % of widows are afflicted with mental disorders and 22 % have acute physical problems.

In some areas of Afghanistan, a widow is forced to marry a close male relative of her late husband. If the widows' husband's families don't have any son, the widow is nevertheless barred from marrying outside the husband's home. Or in other areas often it is culturally unacceptable for a man to marry a widow or for a widow to remarry. In many cases, men who intend to marry widows do not accept the offspring of a widowed woman, or if they accept, they don't fulfill their promise after marriage and force the woman to abandon her children.

On the other side, afghan widows are confronted with the failed democratic laws and empty promises. Thus Article 53 of Afghanistan's Constitutional Law articulates a guarantee that the rights and privileges, as well as assistance to women without caretakers and needy orphans, will

be ensured. But in reality Afghanistan does not have any policy on widows and there are no rights and no privileges for them. So around the world, millions of widows routinely experience violations of their rights and no-one cares really about this issue.

In summary, nowadays there is no government which can provide the helpless widow women a real protection. Only through the Khilafah on the Method of the Prophethood and an Islamic society it is possible for a widow to get her rights, her privileges and her honor as a widow. Thus, it is the obligation of the Khilafah to fulfill the needs of all its citizens. A widow and her children will get the financial, educational and medical support which they need. Furthermore, Islam gives the widow and her children a high status in the society.

Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported that the Prophet (saw) said,

«الساعي على الأرملة والمسكين كالمجاهد في سبيل الله، وأحسبه قال: وكالقائم الذي لا يفتر، وكالصائم الذي لا يفطر»

“One who strives to help the widows and the poor is like the one who fights in the way of Allah.” The narrator said: I think that He (saw) also: **“I shall regard him as the one who stands up (for prayer) without rest and as the one who observes fasts continuously”** (Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim). So efforts for the care of a widow, support and welfare have been regarded equivalent to Jihad. Islam has done full justice in supporting the helpless individuals and the entire poor class of the society by elevating the status of those who undertake this noble task to the level of Mujahidun.

This means that Islam, unlike today's traditions, supports the remarriage of a widow. A Muslim who marries a vulnerable widowed woman and is not anxious to find the most beautiful Huris on earth clearly improves his path to the Akhirah.

Furthermore, Islam motivates for the care of the orphans.

Abu Hurairah (ra) reported Allah's Messenger (saw) as saying, «خَيْرُ بَيْتٍ فِي الْمُسْلِمِينَ بَيْتٌ فِيهِ يَتِيمٌ» **“The best house among the Muslims is one where an orphan is well treated, and the worst house among the Muslims is one where an orphan is badly treated.”**

Abu Omamah also reported that the Messenger of Allah (saw) stated, «مَنْ مَسَحَ رَأْسَ يَتِيمٍ لَمْ يَمْسَحْهُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ، كَانَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ شَعْرَةٍ مَرَّتْ عَلَيْهَا يَدُهُ حَسَنَاتٌ، وَمَنْ أَحْسَنَ إِلَى يَتِيمَةٍ أَوْ يَتِيمٍ عِنْدَهُ، كُنْتُ أَنَا وَهُوَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ كَهَاتَيْنِ»، وَقَرَنَ بَيْنَ «Whoever caresses the head of an orphan (in affection), solely for the sake of Allah, a good deed will be written to his account for every hair over which he passed his hand, and whoever treated an orphan (boy or girl) with goodness and kindness, he and I will be close to each-other in Heaven as these two fingers” The Prophet (saw) made a gesture with his fingers as explained above.

Thus the Ummah should not only feel compassion for these poor women, but they should be fully conscious of the fact that these women are their mothers, their sisters and their daughters! They should not take it lightly that today's colonial war is destroying the lives of these fares, and that today's immoral traditions are lowering the heads of this women and frustrating them. The suffering and discrimination of orphans should put a sting in the hearts of the Ummah! For all these reasons, the Muslims should direct their concentration from their own glorious and beautiful lives on these helpless individuals, and as long as Allah (swt) has given them time, they should do their best to stand up for the oppressed!

The misery of the widowed women in Afghanistan and worldwide can only find an end when the Ummah works together for a true and real solution, namely the reestablishing of the Khilafah upon the Method of the Prophethood! «مَنْ فَرَّجَ عَنْ أَخِيهِ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ الدُّنْيَا فَرَّجَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ» **“Whoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allah will remove from him one of the griefs of the Day of Judgment”** (Saheeh Muslim)

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