

Kabul Diaries Part 15 & 16 : Afghanistan is on an undeclared general strike since Taliban occupation

After forbidding perfume for women, Taliban to ban inciteful kebab

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[Jeddojehad } (Struggle), a left-wing, online Urdu-language daily in Pakistan, is posting reports from Kabul. Filed by Yasmeen Afghan (not the author's real name), these reports depict the picture from inside Kabul and cover what is often ignored in the mainstream media. For a wider circulation, these reports are translated to English.



Solidarity protest in Nepal with Afghan women, on September 25. Photo : @VDay/Twitter

On August 15, the Taliban entered Kabul. Only a day before, the whole sprawling city was operating normally, despite the fear that the Taliban were at the gates.

Students had gone to their schools and universities while government employees went to their respective offices. The passport department, traffic police, banks and the United Nations offices were operating amid the fears of a Taliban takeover.

On August 15, news channels across the world aired the breaking news : “Taliban entered Kabul, Taliban in the presidential palace, Taliban in the police headquarters...”

For the next few days, residents of Kabul stayed home out of fear and uncertainty. However, some brave women and men took to the streets to protest and demand their rights. Yes, they also went to grocery stores for groceries.

But surprisingly, despite the repeated requests by the Taliban to former government employees [to return to work], a majority has stayed home. It seems as if Kabul and the rest of Afghanistan is on general strike ever since the Taliban occupation. The outside world has not yet noticed that the whole country is actually on a strike. At least, there is a “tools down” situation on a mass level.

The government offices are mostly occupied by the Taliban who do not know how to run it and need the assistance of the former employees to even operate a computer. But the former government employees have largely stayed home despite the repeated calls of the Taliban regime.

Wajiha (not her real name) is a doctor by profession and worked at the Rabia Balkhi hospital. She told me : “Even though the Taliban repeatedly called us back to work and even though we know that our people need us, yet many lady doctors didn’t return to their jobs, in reality it was saying no' to the Taliban takeover.” She added: “Who wants to work under a brutal regime whose only purpose is humiliating and terrorizing Afghans? Some like me still want to work, but I don’t know how long. I also support the others to not work under this regime.” Some employees have returned to their jobs, like some teachers, doctors, former employees, but a large number of employees stay away. For over a month, this undeclared strike has paralysed the country. This shows how alienated the Taliban regime is. A teacher from the Makroryan area in Kabul told me on condition of anonymity: “I am a teacher at one of the private schools in Kabul. When the Taliban announced that primary students can return to their classes, it was surprising that not only did the majority of the teachers not return to their jobs, but the majority of the students are still staying home. Every class has four or six students, while we usually had 25 to 27 students.” Her husband, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity, added: “I work for one of the government ministries. The employees were asked to return, but the majority are not coming to their jobs, just like me. Who wants to be humiliated on a daily basis or to be headed by an illiterate Mullah?” He added further: “It’s not easy, as we have financial problems too, but we also need to silently sayno’ to these barbarians. They cannot operate anything without us and we also cannot work under their command, so we are staying away.”

Meanwhile, Kabul university faculty had given an ultimatum to the Taliban to change their approach towards higher education and replace their mullahs with educated professors, besides allowing women students to return. The Taliban refused to budge. Hence, 70 university professors resigned and the majority of the male students are also staying home.

Yasmeen Afghan

Kabul

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<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/kabul-diaries-part-15-afghanistan-undeclared-general-strike-taliban-occupation>

Kabul Diaries Part 16 : After forbidding perfume for women, Taliban to ban inciteful kebab



A year before Kabul and Afghanistan were overrun by the Taliban, sections of the Western media were trying to portray the Taliban as a reformed force.

The *New York Times* even ran an op-ed by Anas Haqqani, and in this way gave the Taliban a platform for their recognition as Taliban 2.0. More importantly, an impression was created that, once the United States and NATO forces withdrew and the Ashraf Ghani administration reached a peace deal with the Taliban, the latter would be committed to women's rights, human rights, freedom of expression, etc.

As soon as the Taliban entered Kabul on August 15, the worst fears and suspicions proved true.

In fact, the Taliban have become violent and aggressive with each passing day as they consolidate their grip over Afghanistan. They are reintroducing their strict religious rules of the 1996-2001 period. The notion of Taliban 2.0 has evaporated into thin air within one and half months.

The "changed" Taliban banned secondary education for girls, higher education for women university students and women teachers, citing security reasons, while co-education, protests and women's sports have been banned. Likewise, shelter homes for abused women are vanishing, women are not allowed to return to their jobs, freedom of media has been curtailed, and the list goes on.

Recently, a Talib, Fazalhaq Samadi, stated in a Tolo TV round table that there are a special set of conditions for women : they cannot wear attractive and colourful clothes, they cannot apply perfume when leaving the house, they cannot wear high heels, because all that incites the men.

Responding to Samadi's statement, an Afghan on Twitter, Zaher Omar, stated : "The whole world must know what's going on in Afghanistan. This is Taliban 2.0. Girls don't even have the right to choose their shoes. Still, do you think the Taliban have changed ? Wake up please."

Likewise, another user, Tamina, tweeted : "Their way of rationalizing the irrational and how they all follow each other in their delusional behaviours is mind blowing."

Monica Afghan commented on her Facebook wall : "May God destroy you with your stupid thoughts. The world has reached Mars and are talking about technology and look at him."

Asenat Asey commented under a post related to this viral clip : "I have prepared a red dress for my first day of university, I will wear high heels and wear perfume, though I have never wore such dresses but I want to tell this Mullah that whatever you emphasize on, the opposite will happen. Shame on your mentality !"

Nilofar (not their real name), a resident of Kabul, told me : "The reason that the Taliban are only focusing on women is because they are fundamentally against women.« Abdul Wahab (not their real name), another resident of Kabul, told me : "These are the changed Taliban that the Doha agreement imposed on Afghans. I am sure in the next couple of months they will become even more brutal and inhumane. »

Afghans did not merely protest, Samadi's statement also triggered their humour. A satirical tweet that attracted considerable attention stated in Persian : "Taliban are banning Afghan nan and grill kebab too because their smell is inciteful for the poor."

The social media outrage forced the Taliban to respond to this negative PR, and Samadi has now posted a video stating that he does not represent the Islamic Emirate and that these were his personal views.

The Taliban's prime aim is to target Afghan women ; they are introducing harsh rules for women, they want to make them invisible, decolourise them. They are punishing women socially, educationally and economically, but Afghan women are fighting fiercely against these medieval forces and will not bow to their inhumane conditions.

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Kabul

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