A message from Ali Reza Yasa, Chairman and Founder

Star's quality control team conducted an in-depth comparative analysis held in three long sessions to determine which textbooks are best for our students. The decision was made to abandon the New Interchange system that we have been using since 2008 and replace it with Oxford University Press' American English File. During these past eight years, despite the effectiveness and efficiency of the New Interchange system, we discovered the need to adopt a more up-to-date, timely and interactive system. American English File Second Edition follows the popular methodology developed by world-renowned authors Christina Latham-Koenig and Clive Oxenden: language = motivation = opportunity. The textbooks contain grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice in every lesson and allow students to develop a solid foundation for successful speaking. This system is best designed to meet the needs and demands of the young Afghan generation.

American English File is a series of six books – Starter, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5. The books were first used in Kabul by the American University of Afghanistan. Previously the books were not readily available in Kabul book markets but now local bookstores have them available on their shelves. This new system requires professional instructors who are not only trained but possess a higher level of language awareness and pronunciation practice in every lesson to be able to apply in their classes. The Second Edition is even more student and teacher-friendly, with an updated design and 75% new content for improved visual appeal and topics that will engage and motivate students. With this new system the semester will be shorter, the tuition fee will be reduced and a student-centered approach to the command of the topics they study in each 40-day semester. An absolute beginner can complete the courses in English language including introductory, elementary, intermediate and advanced in parts. Three to four units will be covered in each 40-day semester. An absolute beginner can complete the courses in English language including introductory, elementary, intermediate and advanced in a total of sixteen 40-day semesters. It will take an absolute beginner less than two years to complete the Diploma of English Language and graduate from Star. Our graduates will be capable of taking TOEFL preparation courses and will be ready to attend universities with English as the medium of instruction. Another advantage of this system is that language learners benefit from numerous workbooks which are supported by audio and video CDs aimed at promoting students' command of the topics they study in classes. The new system will be adopted in B-1 semester of Star starting from the new classes in A Branch. Books are available both at Star offices and bookstores around the city.

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The voice from the mirror

I sat in the corner of my dark room which had no window, no sunshine, and no bad's voice in the morning. I had not combed my curly hair in four days. I liked to sleep more and more. I wished my mom would not wake me up. I did not want to listen to any songs, or see any people. I even hated to look at my paint-ings and wanted... Page 2

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300 Afghan Students, Teachers Speak out Against Street Harassment

To commemorate International Anti-Street Harassment Week, Free Women Writers, an Afghan blog for social justice and gender equality, called on people... Page 6
The voice from the mirror

I sat in the corner of my dark room which had no window, no sunshine, and no bird’s voice in the morning. I had not combed my curly hair in four days. I liked to sleep more and more. I wished my mom would not wake me up. I did not want to listen to any songs, or see any people. Even hatred to look at my paintings and wanted to burn them all. I had never felt as depressed as I did in these days.

My mobile phone’s cover was decorated with orange and white and I had colored them in gray and black to match my dark mood. I received a notification alerting me to a message. I didn’t want to check it. As I started to turn off the screen, another message arrived. Suddenly, it opened and I saw a text from my friend. He was fighting a deep depression. Although our situations were the same, I did not tell him about my condition because he expected me to counsel him like a psychologist.

I started to counsel him to help him return to his normal life and job. I searched for information on the internet on how to reduce depression. He had terrible anxiety. He said that he had attempted suicide the previous night. I knew he was depressed because of Afghanistan’s tragic situation. Bomb explosions every day tormented him. I had to help him, so I sent him a message with many motivational quotes and sayings. After one week he improved and resumed his job and normal life. I am a good psychologist for others but not for myself. I provided advice for many people but I still suffered because I didn’t have any friend like myself to help calm and comfort my soul.

I could not talk to my best friend, Mari, because she was pregnant. Although I knew she understands me, I didn’t want to make her sad and think about my life and depression because I knew that every sadness has negative effects on a pregnant woman. I could not tell my sisters because I act like there is nothing wrong and everything is fine when they come on weekends. They don’t even ask me why I look depressed. I couldn’t tell my other friends about my condition because I was his love and I knew he still loves me and can’t forget me. I told him about my condition because I was his love and it would hurt him deeply. I wish I were only his best friend.

It was 1:00 am. Suddenly, the face of the curly-haired girl from my painting came to my mind. I thought she could feel me. I carried forward my situation. I decided to tell her about my sad, depressed and boring days. I wanted to open my soul to her. I hate the darkness. I hate my failures, my wishes, my screams, my silence and weakenesses. I opened the door to enter the room with the painting of the curly-haired girl. She was too quiet and sad. I started to tell her about all the pain in my soul. One hour passed, but I didn’t hear any response from her. She even did not open her eyes. They were closed like always and she did not shake her head to indicate that she could hear me.

It was 2:00 am. I looked at her. She was quiet. Her face was made up with bluish red lipstick. Her hair was as curly as my depressed days. I knew that eyes are the windows to everyone’s soul and that human’s eyes are the doors to explain their condition. Although her eyes were closed like always, I knew that her closed eyes, made up face, curly hair, curved eyebrows, and the black bird always around her said that she is busy with her own soul and crowded life. How could she help me? Does she have the same condition as me? I wished she could tell me about her silence. I wish I were a good psychologist for her.

I was feeling lonely and disappointed that no one could help me. I came to my room and fell asleep. Day after day, I faced my boring mornings and my depression continued to increase. I did not like fresh colors. I didn’t like the color green anymore. I didn’t like to wear different clothes, makeup, my high-heeled shoes or my nice scarves. When I went out, I wore colorless scarves and no makeup. When my friends saw me, they commented on how tired I looked in those days and asked why I didn’t wear my beautiful scarfs. They knew this was out of character for me because I was normally very stylish and well-dressed.

One night after two weeks, when all were asleep, I heard a voice calling me, "Shaista... Shaista...” I didn’t care about the voice. I was cleaning the dusty mirror in my room. That morning my mom said, “Shaista, please clean your dusty mirror, how can you see your face?” She didn’t know that I had not seen my face for one month.

When I cleaned the mirror, I heard the voice clearly and loudly. I decided to talk about the things that only I knew. She told me how to be close with Allah. Suddenly, the power was cut while she was talking. The voice disappeared. "Be your own psychologist and control your depression," were the last words that I heard. Then I wondered why the soft and spirited voice went mute when the power was cut. I finally understood that the voice I heard was from the mirror.

Day after day, I faced my boring mornings and my depression continued to increase. I did not like fresh colors. I didn’t like the color green anymore. I didn’t like to wear different clothes, makeup, my high-heeled shoes or my nice scarves. When I went out, I wore colorless scarves and no makeup. The voice was still calling and I was a little afraid of the voice. I covered my ears with my hands but the voice became louder, “Shaista, Shaista. Do You Hear Me...?" When I cleaned the mirror, I heard the voice clearly and loudly. I decided to talk about the things that only I knew. She told me how to be close with Allah. Suddenly, the power was cut while she was talking. The voice disappeared. “Be your own psychologist and control your depression,” were the last words that I heard. Then I wondered why the soft and spirited voice went mute when the power was cut. I finally understood that the voice I heard was from the mirror.

I am woman

I am a woman living in a country where the first word is "war." It is my country. It is your country. My country, my homeland and my beautiful house has so far witnessed three decades of war, bloodshed and destruction. I am living in a country that is known as the biggest prison for women. What can I do? I am a woman. Many Afghans believe that women can’t do anything. I wish I had wings to fly. I wish to fly in a storm sky. I wish there would be an amethystine flower - it is me, full of life. Finally, I am the woman who lives in my country and my beautiful house. It is your country. My country, even my tears were heartbroken. The cottage of my dreams was lost in a dreadful forest. The freshness of rain no longer restored my heart. Prosperity and smiles had flown away, harbored in self-immolation, suicide. If sadness released me from its deadly shadow, I would laugh in my heart. But I can’t forget I am #Farkhondeh, #Aisha, #Shukria and #Rokhshana. Immolation is my right. Violation is my punishment. Stoning is my destiny and nose cutting is the tradition. I am a woman and being far from my mother is my destiny. My sin and fault is admirng love. Do I deserve to be beaten? Must I be beheaded or stored to death?

Far from being my father’s daughter, my wants and emotions were not allowed to me although my heart needs its care until it blesses the coast memorial to me. He sold me to an old man - cruel, emotionless, and pleasure-seeking! This was my life. My light no longer shined, just a dim candle was burning and, drip by drip, I was melting away into darkness. Until now, like Rokhshana and Aisha, I was suffering and burning, but today is not my yesterday. I have beautified today as beautiful as the birthday of an amethystine flower - it is me, full of perfume and the sunbeams of hope on a dark and shadowy day.

I break the surrounding wall of brutality around me. Passing this bloody red line is not easy for me. My interpretation of eternal life is a peaceful life. Because I am a woman like Farkhondah, and I am seyah sar, who with the ocean of emotion and hundreds of hopes will free my caged heart and will shine in all the world. Finally, I am the woman who is despised.

O Sarya sar, literally meaning ‘black hair,’ is a pejorative term in Afghanistan used for women to indicate their weakness and inferiority.

Shaista Langari, Me and gray sky, 2016. Oil on paper.
The resignation of Yusuf Nuristani, the head of Independent Election Commission (IEC) has complicated the electoral reform process. Afghanistan’s electoral reform process has been marred by multiple controversies and continues to be overshadowed by competing political interests and increasing insecurity around the country.

The current power play surrounding the process has become a stumbling block to reform. As a key part of the NUG’s political agreement, Special Electoral Reform Commission (SERC) was formed in June 2015 and tasked to come up with recommendations for electoral reform. The two sets of recommendations put forward by SERC were endorsed by the NUG and went to legislature for approval. However, these recommendations were voted off by the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) on 21 and 26 December 2015, mainly reflecting the political tension between the NUG and parliament. In response to Wolesi Jirga’s rejection, on 5 March, President Ghani outlined the structure, authority, and duties of the electoral bodies in a new presidential decree.

Unlike the SERC’s comprehensive recommendations, this recent decree has simply reduced the discussion of electoral reform to superficial changes to the IEC and Independent Election Complaints Commission (IECC) composition. The decree changed the requirements and tenure of the electoral commissioners and directed the establishment of the Selection Committee to look for seven new electoral commissioners for the IEC and nine new commissioners for IECC.

Recent controversial and political moves by the IEC further complicates the power dynamics. On 24 February 2016, the IEC announced the 2014 presidential election results - 16 months after the establishment of the NUG confirming Ashraf Ghani as the winner with just over 55 percent of the vote. A month later, the IEC announced 15 October 2016 as the Election Day for conducting both the Wolesi Jirga and District Council elections. The Commission’s announcements were perceived as purely political because of its leadership’s affiliation to and appointment by the former President, Hamid Karzai. The combination of IEC and parliament pressures might explain the recent presidential decree’s focus only on composition of electoral bodies rather than substantive electoral reform.

The original recommendations of the SERC gives us a sense of the technical reform needed in the electoral process. Key recommendations included the establishment of a Selection Committee and the introduction of a new electoral system, which would shift from single non-transferable vote to a mixed proportional representation system and allow greater roles for political parties and the establishment of single voters’ district. Other recommendations were the invalidation of current voter cards, the introduction of new electronic ID cards, 25 percent representation for women on provincial and district councils, and the presence of two foreigners on the IEC. In light of the latest presidential decree, these technical reforms are no longer on the table.

In addition, electoral reform seems to have dropped lower in the list of priorities for NUG, given the current political and security context, even for Abdullah Abdullah and his team who were strongly advocating for a comprehensive reform.

As part of the NUG’s political agreement, Abdullah and his circle of allies wanted to expedite the electoral reform process and begin the convening of the Constitutional Loi Jirga (Grand Assembly) to secure the legitimacy of the CEO position. However, it is evident that both camps have little appetite to hold loyi Jirga and have vested interests in continuing with the status quo. With NUG’s current low approval rating among the public and emerging political opposition groupings such as the Council of Protection and Stability, Abdur Rab Rasul Sayyaf as its prominent member - the government enjoys limited political capital to positively influence Jirga results in its favour.

Security is the other major factor influencing the momentum around reform. Increasing insecurity around the country has made state survival as the primary objective for NUG and international community. If the goal is the survival of NUG in 2016, as suggested by the UN Special Envoy, Nicholas Haysom, there is very little appetite for electoral reform and subsequently conducting an operational complex and politically tense elections.

If one optimistically assumes that the upcoming parliamentary elections does take place this year, two fundamental immediate concerns must be addressed: how to increase IEC’s credibility and decrease the likelihood of fraud, manipulation, and a contested outcome. The former will partly be addressed through the Selection Committee, which is tasked to find new commissioners. However, the big challenge is how to depoliticize IEC and increase its credibility among the public and political elite. Of the eight elections held in Afghanistan, except the first two, the rest have resulted in prolong crisis marred with mass fraud and vote rigging.

In these elections the main problem was not necessarily technical but political. The broad acceptance of an election outcome by rival parties is as important as the election process and reform itself. This problem can be resolved by keeping the IEC as a technical entity with the sole task of administering the elections; while at the same time strengthening the IEC office by providing dispute resolution powers and authority delegated to the provincial IEC offices. The IEC should function as the ultimate national dispute resolution mechanism. This must be complemented with shortening the reporting period between polling and preliminary result announcements through the use of technology. Evidence from previous elections suggests that the longer the initial result delays, the greater opportunity for rival grouping to put pressure on electoral bodies and open the space for deal-making and fraud.

Ultimately, given the constantly evolving political dynamics and interests, electoral reform might again become a priority and be utilized as a bargaining tool by either camp. However, as things stands now, substantive electoral reform is a distant reality for Afghanistan.
Several terrorists killed and wounded in military operations

As a result of Afghan Security Forces’ military operations, lunched a day ago, 22 terrorists were killed. announcing this news, Ministry of Defense, adds that in these operations that were lunched to save Afghan people’s lives and properties and also to suppress terrorists, 22 terrorists were killed and 14 other were wounded.

As MoD says, 15 terrorists were killed in metropolitan areas of Ghorak city, Kandahar province. In the military operations that were supported by Gunner Forces in Ghorak city, 5 terrorists were killed and other 10 of them were wounded. Two terrorists who wanted to lay mines across the road in metropolitan areas of Herat province, with the purpose of slaughtering civilians and Security Forces’ Caravans, were also killed by the explosion of their own mines and 4 other people including a child who was near a house were wounded.

The resignation of Mohammad Yousuf Nuristani

The chief of the Independent Election Commission, was announced last night. His resignation, which is approved by the president, is a good start point to reforms in the electoral system. The authorities of the National Unity govern ment have to start the work of Selection Committee ASAP after Nuristani’s resignation. The role of the civil society in the Selection Committee should be strengthened. Based on the decree of the president, the Selection Committee has more governmental identity and this avoid political distrust. President and Chief Executive Officer are also responsible to give important role for the civil society in the Selection Committee. Another point is that the electoral reforms should not be confined to the Independent Election Commission. Members of the Selection Committee should give a list to the president and the president has to select the head of the Independent Election Commission and appoint new commissioners from the list. The existing IEC commissions do not have the authority to manage the election process in Afghanistan. If the commissioners had authorized professional competence, 2014 presidential election would be beyond any defraud.

The interesting thing is that the current commission announced the result of 2014 election in 2016, which shows the weakness of the current IEC commissioners. And they all should be replaced by new commissioners. The president and chief executive also should work on a new legislative decree, on base of which the next parliament and district elections should be held. Electoral Reform Commission recently submitted a proposal to the governmental authorities in which some general points about reform and electoral institutions had come. In the decree, which is going to be the successor of the election role, should be considered the recommendations of the Commission. One of the important proposals of Commission’s Electoral System Reform was that voting cards should be falsified. A good alternative should be given with falsified voting cards. The best replacement for electoral cards is electronic identification card.

The sooner the process of electronic ID cards that now has been delayed without any reason should start. There is no reason for government leaders not to distribute electronic ID cards. Population Registration Act signed by the President and there are no obstacles to the distribution of electronic identity cards. Ochlocracy people who have the authority and looting, should not be so important. If the distribution of electronic ID card be started, the upcoming elections will be guaranteed. Another point is that the president and Chief executive should accelerate the process of the political reform. Already a number of “civil resistance” and so on speak. These are the ones who have bad intentions and want to abuse the current ambiguous situation. Others seek to hold the Traditional Session. If some politicians who are in authority agree with the Traditional Session, it causes immense problems for the government of national unity. So the process of political reforms should be started as soon as possible, this brings clarity for parliamentary elections, the district council elections and for coming Constitution Loy-Jerga. If not, some of the politicians will abuse the situation and it leads our country to a tense situation.

Turkey continues military and security support to Afghanistan

Hulusi Akar, Chief of Army Staff of Turkey traveled to Kabul and in a meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said, “Turkey will continue its military and security cooperation with Afghanistan in the framework of NATO mission.”

Mr. Akar says that Afghanistan and Turkey’s cooperation in the framework of NATO forces are deep and strategic. Turkey’s Chief of Army says that his country is fighting against terrorism within its territory and in the region and it is laudable that Afghanistan is in the front line of this combat.

In the meantime, Ashraf Ghani, the president of Afghanistan, also says that the relations between Afghanistan and Turkey are deep and historic and adds that the main foundation of Afghan National Army is based on Turkish experiences. Mr. Ghani also appreciated Turkey’s support to Afghanistan in the framework of NATO, ISAF and Resolve Support mission.

Governors’ Association criticizes the government and requests a national gathering to solve problems

The Governors Association of Afghanistan says: “the manifold policies of the National Unity Government have created the current challenges for the country.”

Abdul Jabbar Taqwa, the CEO of Governors’ Association, in a news conference on March 30th, pointing to the adverse situation of human rights in Afghanistan, expressed his concerns about existence of ISIS in Afghanistan and similar security threats, by approving Gen. John Campbell’s recent declaration.

Mr. Taqwa added that the Governors Association is not interested in the bi-lateral agreement between two previous Presidents of presidential election and the current government leaders, and assumes it against the constitution of Afghanistan. The CEO of Afghanistan’s Governors Association criticized the National Unity Government for not complying with the agreements, disagreements between the two leaders, wasting time by postponing the Parliamentary Elections and Provincial Councils elections, as well as the Customary Loya Jirga.

He stated that dissatisfaction of people about the accomplishments of the government have increased. People are frustrated of big claims, increasing tribalism in most areas, replacing of inexpert with the professional and expert cadres, law breaking and destruction of the administrative system of the country, losing broad lands in different areas to Taliban and ISIS, poverty, lack of investment and…

With all these, the Governors Association of Afghanistan wants a national gathering to solve the ongoing problems of the country, and requests the international community and USA to support this program.

The CEO of this association said: “We are requesting for an extensive national gathering to consult with elders and elites of the country in order to decide about the ambiguous future of the country.

As he says, the USA and other international counterparts should not be involved in the cursed long war of Afghanistan, and the Security Council of UN and the neighboring countries should support monitoring and implementing this big national gathering to make the people decide about their fate, and end the war.

Despite the optimism of leaders of the country, the New Year is predicted as a difficult year, in addition, international and foreign concerns regarding increasing violence are increasing.

On the other hand, Ashraf Ghani, the president of Afghanistan says: “last year was the year of subsistence for Afghani stan in which Afghanistan passed seven terms of fight, but the new year will be the year of movement.

April 16th, 2016
Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the High Office of Oversight and Anti-corruption (HOOAC) signed an agreement to fight corruption in work places of this ministry. Nabilah Muzhi, the deputy minister of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs said that by signing this agreement, this ministry is underlining corruption with gained positive steps forward.

The deputy minister says that administrative corruption is the main ingredient of the disasters in the country. Therefore, it is the obstacle to realizing sustainable improvements and deteriorates the situation for equal improvement of women.

Also, Miss Muslih asked the HOOAC to combine a group of committed women to fight against corruption. She emphasized that women will not have any major role in the plans and implementations of the HOOAC. At the same time, Abdur Razzaq Zalal, Financial and Administrative deputy of the High Office of Oversight and Anti-corruption says that this year (1395) is named as the “year to fight against administrative corruption” by the government, and the unity government will move towards this objective.

The asylum seeking crisis is changed overboard meeting which was called with qualification” Mr. Alimi Balkhi said in an announcement that defense officials with the national council’s cooperation have rejected them. According to this convention, those refugee applicants will be accepted who left due to insecurity, not due to economic problems.

The asylum seeking crisis is changed to be a very big problem in these recent months for this continent and has caused some of the European countries to revise their immigration plans. The officials of Afghanistan talk about avoiding the returns of asylum seekers, when the president said in a talk with BBC that the presidency had no sympathy for the asylum seekers. He said that those asylum seekers had left Afghanistan because of small problems and didn’t take part in reconstruction of their homeland. He asked them to return and start over to build their country.

The national security forces have launched extensive operations against terrorist group in Helmand.

The Helmand governmental officials said on Friday that these operations had been set out in four areas included Khanshin, Sangin and Garshak districts. According to their reports, these operations are going to be extended and retake other regions of northern districts of Helmand.

The officials also added that many military operations are being conducted to wipe out insurgents from regions. They said that after eruption of a fierce clash between security forces and terrorist group, the militants had been taken heavy casualties and were dislodged from these regions. On the other hand, the defense ministry said in an announcement that defense officials with the national council’s collaboration have evaluated the security situation of this country.

According to this announcement, Massoom Stanekzai, the supervisor of defense ministry with defense commission members and senate have evaluated the security situation.

In this session, Stanekzai has given information about military equipment and capabilities to national council members. He said that during last winter, the defense ministry equipped security forces and built four bases in Helmand province.

He also mentioned that 1800 personnel of national security forces have been placed in Uruzgan province in order to recover the situation in this province.

The defense ministry reiterated that particular security evaluation had been taken by security organizations and local independent organizations.

The supervisor of defense ministry said that international terrorists networks were carrying out their operations under domestic terrorist support, but national security forces would not allow them to succeed. This is a tremendous opportunity for strengthening and empowering the national security forces”, the defense minister’s supervisor stated in a statement.

He added that the international community support our security forces under the framework of security agreement. Furthermore, the people including clergy, tribal elders, jihadi leaders, members of national council and defense from national security forces.

Agreement signed between Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the High Office of Oversight and Anti-corruption

Translator: Emran Poya
Source: Hafti-e-Sabki

Afghan Minister of Refugees asks European Union to refrain from forcibly deporting hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees

Translated By: Hadi Shaiikhzada
Source: BBC Persian

Sayed Alimi Balkhi said in a meeting at parliament that they have ordered all Afghanistan’s counsels and political agencies not to give visas to security authorities of those countries that were forcibly deport the asylum seekers. “European countries wanted to forcibly deport a large amount of asylum seekers, around 40 percent of whom are about a thousand hundred with no qualification” Mr. Alimi Balkhi said in an overboard meeting which was called with Salahuddin Rabbani, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

He also included that the European Union and its members’ representatives were persuaded to negotiate with Afghan government regarding asylum seeker’s fate.

Mr. Rabbani told the parliament members that the Afghan government’s position is to avoid accepting the desperate asylum seekers returning back to Afghanistan.

He included that drafting agreement with European countries was ready by which voluntarily returns were affirmed and it was included that the women who were care takers of their family, the disabled people and those who had left the insecure part of Afghanistan shouldn’t be returned.

The European countries are determined to send back those asylum seekers whose conditions are not according to 1951 Genève’s convention and the judicatures have rejected them.

According to this convention, those refugee applicants will be accepted who left due to insecurity, not due to economic problems.

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The Ministry of Public Health and World Health Organization (WHO) have announced that diabetes is rising in Afghanistan.

According to the newsletter, both the institutions said that the surveys show that almost 8.4% of Afghanistan population, 2.7m people suffers from diabetes. More efforts are needed to prevent and cure, they added. In addition, 9% of the world adults suffer from diabetes and this disease directly caused an estimated 1.5 million deaths.

World Health Organization (WHO) said that Diabetes would be the 7th leading causes of deaths in 2030.

Ahmad Ian Naem, Deputy Director of health Ministry said: “If diabetes is not controlled, it will cause several disorders like heart attack, brain attack, kidney failure, blindness, and foot ulcer which may cause amputation. The Ministry of Health will provide necessary health diagnostic services, medicine, and raise awareness about diabetes, he added.

Diabetes rising in Afghanistan

Translated By: Zahra Amiri
Source: BBC Persian

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Diabetes is not only rising in Afghanistan; Diabetes is a chronic disease which occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces. This leads to an increased concentration of glucose in the blood (hyperglycemia).

Type 1 diabetes is characterized by a lack of insulin production. Type 2 diabetes is caused by the body’s ineffective use of insulin. It often results from excessive body-weight and physical passiveness.
300 Afghan Students, Teachers Speak out Against Street Harassment

Reprinted from: Stop Street Harassment http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/2016/04/300-afghan-students-teachers/

To commemorate International Anti-Street Harassment Week, Free Women Writers, an Afghan blog for social justice and gender equality, called on people around the country to send photos with messages about the harassment of women and girls in public spaces. Within the first week, dozens of powerful pictures were sent to the blog via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Email.

The photos and the messages were inspiring, but Star Educational Society (SES), a private learning center with branches in several provinces in Afghanistan, went beyond that and engaged hundreds of students and teachers in speaking out against street harassment.

In three different branches located in Kabul, SES organized class discussions about street harassment in which men and women spoke about the problem and efficient ways of fighting with it. Then students and teachers wrote and took pictures with signs about street harassment. The pictures and slogans were published in the center’s newspaper to encourage further debate.

"With this campaign we not only stand against the negative perceptions that exist about Afghan men, but we also redefine masculinity and stand firm to build a better community," said Ali Reza Yasa, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at SES.

Using Free Women Writer’s campaign, SES not only created a meaningful debate about street harassment in their centers but also allowed students the opportunity to feel agentic by raising their voices. According to Yasa, one of the most encouraging outcomes of the campaign was that girls, who usually do not want to take photos due to fear of violence or harassment, participated with enthusiasm and passion.

“We are so glad to have been part of this initiative. The culture of street harassment has to end. Let’s hope for a better Afghanistan, one we all deserve,” Yasa said.
The good are good regardless of the time of the year. The scoundrels display rare but false honesty and goodness in Ramazan. During the civil war many years ago, Ramzan brought a lull in the fighting. People ventured out of their villages and farms, and it appeared as if the peace would last.

I heard from Moallem of Sirqol that the neutral families and villages had mediated between the warring groups. They had negotiated a cease-fire. It was the month of Ramazan, perhaps the day before the 3rd Qadr. There was an unusual calm, perhaps a little too calm.

Your mother and I had just sat down to break our fast that evening when gunfire shattered our new-found calm. It was close, perhaps from just beyond the pass. There was periodic gunfire at first, and then it was chaos. I walked out to see what was going on, but I saw nothing at the pass beyond the village or on the mountains people crawling up the hill, but as he approached them to find out who it was, he was shot and killed. His comrades were alerted by the gunshots, and soon, they rained hell down that mountain slope. The cease-fire was broken, and it was back to war and killing as usual.

Opening paragraph from *A Tale of Two Cities*:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way — in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

Charles Dickens was born in 1812 and died in 1870. He was an English writer and social critic. He created some of the world’s best-known fictional characters and is regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. His works enjoyed unprecedented popularity during his lifetime, and by the twentieth century critics and scholars had recognized him as a literary genius. His novels and short stories enjoy lasting popularity.

Dickens wrote *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859, a novel set in London and Paris before and during the French Revolution. The novel depicts the plight of the French peasantry demoralized by the French aristocracy in the years leading up to the revolution, the corresponding brutality demonstrated by the revolutionaries toward the former aristocrats in the early years of the revolution, and many unflattering social parallels with life in London during the same period. It follows the lives of several characters through these events. The opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities* is considered one of literature’s greatest opening paragraphs.

Opening paragraph from *A Tale of Two Cities*:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way — in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.
Could you please tell me about yourself? Sure, my full name is Sameer Rasa. I am from Ghazni Province. I graduated from Ilm-i-Sina University Faculty of Law and Political Science. I studied English and computer at ILITE Institute. I hope to continue my lessons up to Masters and PHD levels.

I was born in 1992 in Ghazni province. I am working at TOLO TV station as a presenter since 2010. In my free time, I like to study political books, to read newspapers, to watch news and to swim. I studied political books, to read newspapers, and perform my duties in an independent manner and love journalism.

Who is your favorite journalist in Afghanistan? From one hand, the Afghan government is not supporting media and journalism. But from the other hand, the Taliban insurgents always threaten attacks on media and journalists which creates a kind of horror in their mind. For example, we still remember the black Wednesday on which we lost a great number of our colleagues and many more suffered serious injuries. However, freedom of speech has been marked as one of government's achievements in 14 years but government doesn't protect freedom of speech. For instance, access to information law was signed by the president, but typically is neglected by the government. In addition, reporters have been repeatedly beaten by government officials and powerful men but were not arrested. We know that Mr. Karim Khurram, previous minister of Ministry of Culture and Information, said that "freedom of speech is nonsense." Another example of this can be, when parliament member, Mr. Abdul Khawasi, who once announced Jihad against media. And also sometimes reporters are questioned unjustly by security officials. On the other hand, Taliban and insurgents' groups frequently threaten and target media workers. For example, in Kunduz Province, insurgents attacked media and collapsed the media station. And also seven journalists were killed and 20 others injured in another attack on TOLO TV.

What do you think about the recent terrorist attack on TOLO TV workers? The Taliban wanted us to stop exposing and broadcasting the realities to the public. Taliban constantly denounced freedom of speech and media. But there is a question, how can the Taliban condemn media when they are using social networking media? For example, presently the Taliban has Facebook, Twitter and other social media pages. They have a media station and they record their activities and release it on YouTube and also they send emails to the media to publicize their work. So, why do they condemn other media? Another example, ISIS has a radio in Nangarhar Province. From the radio they oppose government. But they don't agree that others also have the right to have radio.

What are the important journalism skills that you possess? I keep the balance, make my voice strong enough to suit anyone, clarify issues, and want the discussions to be result-oriented. I have a strong knowledge base, an understanding of issues, names, geography, history and the ability to put all of these in perspective for viewers. It comes from the journalist commitment. That's the essence of skills without script the measure of the best broadcast journalists. A journalist always should think nationwide. A journalist must forget about racism, and see all the people from lenses of brotherhood of which a journalist can be a journalist and can bring changes for the society and can spread the struggles.

Describe how you handle deadlines, stress and competing deadlines. I always try to do things fast, but precisely. I always tried to be accurate; however, speed is one of journalist's basic characteristics but accuracy is more important because inaccurate reporting decreases the validity of media. Therefore a successful journalist will keep accuracy and speed together in order to have good results.

Why do you work at TOLO TV? Because it is the greatest TV station in Afghanistan. It is unilateral and belongs to none of the political or religious groups. It is private not public. Most of the TV workforce is formed by youth where they lead different aspects of the TV tasks. And TOLO news is Afghanistan's first 24-hour station dedicated to news and current affairs. A successful media is the media that is impartial. Working in TOLO means a family and we consider that we are all working in a big media family where everyone is sincere and hardworking.

What is your greatest strength? My self-confidence, commitment to my duty, have freedom of speech to speak out my comments in an independent manner and love to keep working in the journalism profession. I am the person that learns quickly and performs better under pressure. I love my job and can work from my heart and will always do my job better every day.

About the interviewer: Adela Khurrum began teaching at Star in 2012 after studying English Literature and Accounting at Iqra College in Karachi, Pakistan and teaching English in Quetta.

Describe the interstellar journalism.

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Add: Star Avenue, Sabiqa Stop, Dehburi, Kabul.
A Branch Phone: +93-785 10 39 20 / +93-744 56 37 55
Email: interstellarbulletin@gmail.com
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Serving his countrymen as a television journalist

Interview with Sameer Rasa