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[Note: Using editorials as an indicator, this series presents views, understanding and attitude of the Urdu periodicals in India towards various developments concerning the Middle East. The selection of an item does not mean the endorsement or concurrence concur with their accuracy or views. **Editor, MEI@ND**]

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Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (National Sahara Daily), Delhi

Editorial, 27 July 2011, Wednesday

1. Famine in Somalia

The East African countries of Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda are suffering from severe drought and famine. In particular, the southern part of Somalia which is under the control of militant opposition group Al-Shabab, are reported to be worst affected. According to reports, more than ten thousand people have lost their life due to this calamity in the past few months. People are wandering in search food and water for weeks.

The UN called an emergency meeting of aid agencies and charity organisations on Monday in Rome to discuss the prevailing situation in Somalia resulting from the draught and famine, where a decision was reached to provide food through airplanes. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations appealed to the international leaders for swift action saying that the severity of situation demands immediate aid at maximum level.

The UN has received only one billion dollar of aid since the appeal was first issued in November 2010, while another one billion dollar would be required to deal effectively with the widespread famine during the ongoing year. According to reports, the UN wants the donor countries to act swiftly. A meeting of the donor countries is to be held in Nairobi this week.

An unfortunate incident regarding this horrific drought and efforts to deal with it is that Al-Shabab, which controls southern Somalia, has blocked the four hundred tonnes of grain issued by the International Red Cross Society for the affected region. The group is not ready to term this drought as famine. It accuses that the UN declaration of Somalia as under famine is based on politics. Meanwhile, the World Bank has also announced five hundred million dollars in aid to fight with the famine in Somalia and neighbouring countries.

But the biggest problem is the Al-Shabab group which is reported to be an ally of Al-Qaeda and which has been categorised as a terrorist organisation by many countries. The group has taken control of southern Somalia after armed battle with the government of Somalia and is fighting to take control of the entire country. The UN declared the area under the control of Al-Shabab as famine hit and said that if immediate help is not provided then hundreds of thousands of people will lose their life. The group initially allowed foreign aid to reach the area but suddenly on Friday it denied the famine and termed it as propaganda from western powers.

The government of Somalia has condemned the Al-Shabab for not allowing aid to reach the people under its control. The Somali Prime Minister Abdul Wali Muhammad Ali has accused Al-Shabab that it is forcing people to leave their homes by not allowing the aid workers to enter its region. He appealed the international community to help his government fight the militants together with helping in providing food grains. The situation in Somalia and this chain of accusations may prolong but the reports coming out of the country indicate the kind of politics being played on the corpse of people hit by hunger and famine, which is a matter of shame for the entire humanity.

Source: <http://roznamasahara.samaylive.com/Details.aspx?id=25909&boxid=15543343>

Translated and Compiled by Md. Muddassir Quamar

Md. Muddassir Quamar is a Doctoral Candidate at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
Email: muddassir.2005@gmail.com

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