



# GUEST LECTURE

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## REPORT

### “Youth Activism for Peace Building in FATA”

*“The opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it is indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it is indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.”*

*Elie Wiesel*

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## Acknowledgement

FATA Research Centre holds regular guest lectures on the significant issues of FATA in collaboration with The Royal Danish Embassy in Pakistan.

FRC is privileged to thank the young and passionate guest speakers, Ms. Mehreen Afridi and her colleagues from FATA Youth Forum, who took out time from their busy schedules and contributed their intellects on the establishment of “FATA Youth Forum” and ways in which youth in FATA is being mobilized for peace building.

FRC also would like to thank guests from academia, media and research institutions for their presence and valuable participation in the event. FRC owes to thank its team for contributing all their efforts in holding the event.

This report is based on the content of speech and address by the speaker and participants at the guest lecture.

## **Profile of the Guest Speaker**

Ms. Mehreen Afridi is a young entrepreneur from FATA and a student of University of Peshawar. She has been very active in the co-curricular activities at University level. She has been actively involved in bringing together FATA students to a united platform. She has been awarded with Governor's Special Award, for her excellent track record of working for FATA Youth.

Mehreen Afridi has been vocal and advocating for the rights of youth of FATA at KP and National level. She has been joined by a group of passionate youth from all over FATA and they founded FATA Youth Forum. This forum is though newly established but has a great cause ahead to work for.

## **Introduction to FATA Youth Forum**

FATA Youth Forum (FYF) is non-political, non-profitable & non ethnic forum with the vision to empower the youth of FATA and encourage them to take part in their development, inculcating leadership and decision making abilities for a brighter and sustainable future for the people of FATA.

FATA Youth Forum represents all the seven agencies including Frontier Regions (FRs). Every person of FATA between the age 15-35 are welcome to join FYF as a member to make the voice of FATA youth heard, to inculcate leadership, and to understand their enduring role in shaping society.

FYF is a platform for the FATA YOUTH to identify their common issues and bring these issues on government agenda for positive solution and to understand their enduring role in shaping the society. FYF is committed for the empowerment of Youth in FATA.

## **Objectives of FYF**

To unite the FATA Youth, make their voice be heard across the World and influence decision makers to make positive strategies for FATA and its Youth, look into their problems and give them valuable solution:

- To provide information, guidance and advises to youth of FATA regarding issues such as lack of education opportunities, unemployment, health related problems and other common social issues. FYF aims to help resolve them by participatory and positive approach
- To improve youth participation and youth empowerment as it relates to sustainable development and make them aware about the importance of their role in community development
- To help promote the hidden potential of Fata Youth by arranging seminars, training workshop, round-table discussions and other healthy activities in order to improve their skills of leadership, communication, presentation, conflict resolution and promotion of peace and harmony in the tribal belt and other parts of the country
- To identify the most impounding problems FATA youth is facing at the present time and help resolve them by participatory and positive approach

- To encourage them to participate in healthy and constructive activities and enable them to understand the importance of their role in community development
- To enhance their skills of communication, leadership, presentation and conflict resolution etc. by arranging seminars, workshops, training sessions and round table discussions;  
To eliminate the miss perception of the international community about FATA and its Youth in a positive way<sup>1</sup>

## **Conceptualization of Youth Activism in FATA**

Youth is considered to be the backbone of any society and can play a vital role in bringing success and prosperity to their society. Today in the world of science and technology the only way to reach the pinnacle of success and prosperity is to equip the youth with modern system of education.

Although majority of population is aged 15-30 which according to social scientist is the demographic dividend for the society but unfortunately the abysmal literacy rate and deteriorating security situation in the region is slowly and gradually transforming this potential from demographic dividend into demographic threat for the tribal region. Moreover, the economic depravity stemming from the lack of development in the region both by the government and nongovernmental organizations is also believed to be a root cause for the low rate of literacy i.e. 17% for male and less than 3% for female in the region; making the youth even more vulnerable to radicalization and extremism.

Despite the low literacy rate and deteriorating security situation in the region it is only youth who can alter the fate of FATA. There is this need to instigate the desire for education among the youth of FATA. The youth of FATA who are currently studying in various levels of education in different parts of Pakistan can create student organization and through this platform they can organize various programmes emphasizing on the importance of getting education and creating awareness regarding the organizations offering scholarships at various levels of education both on need and merit basis.

Likewise, community based schools should be built with the help of nongovernmental organization and literate youth of FATA by offering their voluntary services in these schools can play integral part in enhancing education system in the region.

Moreover, youth of FATA studying or working in the urban region can organize programmes for the tribal youth, where they can share their experiences about how they reach to their current status which will no doubt instigates the desire for learning and knowledge among those living in the tribal belts.

The youth of FATA as we know are facing severe psychological issues due to the ongoing conflict in the region. The youth of FATA with the help of the student organization can organize recreational activities, cultural shows and other related activities for the students and elders which will certainly help in mitigating psychological issues among the people in general and youth in particular. Likewise the youth of FATA are also faced with the dilemma of drug abuse therefore; the youth of FATA with help of local doctors can organize programmes for those who are victims to drug abuse, catering to the harmful effects of drug addiction.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.facebook.com/FataYouthForum.Official/info>

Moreover, skill enhancement programmes need to be introduced specially for the females who most of the times remain in their homes. Pertaining to the rich culture of FATA, embroidery can play an integral part in bringing prosperity to the female population of FATA particularly to that of illiterate female youth; who can earn in thousands with the assistance of governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Likewise FATA is rich in mineral resources and if these resources are excavated it will not only fulfill the needs of FATA but also can recast the fate of Pakistan. Skill enhancement in marble industry will also help the uneducated youth of FATA in generating employment opportunities for themselves and can certainly improve the standard of living of the uneducated youth. Beside marble industry honey production can also be introduced in the region as it can be an easy and profitable source of earning for uneducated youth including males and females in FATA.

Moreover, the sustainable development programme introduced by the government of Pakistan with the assistance of US government, where \$2.46 billion were allocated for the development of the tribal region, if SDP programme will materialized in an appropriate way it can certainly bring prosperity to region. Likewise, after the 18 constitutional amendments the government of Pakistan is responsible for providing basic education to the youth of Pakistan. So the government of Pakistan with the help of nongovernmental organization should initiate programmes for enhancing education system in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

## **Main Contents of the Speech**

Mehreen Afridi spoke about her untiring effort she put in her quest for developing youth of FATA. She gave brief discussion about points that how she started alone and built a team soon after. She stated, “I shared the feelings of a typical FATA young woman, being from FATA myself. I was thinking how youth in the rest of the country is mainstreamed and they participate in the matters related to them, while we as a FATA youth neither have know-how nor a platform for expressing ideas and participating in our matters. This urge of mine stimulated me for the emergence of FATA Youth Forum. And today I am happy to have an established form of it in front you. We are currently advocating for FATA youth rights and making them organize on different aspects”.

The education and training youth receive is important to their role as activists. Education teaches youth to be engaged and feel like a community. Young people are the future of their society; they are attracted to the hope and promise of building new futures and better lifestyles, like many political parties have been mobilizing young voters with the hope of change in the recent elections in Pakistan. The problems and issues occurring now will affect the youth in the future. Therefore, youth have an incentive to advocate for change in society.

People under the age of 18 comprise 46% of the global population, and these youth played a crucial role around the world during the first decade of this century. Youth activism in the developing world increased especially after 2010. Youth born in the 1980 and 1990s now comprise part of a middle-class increasingly vocal against government corruption and greater representation. Youth in many countries defy the official regimes, cultural and political policies through engaging in proactive activities through social media campaigns, and sitting in places like coffee shops and basements meetings. The revolutions of Egypt, Syria and the Middle East reflect this fact.

FYF intends to provide youth of FATA a comfortable space where they can go to have an open conversation regarding their questions and worries. We want to provide them genuine support and help empower young women and men to realize our strength and ability to make ourselves and our communities better.

Our role as an activist is to support and generate hope for youth within our community, as well as throughout the nation. We feel that love and knowledge are key elements for transforming youth into a powerful, united voice and help prevent them from becoming another statistic or fall prey to some extremist group.

Mehreen Afridi along with her two team members discussed about their struggle for promotion of youth affairs and listening to youth in the decisions making, which directly affects youth. Mehreen Afridi was very vocal as she elaborated the struggle and its achievements in a facile language. Some points are as following;

### **1. Approval of FATA Youth Policy**

FYF has been advocating for youth policy in FATA and it has now been approved by the Governor KPK. FATA Youth Policy is the brain child of FATA Youth and they have struggled for it a lot. With the inception of this policy youth in FATA will now have a chance to prosper and mainstream in the national life of Pakistan. This policy will open many ways and opportunities for youth in FATA. This will result in allocation of more funds and development programs focusing on the youth in FATA. Youth will be empowered to play a better part in decision making related to their fate.

According to Mehreen the Governor KPK has shown full commitment to youth policy and it will soon be drafted. Governor Shaukatullah has met FYF in this regard and it is now a matter of days as per Governor's commitment<sup>2</sup>.

Mehreen Afridi further added that soon a discussion session will be arranged on youth policy. Seminars, workshops and focused group discussions will take place and every aspect of youth welfare and uplift will be considered in the policy. Mehreen and her colleagues invited FRC and other supporting institutions to take full part in the policy making and finalization.

### **2. Establishment of Youth Welfare Department at FATA Secretariat**

After the approval of youth policy, Youth Welfare Department (YWD) has been established in FATA Secretariat. As soon as the policy will be approved by the National legislature; the department will have its footings in place inside FATA, and it will be in a position to work for the welfare of FATA. Mehreen Afridi (according to her) has been in close coordination with the YWD and keeps on meeting the department highlight the issues and needs of youth hailing from FATA.

### **3. FATA Youth Parliament**

Mehreen added that FYF is working in close coordination with PILDAT for establishing youth parliament in FATA. FYF is working to train youth for democratization process and make them effective citizens; participating in the civic and political affairs of society. Youth Parliament, in her words, will prove a great venture to train youth in this regard.

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<sup>2</sup><http://dawn.com/news/1035541/youth-policy-for-fata-on-the-anvil-governor>

#### **4. Visibility of FATA Youth Forum on Ground**

Mehreen Afridi and Mr. Shahid elaborated about their current existence on ground in FATA. Shahid said, “We are working with volunteers throughout and in the process of developing it. We have started it from Agency level and now expanding it to Tehsil level. FYF is building volunteer activists and getting them organized”.

Mr. Shahid further added, “We are having an online registration form, which is for FATA youth membership with FYF. We are launching our website and it will manage our memberships and host the progress we shall make from the platform of FYF. Currently we are having our facebook page which we use as a forum for accessing FYF and share the progress we make”.

#### **5. Hurdles and limitations**

“The security situation in FATA has been a great challenge for us. It causes retardation in the development of every sector in FATA. It has minimized the communication tools and its effectiveness. We cannot reach to Youth in FATA and vice-versa. There are many other problems we face due to the legal restrictions in collaborating with Political Agent offices in FATA due to FCR. FATA Youth is not allowed to participate openly in many forums”, Mehreen Added.

Shahid and Mehreen were of the opinion that they have got financial constraints besides the intellect and experience they need from intelligentsia and academia. He added that soon they are going to contact senior citizens to finalize the mission, vision and strategy for promoting FYF.

According to the speakers, FATA is such a society where there are strict family codes and the elders are given much importance. Therefore, targeting the youth of the area without focusing the elderly would not be useful. The strategy of FYF would include reaching the elders of families and convincing them about youth activism so that these elders themselves motivate their young members of the family to participate in the polity of FATA.

Another important thing came under discussion was the financial constraints faced by the youth in this regard. According to Mr. Shahid, on one hand poverty is on a very high side in FATA while there is unemployment in the area and the youth mostly concentrate on finding for themselves a better livelihood than to participate for their community.

Similarly Miss Mehreen also pointed to the fact that due to inadequate education facilities in the area coupled by economic constraints, the youth is intellectually not mature. This is further added to the agony as uneducated and unaware youth who is not economically stable and socially independent cannot actively participate for the peacebuilding in FATA.

#### **Open Floor/ Open House Discussion**

The end of this session Mehreen and her colleagues participated in a fruitful discussion by answering many questions of the participants. The youth and students of universities sitting among participants were also from FATA. They seemed interested in registration process of FYF. Mehreen replied that soon an online registration mechanism will be available on the website of FYF.



A participant suggested to invite some dignitaries to attend FYF meetings and gathering, so that, youth in FATA can be mobilized and perform as a unified entity and achieve greater successes. Mehreen agreed and extended her intentions and future programs. A participant suggested that FYF may have its secretariat and five year plan of action. This way they can better advocate for the cause of youth welfare.

## **Conclusion**

According to Mehreen Afridi, FYF is a successful venture by some young students but it will expand to a wide range of services and successes for youth of FATA. FYF is already operating at Tehsil level in FATA and it will soon get in touch with the educated FATA members through online services. FYF has many developmental endeavors to offer in the fields of capacity building, students' scholarship programs, advocacy for policies adaption and use of FATA resources for the genuine cause of FATA development.

FYF is going to transform into an organization of highly skilled members having background in youth development programs and a broader vision for youth of FATA.

## Appendices



### **FATA Research Centre Guest Lecture**

#### **Topic: “Youth Activism for Peace Building in FATA”**

Date: August 26, 2013

Timings: 14:00 hrs to 17:30 hrs

Venue: FRC Head Office Islamabad

Contact: 051-2112853-4, 0343-8511353

#### **Guest Speakers:**

**Miss Mehreen Afridi (FATA Youth Forum Representative)**

**Mr. Shahid (FATA Youth Forum Representative)**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Owner</b>
<b>14:00-14:15</b>	Arrival of Guest and Registration	Mr. Mehran Ali Khan
<b>14:20– 14:35</b>	Welcome, Purpose and Agenda	Mr. M. Zaheer Khan
<b>14:45- 15:00</b>	Introductory speech	Dr. Ashraf Ali
<b>15:05 – 15:25</b>	Introduction of FRC projects	Dr. Ashraf Ali
<b>15: 30 – 16:00</b>	Lecture on “Youth Activism for Peacebuilding in FATA”	Ms. Mehreen Afridi
<b>16:05- 16: 35</b>	Visibility of FATA Youth Forum on Ground: Contribution of youth for peace building in FATA	Mr. Shahid
<b>16:40- 16: 50</b>	Discussion, Question and Answer	Open
<b>16:50 – 17:00</b>	Conclusion	Dr. Ashraf Ali
<b>17:00 – 17:30</b>	Hi Tea	All participants

**Registration Form**

**Guest Lecture: ‘Youth Activism for Peace building in FATA’**

**Date: August 26, 2013**

<b>S. NO</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Organization</b>
1	Zaheer khan	Prog. Manager	FRC
2	Raheel anees	Admin & finance Manager	FRC
3	Umair Zahid	Asst. Manager	FRC
4	Mehran Ali Khan	Senior Research	FRC
5	Nawaf Khan	Asst. Research	FRC
6	Zakia Rubab	Asst. Prog. Manager	FRC
7	Fatima Zaib	Internee	FRC
8	Sajjad Haider	Internee	FRC
9	Alamgir Khattak	Internee	FRC
10	Taimur Ali Khan	IT Engineer	FRC
11	Dr. Ashraf Ali	President	FRC
12	Saifullah Khan	CEO	FRC
13	Mansur Khan	Admin & research Director	FRC
14	Sharafat Ali	Editor	FRC
15	Iranqa Kahangama	Researcher	Jinnah Inst.
16	ZahidUllah	Student	ICMAP
17	Umar Saddiq	Student	ICMAP
18	Gulab Afridi	Student	Iqra Uni
19	Sher Zada	Student	ISSG UOP
20	Ahsan Ali Raza	Student Media	NUML