

Music to Fight Extremism in Afghanistan – By Dr. Ali Ahmad

By Ali Ahmad

Farhad Darya, an Afghan singer, declared his first international campaign against extremism in his visit to Peace Museum Vienna (PMV) on 2 December 2014.

Darya, one of the peace heroes of PMV, believes that extremism was the biggest enemy of humanity and that enemy was beyond any religion or politics.

“Today I announce the international campaign against extremism which starts from PMV,” Darya announced. For Darya, extremism today around the world represented some sort of lifestyle, not any particular ideology.

Afghanistan is a country plagued by violence and extremism. The country has been witness several invasions and internal conflicts in its recent history. It has been home to diverse ideologies ranging from tribalism to strict Marxism, authoritarian regimes and now to a fragile democracy. Each of these regimes, however, tried to either censor or ban music in Afghanistan.

Darya said that dictatorship or reactionary regimes silenced music because those regimes were aware of the power of music to inspire people, whereas the Taliban (1996-2001) had banned music because they considered it as un-Islamic. Right after the U.S.-led coalition ousted Taliban from power in 2001, it was Darya’s voice and music that broke the silence in Afghanistan. Darya thinks that music touches hearts and every small and big change starts from the heart.

Darya critiqued international media and said that media had only focused on portraying the negative side of Afghanistan while his country had a rich cultural aspect that they had missed completely, “media has poisoned people about Afghanistan,” he said.

Every conflict has a cultural aspect, which gets neglected during the conflict. Darya suggests that music could be a cultural aspect that could heal people. Darya believes that art promotes peace and it also creates hope and inspiration for a generation that has never seen peace in their lifetime. Though worried about increasing extremism, Darya remains optimistic and said “this is the time to stop extremism with a smile and the time is today”.

[Farhad Darya](#) is an Afghan singer, composer and peace activist. One of the most influential singer in the war-torn Afghanistan, he is also credited with popularizing a new wave of music in his native country and promoting peace and unity among his fellow Afghans through the power of his art.

Darya is on his maiden Europe tour to perform a series of concerts for the Afghan diaspora. In Vienna, he will be performing on 5th December at Austria Center.

Peace Museum Vienna recognizes him as a 'Peace Hero' and has featured him on the [Windows for Peace](#) at Blutgasse, Vienna since June 2014.