

Thirty fourth Note

Peace and Reconciliation with the Taliban:

Sayed Yusuf Reza Gilani, the Pakistani Prime Minister, paid a visit to Afghanistan in which he came to terms with the government of Afghanistan on establishment of Joint-Peace Commission between the two countries. With regard to this, the Head of the Prisoners of the High Council for Peace has said that all the Taliban prisoners in Guantanamo, Bagram and Kandahar jails should be released. In the most recent event, a member of the High Council for Peace was killed in Helmand province. Sara Sorkhabi, the member of the High Council for Peace has said the council has established telephone contacts with the anti-government forces. In the current week, more than hundreds of the Taliban's prisoners and armed anti-government forces have escaped from the Kandahar Prison. It is assumed that escape of the said Taliban has been carried out by

coordination of some State officials in that province.

Election Transparency: The Special Electoral Tribunal dedicated to investigation of elections' complaints has announced that the recounting process of dubious ballots has been finished.

However, so far there has been no mention of how the list of the members of the Parliament might be modified. Meanwhile, the Deputy Head of the House of the Representatives has said that some corrupt individuals are working at the Special Electoral Tribunal. The Deputy Head of the House of Representatives says he has audio recorded evidence on which a MP accused of fraud talks about offering money with one of the official of the Special Electoral Tribunal to get his name omitted from the list of said Tribunal. Ahmad Ziya Rafat, the member of the Election Complaints Commission has said that the AGO has suspended him.

Administrative Corruption: Sayed Mobin Shah, the Deputy of the Revenues & Customs Department of the Finance Ministry has said that interferences of several state organs have caused increased corruption within the said department.

Based on some evidence, 140 acre of the State's lands in Rahman Mina area of Kabul City has been expropriated by the Onyx Construction Company on which some residential townships are being constructed. There are some other subjects regarding the corruption which are obstacle against international community 'trust in Afghan government.

Interviews and Articles: There is an article entitled, "Reconciliation, Impunity and Justice in Afghanistan" written by Hussain Moein, an expert of Human Rights in Articles Section of this issue of the Truth. The Article has explored the issue of the reconciliation with the Taliban from the Human Rights angle.

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Reconciliation, Impunity and Justice in Afghanistan

By Husain Moen, a Human Rights Analyst
Stable peace and state building pertain to implementation and restoration of justice. If justice is not secured, the Afghan government would lose peoples' support. **Page 15**



Consultation Conference with Civil Society Organizations And Victims of the Massacre of 24 of Hut, 1979

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Negotiation with Armed Anti-Government Groups

Support of Foreign ministers of ISAF members from the reconciliation with the Taliban

Mandegar Daily, No 549, Page One, 16th April 2011

Zalmay Rasul, the Foreign Minister of the country says, the foreign ministers of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) members have announced their support of the reconciliation process with the Taliban. The Foreign Minister of Afghanistan at a Conference of NATO and ISAF Foreign Ministers in Berlin Said, the foreign ministers of the ISAF in Afghanistan have supported the peace process of Afghanistan with the Taliban. He said Afghanistan was in need of international community and neighboring countries, in particular, the Pakistan.

The Foreign Minister of Afghanistan with regard to the emerging internal concerns about the trend of the peace process says: "this trend enjoys the support of the Afghan people and the representatives of people in the Peace Council have determined red boundaries with respect to the peace process. Mark Sandoval, who has been serving as the NATO's Senior Civil Representatives in Afghanistan, sees the success in the reconciliation process with the Taliban as a catalyst for the transition of security responsibilities to Afghan forces. He, however, reiterated that even if the Taliban continue their insurgency operations, the security responsibilities will be transferred to Afghan forces regardless.

Playing with a wolf requires a brave heart!

Cheragh Daily, No 1785, Editorial, 16th April 2011

Yusuf Reza Gilani the Pakistani Prime Minister leading a Pakistani delegation is due to visit Afghanistan to hold talks in ceremonial meetings with Afghan official. They will focus mainly on the reconciliation and dealings with the Taliban. These meetings are going to take place while political experts and Afghan people are concerned about the increasing influences of the Pakistan and Iran governments and the US permanent Basis in Afghanistan. In the current situation where the government of Afghanistan is seeking to get the Taliban unconditionally and safely return to the political arenas of the country, the presence of Mr. Gilani as the "big brother" could create a good opportunity to expedite the said process by receiving his consent.

It is said that when the Afghan government considered some unjust privileges for the anti-government forces through the High Council for Peace upon the receipt of some green signals from them, the Pakistani government being generous enough, paid a lot of attention to the political and military improvement



of the Taliban! The releases of the eight Taliban commanders including Mola Mansor Dadullah from ISI prisons, increase in complementary logistic and war equipment, and provision of huge financial funds in the last recent months, could be named as some of the humble actions of the Pakistani government for the Taliban. Although both the Pakistan and Afghanistan are counted as strategic allies of the US and the west for the current war against terrorism, in the recent months the relationship between them have been tarnished by anger and lack of trust environment. Therefore, the officials of Afghanistan and Pakistan, despite having differences in their approaches, try to form a closer alliance to make a capital from the conflicts emerged among their western allies and increase their pressures for receiving more political and financial privileges from them.

The extension of Karzai's power is dangerous for the country

Arman.e.Meli Daily, No 18, Page One, 16th April 2011

Mohammad Yunus Qanuni, the representatives of people at the House of the Representatives, expressed his viewpoint and scheme about major political issues of the country including Traditional Peace Council (Jirgah) and negotiations with the Taliban and armed anti-government forces at a gathering held on by the members of Modern Afghanistan's Party on 14th April. This party fully supported him during parliamentary elections.

With regard to the issue of reconciliation with the Taliban and armed anti-government forces he said that the government had

constantly talked about peace, however, so far, the Taliban had shown no leaning towards negotiation with the government of Afghanistan. He added that the political entities and the people of Afghanistan have been kept in dark about the method for negotiation with the Taliban. In addition, only members of a certain family, with consideration of some personal benefits, talk about peace and as yet this issue has not been brought forward to the House of Representatives.

He said about twenty percent of the members of the Taliban were closely linked with the Pakistan's intelligence services (ISI) and these percentages of the Taliban member who are masterminds of the Taliban were refusing to negotiate with the government. According to him, they are indented to bring down the government of Afghanistan by their all available equipment and establish their own government.

Turkey has remained silent about the opening of Political Office for the Taliban

8AM Daily, No 1133, Page Two, 16th April 2011

The Presidents of Turkey and Pakistan refrain from confirming the plan for establishing a political office for the Taliban in Turkey. The Presidents of the Turkey and Pakistan support the plan for ending the war in Afghanistan; however, they are silent about opening a political office for the Taliban in Turkey which is conducive to progress of the peace negotiations.

Abdullah Gul, the President of Turkey who was speaking at the presence of Asef Ali Zardari, the Pakistani President at a press conference in Ankara, supported the negotiation trend of the Afghan government with the Taliban, however, he decided to remain silent and have no mention of the opening of political office for the Taliban in Turkey.

Abdullah Gul, the Turkish President said: " the year of 2011 will be a significant year for Afghanistan as in this year the foreign forces will start to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan; and we will provide our full support to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan by all our capabilities".

Asef Ali Zardari, the Pakistani President when asked a question as to whether or not the Taliban would be allowed to travel to Turkey if a political office is established for them in turkey, did not give a clear response with regard to the establishment of such office for the Taliban in Turkey

The aim of Gilani's trip to take control of reconciliation with the Taliban

8AM Daily, No 1133, Page Five, 16th April 2011

Concurrent with Yusuf Reza Gilani the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the delegation accompanying him on his trip to Afghanistan, political analysts say the Pakistan intends to make Afghanistan understand that without the support of Pakistan, the efforts for reconciliation with the Taliban by resorting to other countries would be ineffective.

Right a few days before the trip of Pakistan's Prime minister to

Afghanistan, the Turkey which had promised to open a political office for the Taliban in its country refused to confirm the fulfillment of its promise. Meanwhile, the High Council for Peace were hopeful that the existence of such office in Turkey would facilitate the work of this council because, the Taliban have no specific address and an office in Turkey would serve as a good address for negotiations with them.

Mir Ahmad Joyandah, a former MP says the Pakistan, in fact, does not want the Taliban to have an office in Turkey. According to Mr. Joyandah Pakistan intends to take the control and leadership of the negotiations with the Taliban. Ahmad Saeidi, political analyst of regional issues says now that the Pakistan has prevented the establishment of an office for the Taliban in Turkey, it this meeting it would emphasize that instead of Turkey, this office should be opened in the Pakistan for the Taliban. A gathering is due to be held in Saudi Arabia with purpose of searching for negotiation ways with the Taliban. However, analysts have a skeptical view on this gathering as well. Mr. Joyandah says, the Pakistani officials have many time said that peace negotiations with the Taliban without the engagement of Pakistan in them would be ineffective. According to Mr. Joyandah, now the Pakistani officials would like to emphasize the fact that the leadership of negotiations with the Taliban should be given to them. Thus, the Pakistani officials are directly making it clear for the Afghanistan that it should not resort to Saudi Arabia or Turkey for the negotiations with the Taliban, and that only the Pakistan could be the final decision maker in this regard.

The Taliban and opening of a "Political Office"!

Payam.e.Mojahed Weekly, No 715, Page Two, 16th April 2011

With the current situation in the country, by what vision we could be optimistic about the future of the peace process? Isn't opening a political office for the Taliban and recognizing them thereby another privilege for them being conferred on them by the government and international community? In addition, what guarantee exists that opening a political office for them will bring them at negotiation table? If, despite having a political office, the Taliban still continue their suicide attacks, killings, and crimes, will there be any reputation and name for the international community, human rights entities and the Turkish government?

Some analysts, irrespective of some political and human rights aspects, believe establishment of a political office for Taliban could a positive step towards stabilizing peace in the country. They point out two major points with regard to this issue: with the establishment of such office, first the Taliban would be disconnected from the Intelligence Services of Pakistan (ISI) and would be acting as an independent group having clear demands to be announced at negotiation table, and second, their group could eventually turned into a civil one. In view of these analysts, by establishment of an office for the Taliban the old tactic used by Pakistan which is denying the existence of the Taliban in its territory would not wok again. However based on media reports the Taliban have rejected the plan for

establishing a political office for them, that is to say, they are not willing to give up their hostile activities.

Taliban, a step towards legitimacy?!

Eghtedar.e.Meli Weekly, No 407, Editorial, 16th April 2011

Based on reports, the Turkish government has agreed with the proposal of High Council for Peace on opening a political office for the Taliban in its country. Although the Turkish Prime Minister has said that if they receive any formal proposal on establishing the office, his government will consider it, Arsala Rahmani a leading member of the High Council for Peace has said that Turkey has already accepted the establishment of the office for the Taliban and so far some preliminary approaches have been done in that regard. Meanwhile, the Taliban as their most recent reaction to this approach, have opposed the plan and said there is no need for such an office.

Why do the Taliban oppose such efforts?

Those devising strategies for the Taliban are well aware of the policy of "exertion of pressure in war field and receiving scores at negotiation table". They are also very well cognizant of the weaknesses of the Afghan government and international community. The Taliban have opposed the promised privileges as they are not compatible with what they demand. The demands of the Taliban are much more than the promised privileges and the will only be satisfied by establishing an Islamic Emirate in the country. Given this fact, the High Council for Peace is totally mistaken if it believes by legitimizing the Taliban by opening an Political Office for them they will be satisfied.

Another group of people are those who believe that the negotiation with the Taliban would bring in some benefits for them as such people are potentially weak in management and creating national unity in the country.

They have been deviated from the national path and fallen into ethnical and sectarian tendencies.

They are wrongly believe that the existence of the Taliban would strengthen their political positions.

Establishment of a Joint Peace Commission between Afghanistan and Pakistan Optimized use of Gilani and "useless" slogan of Karzai

Mandegar Daily, No 550, Page One, 17th April 2011

Afghanistan and Pakistan will establish a Joint Peace Commission at a high level for the purpose of brining peace and negotiating with the Taliban. On 16th April, Yusuf Reza Gilani, the Pakistani Prime Minister said at a press conference in Kabul with the presence of Hamid Karzai that this commission would function under the supervision of senior officials of the two countries. According to him, in the past there used to be another similar commission; however that commission had been working under the supervision of foreign ministers of the two countries while the commission to be established in the

near future would be supervised by senior administrative military and non-military officials of the two countries.

Mr. Karzai at this press conference said that the Prime Minister of Pakistan and Head of the Intelligence Services of Pakistan (ISI) will oversee the functions of this commission in Pakistan.

According to Mr.Karzai, in these discussions there was an unprecedented "clarity and explicitly" and the remarks of the Pakistani Prime Minister was an indication of a "general change" in the mood of the negotiations that existed in the past negotiations between the Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, Karzai refused to touch upon this issue more.

To whose benefit would be the political office for the Taliban?

Mandegar Daily, No 550, Page Six, 17th April 2011

There are some rumors of the tendencies of some elements of Taliban for negotiating with the government of Afghanistan, however in practice; these rumors have proven to be baseless. Obviously, the Taliban and the government are going in two different directions. From one side, the efforts of some State officials and, in particular, the High Council for Peace have increased to push the peace process forward, from another side, however, the destructive and suicide attacks of the Taliban have arisen as well. In response to the peace efforts, the Taliban have adopted some brutal and dangerous approaches including bloody attacks on public places, police stations, non-state offices and attempting on the life of high ranking officials. Based on some reports, more than 200 innocent civilian people have been killed or wounded as a result of brutal raids of the Taliban during the last month. This fact indicates that the terrorists are following specific goals and culture which are totally in direct contradiction to the achievements of the government over the last 10 years. Additionally, over the past month, the Taliban have murdered some military and political elements most of whom had been the commanders of Jihad period. Turkish officials after their visit with the delegation of the High Council for Peace and officials of the Afghan government announced the readiness of their country for hosting peace negotiations. They also pointed out that they would consider the establishing of a political office for the Taliban in Turkey. This fact indicates that the Turkish officials are not only inclined towards hosting the peace negotiations but they are also keen to open a political office for the Taliban in their country.

The said political office for the Taliban would exempt criminal and murderer commanders of the Taliban from punishment and it would politically ensure them that they would not be sued or prosecuted in the future. The Pakistan would derive the most benefit from the political office for the Taliban in Turkey. Inside the country, Mr. Karzai, a number of his cabinet members, the Islamic Party, some tamed circles of the Taliban and some people and groups inclined towards ethnical issues, would derive the most benefit from the likely political office for the Taliban.



Leaders of the Taliban are fighting to reach power

Arman.e. Meli, No 19, Page One, 17th April 2011

The District Chief and the Police Chief Commander of the Taliban in Dasht.e. Archi district of Kunduz province have joined the peace process. Major General Samiuallah Qatrah, the Chief Police Commander of Kunduz province has said that Ahmad Shah, the District Chief and Mohammad Omar the Chief Police Commander of the Taliban in Dasht-e Archi along with their 8 soldiers, through the mediation of local elders had joined the peace process on 16th April. Qatrah added that these people had opted the right path and the government would do all it can to cooperate with them.

Mohammad Omar, the Chief Police Commander of the Taliban in Dasht-e Archi said he had been with the Taliban for two years and three months ago he had escaped to Pakistan following the military operation conducted by national forces. According to him, in Pakistan he was not respected and there he had realized that the leaders of the Taliban are fighting to gain power.

The Pakistan is a barrier against the Peace Process

Arman.e.Meli Daily, No 19, Page Three, 17th April

The people of Afghanistan were hopeful that by the establishment of the High Council for Peace and the support of the international community of the peace process, they would witness the stabilization of peace and security in the their war-shattered country, however after a short while all their hopes turned into disappointment.

Because by direct interferences of the Pakistani government and its Intelligence Services, the structure of the peace process failed to negotiate and come to terms with those leading members of the Taliban whose joining to the peace process

would encourage more Taliban members to partake in the peace process. Because Islamabad, by an urgent and mysterious action detained and sent to jail those members of the Taliban who had agreed to sit behind negotiations table with the Afghan government. Despite constant requests of the Afghan government, the Pakistani officials refused to hand them out to the government of Afghanistan. By this tactic of the Pakistani government, the difficult aspect of the peace process is revealed. It should be noted that the Pakistan has reached its major goals by this game. Firstly, the Pakistan by the request of the ISI, weakened the efforts of the High Commission for Peace, and from another side, created some barriers ahead of the government of Afghanistan. Secondly, it by detaining and imprisoning of the leading members of the Taliban group proved its good faith for combating with the terrorism to the international community so that it could not be accused of not being firm in campaign against terrorism anymore.

Another practical step was taken for bringing peace in Afghanistan and in the region

Anis Daily, No 19, Page One, 17 April 2011

Burhanudin Rabani, the Head of the High Council for Peace met with Sayed Yusuf Reza Gilani the Pakistani Prime Minister on 16th April at Presidential Palace. This meeting was participated in by a number of the members of the High Council for Peace and a high ranking delegation of Pakistan. In the meeting Sayed Yusuf Gilani, introduced the Pakistani members to the Joint Peace Commission between the two governments who were later approved by the Prime Minister and Hamid Karzai the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Gilani declared his readiness to support the commission and said that the commission would soon start its work. The Pakistani Prime Minister announced his support for the initiatives of the peace process taken through the High Council for Peace and said the Joint Peace Commission would help bring security and peace in the region. The two parties in this meeting admitted that proper timing is in place to end violence in both of the countries as the war is not the solution and, instead, some practical steps should be taken to ensure peace.

All the promises vanished into the air...!

8 AM Daily, No1134, Page Four, 17 April 2011

The vague nature of the peace process with the Taliban which is mingled with some clandestine and secret acts has triggered considerable oppositions. While many critics of the peace trend are talking about the necessity of negotiations with the Taliban, they still place their vigorous criticisms on the High Council for Peace. With no doubt, the position of the Minister of Education adopted towards the Taliban, and the desperate flexibility of the President Karzai on different occasions for encouraging the Taliban to partake in the peace process, and widespread silence of different social and political groups towards the peace process, indicate that the terrorist group of the Taliban are in a position to, very easily, impose themselves on the government.

The advocates of the Taliban say that the Taliban will only enter into negotiations with the United States as they look down on the government and do not count on it. It should be said that if Karzai is really want to be in a powerful position in the eyes of the Taliban, he should first of all bring reforms to the government, apply the rule of law, and equip the armed forces and boost their capabilities. In addition, in order to satisfy the people, he should improve the economical state of them. It doesn't seem to be enough capacity and will within the government of Mr. Karzai for bringing fundamental reforms and changes. This is because our country is suffering from a poor leadership and lack of a clear, wise and practical vision. In fact the internal weakness of the current government makes a powerful stand of the government impossible.

Critics in the country are fairly right to be very deeply worried about losing all the political and legal achievements gained so far under the pretext of the negotiations with the Taliban. Mrs. Sima Samar, the Head of Independent Human Rights Commission, believes that stabilization of peace would fully depend on application of justice in Afghanistan. However, since the inception of the Bonn Conference till now, the peace process have gained some legitimacy without application of justice and by giving immunity to the criminals and violators of the human rights.

The concerns of the peace process critics are well-grounded because there is a sort of opportunity-seeking tendency among state and non-state political parties. The negotiation with the Taliban seems to be impossible without amending the Constitution in a State Loyal Jergah.

The role of Pakistan in bringing peace

Afghanistan Daily, No 1372, Editorial, 17 April 2011
Writer: Hafiz Ullah Zaki

The process of peace and negotiation with the Taliban has currently become the core issue of public policy. The government has tried to win the support of the people and foreign countries to promote this process; however, the lack of transparency in implementation of this process has created doubts and uncertainties. The doubts and uncertainties roots back from the fact that this process is not a national process that would be completely implemented according to the wills of Afghans but the success of this process relates mostly to the security and political process outside of Afghanistan.

The most influential element on the process of talks and negotiation with the insurgents is the cooperation of Pakistan in this trend as the country enjoys a wide range of influence inside Afghanistan and the fact that the armed anti-government groups are backed from the soil of Pakistan on military means. The government of Afghanistan has repeatedly asked the Pakistanis to play their effective in the peace process, but the Pakistani cooperation requires strengthening confidence-building between both the countries. Pakistani government may not leave aside its strategic tools in Afghanistan as long as they have a strong trust over the Afghanistan's political future.

The visit by Pakistan's Prime Minister and the formation of Peace Commission at the high levels of government can be the

signals that the two countries have decided to work toward mutual development of friendly relations.

Provincial Peace Committee is inaugurated in Samangan province

Cheragh Daily, No 1787, Monday, Page Two, 18 April 2011

A high ranking delegation of Supreme Council for Peace led by Moulavi Mahyudin Baloch, provincial committees' affairs head of Supreme Council for Peace and Engineer Farhadullah Farhad, the deputy of Supreme Council for Peace are on a visit to Samangan province.

The objective of their visit from Samangan province was to officially open the peace committee of this province. The provincial peace committee will work on the peace process and national reconciliation to reintegrate the anti-government forces back to normal life in provincial level. The delegation of Supreme Council for Peace also demanded the people to support them in bringing a sustainable peace to the country.

The Head of Supreme Peace Council Prisoner's Committee: All detainees in Guantanamo, Bagram and Kandahar should be released

Mandegar Daily, No 551, Page One, 18 April 2011

A former Taliban official and member of the Supreme Council for Peace says that they have started their efforts for the release of Taliban prisoners in Guantanamo prison and the prisons in Pakistan and there have been developments in this regard during their talks with the Pakistani delegations during their visit from Kabul.

This former Taliban member says that the issue of releasing those Taliban leaders who are locked up in the hands of Pakistani officials is discussed with the Pakistani authorities.

Arsala Rahmani, head of Supreme Peace Council's prisoner committee during an interview told the media that these Taliban are released because they have lately observed positive implications by this group and this step is taken to accelerate the peace process.

This member of Supreme Council for Peace added that practical steps are taken to release this prisoners and a six-member commission with three members of the Supreme Council for peace is established for this purpose.

According to Rahmani, Mollah Khair Mohammad Khairkhah, the former Taliban governor of Heart province in an electronic message to president Karzai has demanded for his cooperation to release him.

Taliban want peace or political power?

Mandegar Daily, No 551, Page Two, 18 April 2011

Writer: Ahmad Omran

The government and the United Nations have decided to pay

money to those Taliban that leave aside violence. According to authorities this program is meant to solve the financial problems of these people so that they return to normal lives.

Taliban have never demanded for a particular amount of money to quit war and never have they any socialistic approach to claim that the instability in the society is because of money gathered in the hands of some particular class and group of people.

The interviews released so far from Taliban commanders or quoting these commanders show that these commanders have a commitment to the Taliban leadership and they fight willingly in the ranks of this group.

Pakistan and Afghanistan moving towards peace

Afghanistan Daily, No 1373, Editorial, 18 April 2011
Authors: Mohammad Reza

The Peace process in Afghanistan needs support of internal factors but it also requires the sincere efforts of neighboring countries. Pakistan has been actively involved during past decades in the politics of Afghanistan. Currently Pakistan is an important player in bringing peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Some experts believe that the recent visit by the Pakistan Prime Minister, Mr. Gilani and the formation of Af-Pak Joint Peace Council is another delay towards bringing peace in Afghanistan as there already exist several other commissions working on this issue. Is it required to form another commission? Because the commissions have not been effective in carrying out their tasks in Afghanistan so there are concerns if this commission could play a role in the peace process.

Unlike many experts, some others believe that as this commission is formed in the high ranking of Afghanistan and Pakistan officials then one can be optimistic that there are close relations established between both the countries and together they may be able to make some achievements in bringing peace in Afghanistan.

Peace process is the top agenda of Afghanistan government

Anis Daily, No 21, Tuesday Page One, 19 April 2011

President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and French Defense Minister Gerard Longuet met in presidential palace. During this meeting, both sides discussed about the peace process, transition of authority and the security situation of Afghanistan and the region.

President said that peace process is the top agenda of Afghanistan and the afghan people are tired of war and insecurity. Therefore, the peace process is seriously perused by the Afghanistan government. The president also referred to the visit of Pakistani delegation led by Prime Minister of Pakistan and said that efforts are underway inside and outside of Afghanistan to reach a sustainable peace and In ShaAllah it will have effective results.

Sar e Pul armed men support the peace process

Daily 8 am, No. 1137, Page Two, 20 April 2011

On April 19, a number of anti-government forces declared their support for the peace process in and handed over their weapons to the government forces. These people who reached 12 men were ready to accept peace process after the operative efforts of the Sar e Pul Security Chief.

These people were led by Jalendar, the commander from Chahar Gonbad area of Sayad district. They have demanded the government to cooperate with them and implement development projects in their areas. Sayed Anwar Rahmati, the governor of Sar e Pul province and other security officials welcomed them and asked them to cooperate in different areas with the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

It is said that after the peace council was launched, more than 400 anti-government forces have joined this process.

The disastrous policies of Supreme Council for Peace widens the scope of tragedies

Mandegar Daily, No 553, Page One, 20 April 2011

The Supreme Council for Peace has once again urged the Pakistani authorities to release detained Taliban leaders in Pakistani jails. Attaollah Lodin said: "They have asked Pakistani authorities to release imprisoned leaders of the Taliban." But Ahmad Behzad, the deputy of House of Representatives believes that the Afghan government with these one sided privileges given to terrorists widens the scope of tragedies and anarchy.

Mr. Behzad says that the past experience shows that the Taliban leaders who were released have rejoined the ranks of Taliban group and have increased violence and attacks.

The Deputy of House of Representatives added: "Unfortunately, the policies of government and other institutions like the Supreme Council for Peace have not been effective and these flawed policies have increased and caused further violence in the country."

He stressed, " One should analyze that what achievements we have had in bringing peace in the country with the release of imprisoned insurgents from local and American prisons; no wise man can pursue such a false policy that drives the country towards more violence and war. "

Peace process; a one-way Road!

Mandegar Daily, No. 553, Page Six, 20 April 2011

The biggest strategy of Afghanistan government in bringing the country out of these crises is limited to the peace process which never has had a comprehensive definition by the government or the anti-government forces. These false policies of the government insisting on peace and reconciliation with the Taliban have actually given privileges to those people who

never took a single step towards peace. On the other hand, the Taliban have also continued their anti-government struggle by killing and attacking the civilians every other time. Thus we can claim that this peace process is a one-way road. In this one-way road we only move forward towards an undefined goal which is more endangered by other threats before reaching a sustainable end.

Today the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission is being established to consider the interests of both the countries in bringing peace in Afghanistan. What if the interest of both the countries never reaches a single point then what will happen to the peace and security in Afghanistan?

People play the fundamental role in restoration of peace and security

Anis Daily, No 22, Editorial, 20 April 2011

Governments efforts through effective institutions involving the cooperation of people in bringing peace in the country is continuing with the creation and activities of the Supreme Council for Peace and Pak-Afghan Joint Peace Commission to discuss comprehensive solutions in ending war in Afghanistan.

The only effective and strong mechanism to implement peace in the country is the cooperation of people and strengthening these relations between people and the government. Because, the view and decision of people about peace play an important role. We strongly believe that with calling Loya Jirga in three months based on the decision of Hamid Karzai, many of our problems including deciding about the creation of military bases will be solved.

All Taliban prisoners should be released from Guantanamo, Bagram and Pakistani prisons

Arman e Milli, No 22, Page One, 20 April 2011

The Supreme Council for Peace in Afghanistan has asked the Pakistani authorities to release those Taliban leaders who are detained in their country. Atta Ullah Lodin, Deputy of Supreme Council for peace has said that the as a sign of good will they ask the Pakistani authorities to release a number of senior Taliban leaders and other criminals detained in that country so that these people including those important Taliban leaders like Mollah Abdul Ghani brother make contacts with their friends inside Taliban group. We hope that their release will count as the start of a good understanding between government and the Taliban.

Lodin added, although the government of Pakistan did not provide any answer to this demand yet, however we asked the Pakistani delegation led by Yousuf Raza Gilani, the Prime Minister of Pakistan during their visit from Afghanistan and hope that they give positive feedback about it.

Deputy of Supreme Council for also said that when the demand of Taliban are met as removing the names of their leaders from

the UN-blacklist and releasing their prisons from Guantanamo and Pakistani prisons then it will be a good message for bringing peace in Afghanistan.

From Peace Jirga to Commission...

Nukhost Daily, No 57, Page Four, 20 April 2011

Mahmoud Saiqal, former deputy of ministry of foreign affairs says, "Afghanistan's current government lacks the support of majority of people and whatever it says from the address of people has no legitimacy. However, the withdrawal of foreign troops has brought competition between regional countries particularly Pakistan that wants to keep its major influence in the region.

Pointing towards the tripartite join commission of Pakistan, Afghanistan and NATO, Saiqal said that their meetings did not bring any achievement in the economic and other sectors but created many other hurdles for Afghan businessmen.

Saiqal believes that the success of Af-Pak Joint Commission relies on the members of the commission that who are selected from Afghanistan side to be part of this commission.

Peace is the top agenda of Afghanistan government

Anis Daily, No. 21966, Editorial, 23 April 2011

Peace and stability and saving the people of Afghanistan from war has been the top agenda of Afghan government during past nine years. There are two important issues; establishing peace and stability and the transfer of power from international forces to Afghan security officials.

The Afghanistan government pursues both of them at the same time and the people of Afghanistan are tired of war and fighting.

The government's continuous efforts inside and outside Afghanistan to bring peace is going on which will have effective results. Even though the peace process and transfer of power to the Afghan security officials confront major challenges, the people and the Afghan government will not stop their efforts to achieve success in this regard.

The opponents joined the government complain about the state functions

Afghanistan Daily, No 1377, Page One, 23 April 2011

Some of the anti-government forces that have joined the peace process complain about lack of attention by the government to improve their lives. The officials in Peace Strengthening Commission say that since the creation of this commission nearly 8500 armed dissidents have joined the government.

These officials acknowledge that due to a series of restrictions they have not been able to make their promises practical for the opposition groups.

Armed anti-government forces joined the peace process

Arman Milli, No 2027, Page Four, 24 April 2011

The local authorities in Heart province have informed that five armed anti-government forces have joined the government and it is said that another armed anti-government man was arrested in this province. This group of armed men handed over their weapons in the Pashtun Zarghon district of Heart province on April 23, 2011.

The National Security Directorate media office issued a communiqué saying that these people were operating under commander Abdullah who was fighting against the government in this district of Pashtun Zarghun.

been able to escape after an explosion happened in front of the prison entrance.

The possibility of cooperation between someone from inside the prison cannot be undermined as the attack on the ministry of defense.

It should be noted that almost a hundreds of these prisoners are Taliban commanders. With these collective escape, how will look the prospect of transition of power and taking over of responsibilities by the security officials in prisons?

The officials must provide convincing answers to these questions. Now we cannot claim that the Taliban could not face us in the failed and have turned towards secret escape.

A member of Supreme Council for Peace is killed

Cheragh Daily, No 1792, Page One, 25 April 2011

The spokesperson for Helmand governor informed that a local peace council member was killed by unidentified gunmen this province. Dawood Ahmadi said that Haji Zahir, a member of Afghanistan Supreme Council for Peace was killed on April 24 in the Karte Lagan area of Lashkargah in Helmand province.

The killer has escaped after killing this member of peace council.

The presidential palace has strongly condemned the killing of Haji Zahir and called it the act of enemies of Afghanistan.

Kandahar prison or Mullah Nasruddin's Caravan Sarai

Daily 8am, No 1142, 26 April 2011

Kandahar governor said that several hundred prisoners have been able to use the tunnel dug for hundred meters long and escape central Kandahar prison in Southern Afghanistan. According to local authorities in Kandahar, four hundred and seventy five detainees were able to secretly escape from Kandahar's central prison on Monday morning using this tunnel.

Zabihullah Mujahid, Taliban spokesman says that a 320 meters long tunnel was dug in five months to carry out the plan of prisoners escape from Kandahar prison. He says that almost one hundred of the prisoners were Taliban commanders and others are junior militants affiliated to this group.

Meanwhile, the analysts say that the government has made attempts through the Supreme Council of Peace to release Taliban prisoners and so far dozens of these prisoners affiliated with the Taliban have been released.

Mr Osmani says that the Taliban prisoners released rejoin the Taliban ranks and has no effect on the peace process. It has been practically experienced that the Taliban fighters who are released have rejoined the ranks of the insurgents instead of regretting their acts or cooperating with the government.

Contact by Phone between Supreme Council for Peace and the Taliban

Daily 8 am, No. 1141, 25 April 2011

Some members of the Supreme Council for Peace say that in their recent efforts negotiating with the anti-government forces including the Taliban, they have had phone contacts with these groups.

Sarah Surkhabi, a member of the Supreme Council for peace has said that during past two months they have had visits from Herat, Faryab, Baghlan, Wardak and some other areas and the women member of the council have had talks with some of the anti-government forces.

Ms. Surkhabi added: "Almost 107 people have joined the peace process in Faryab province and these days some other angry brothers have contact with us via phone calls. They have promised to cooperate with the government. We talked with them about the role of women in current government and they have told us that the women can work but observing Islamic dress code."

Pak-Afghan join peace committee; another ambiguous aim of Pakistan about Afghanistan

Arman e Milli, No 2029, Tuesday, Page Three, 26 April 2011

The joint Pak-Afghan peace committee is due to work under the supervision of Prime Minister, Army Chief and Head of ISI, which shows that Pakistan is sought to pursue another ambiguous ambition about Afghanistan. Because, ISI played the major role in training Taliban members.

The point to be pondered upon is that the government of Afghanistan already knows that the whereabouts of terrorist's training centers and several times have said that the insurgents are trained across the border in Pakistani soil, then why they have given another supervisory role for Pakistan.

Cowardly Escape!

8am Daily, No 1142, Editorial, 26 April 2011

The officials in Kandahar province say that almost five hundred Taliban prisoners escaped through a tunnel dug in 320 meters long on. Earlier also about nine hundred Taliban prisoners had

Like Hollywood movies, did Taliban escape or were they released?

Mandegar Daily, No. 557, Editorial, 26 April 2011

The digging of tunnel from outside into the prison without any compromise with officials does not seem to be possible. It is unknown that who will be arrested this time in connection to cooperating with the Taliban and ISI; however, it seems unlikely that the government may arrest anyone because the issue of releasing the Taliban prisoners has several times talked of in the analysis of experts and discussed in the behind door meetings of Taliban and government officials. It has been hard for the government to release Taliban prisoners at once with a single decree; therefore, they had no choice but to adopt this method.

This analysis comes when there are serious efforts under the peace program to release Taliban prisoners from Afghan prisons, Guantanamo and Pakistani jails. Thus, we can conclude that Taliban did not escape from Kandahar prison but were released under a deal.

But we must not forget that this release of Taliban prisoners can have happened in exchange for money and without government's involvement.

Senate House:

Political dealings exist in making Taliban run away from prisons

Sam daily, No 1143, Page Three, 27 April 2011

Writer: Qudratullah Jawid

Afghanistan Senate House calls the escape of Taliban prisoners from Kandahar prison an embarrassing act for local authorities and speaks of possible political dealings behind this act.

Although the local authorities informed that they have arrested almost 70 prisoners, the Senate House has strongly protested against these authorities and says that there are big dealings behind this escape.

Mohammad Alam Ezadyar, deputy of Senate House says: there are hands behind this Kandahar plot that try to bring complete instability in Afghanistan.

Sar e Pul provincial governor:

Government's grown capability brought armed opposition to join it

Afghanistan Daily, No 1381, Page One, 27 April 2011

The authorities in Sar e Pul province says that the security officials have boosted up their capabilities in recent months which has caused many anti-government forces to join the peace process; however, the people of the province believe that joining the government has become a source income for many people. Sayed Anwar Rahmati, Sar e Pul provincial governor said: "A number of people who were angry with the government for various reasons now join the government because the main centers of armed opposition forces have been destroyed."

According to him, other major factors that played important role in forcing the anti-government forces to join the government and the peace process are the efforts of intelligence agencies, coordination between international and local forces and taking full control of opposition group's areas in Sayyad district.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Arif Sharifi, head of Sar e Pul provincial council says that lack of trust among people on providing them security and the existence of corruption in the governmental institutions were the reasons that these people were angry with the government and have recently rejoined the peace process.

Development in Afghanistan's ties with neighboring countries

Paiwand Milli Weekly, No 64, Editorial, 27 April 2011

The meetings of Afghanistan government with other regional governments on solving the conflict between the government and anti-government forces have made them take some interest in this area. Afghanistan is now faced with a challenge that a third hand must act in between to bring an end to the war in this country.

Saudi Arabia is the first country that was proposed to mediate in the issue of Afghanistan. However, some other reasons like the relationship between Taliban and Al-Qaida network which has problems with Riyadh questioned the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia on the armed anti-government groups. Other countries like India also showed its willingness to cooperate in peace process with Afghan government and the Taliban.

Considering the military actions against the Taliban, we cannot be optimistic about making this group consented for peace process. The drone attacks in the tribal areas of Pakistan targeting Taliban leadership has not been stopped yet though Pakistan has many times protested against this action and demanded to let it deal with its internal affairs.

Elections Transparency

The recounting process of dubious ballots came to the end

Mandegar Daily, No 553, Page One, 20 April 2011

Officials of the Attorney General Office of Afghanistan say, the recounting process of dubious ballots have been finished in all the provinces of the country except for those of the Kabul. Amanullah Eman, the spokesperson of the AGO said the media: "this process has been carried out under thorough monitoring of the AGO and other respective organs involved in the recounting process of the ballots".

According to Mr. Eman, after the completion of recounting of ballots in Kabul, the court is authorized to issue its final decision regarding the investigation undertaken regarding the ballots.

With regard to this issue, the Spokesperson of the AGO said: "we ensure the transparency of the recounting process. 14 organs are involved in this process in order to better handle the investigation process of the ballots. The AGO is also involved in the said process and we carefully monitor the soundness of the process and it will be accomplished within a period of two weeks".

According to the Spokesperson of the AGO, in addition to the authorized representatives of the AGO, the representative of the dissatisfied and winner candidates, international community, Electoral Complaints Commission, Independent Election Commission and other entities involved in the elections affairs, have supervised the recounting process of the ballots and the result reached thereof, will be transparent and acceptable.

The Deputy Head of the House of Representatives: "Some corrupt individuals are working at Special Electoral Tribunal"

Mandegar Daily, No 556, Page One, 25 April 2011

The House of Representatives informed of the existence of corruption within the Special Electoral Tribunal dedicated to handle elections' case files.

Khalid Pashton, the Deputy Head of the House of Representatives, in a briefing with the media has said that he has overheard a dialogue between an official of the said tribunal with a MP accused of fraud in the election over the phone in which the official solicited money from the accused MP.

However, in reaction to these remarks of the Deputy Head of House of the Representative, the Head of the Special Electoral Tribunal has said they do not know any corrupt individuals serving at the said tribunal. He says if the House of Representatives has identified such individuals it should introduce them to in charge officials. Khalid Pashton says: "there is some evidence available which proves the corrupt nature of some officials of the Special Electoral Tribunal for investigating the case files of the last years' Parliamentary elections. He has also warned that if as a result of the final decision of the Special Electoral Tribunal, some MPs lose their seats at the House of Representatives it will create a chaos in the country.

Ahmad Ziya Rafat was suspended by the Attorney General's Office

Mandegar Daily, No 557, Page One, 26 April 2011

The Attorney General's Office has suspended Ahmad Ziya Rafat, the lecturer of the Kabul University and the former spokesperson of Election Complaints Commission.

Ahmad Ziya Rafat the university lecturer and member and spokesperson of the Election Complaints Commission (a commission which its mission is already finished), has said the Mandegar Daily that the AGO by "misusing its authority" and by an "offensive" behavior and by "revenge" purpose has ordered suspension of my duty through a letter sent to the Kabul University. Rafat accusing the president of Afghanistan in preparing case file against him through the AGO says: "the President of Afghanistan through a decree, has given the AGO and the Supreme Court a free hand to illegally investigate elections complaints".

Corruption

Expropriation of State Lands of Kabul City worth 560 \$Million

Eradah Daily, No 1022, Page One, 18 April 2011

Based on some evidence, about 140 acre of state lands located in Rahman Mina area of Kabul city have been expropriated by Onyx Construction Company, on which some residential townships are being constructed.

Some evidence and documents obtained by the Expropriation Department, Urban Plan and Implementation Department of the Kabul Municipality, District Eight Office, and those obtained from Bagrami district, suggest that the said area which are being turned into residential townships by Onyx Construction Company, have been proven to be the property of the State, following a survey commissioned by the Municipality of Kabul and scrutiny made on land ownership documents remained from 1979.

Based on some quotations, the cost of each 100 square meter in this area is determined to have been variable ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Corruption is a major obstacle to global trust in Afghanistan

Afghanistan Daily, No 1373, Page Two, 18 April 2011

Author: Hafizullah Zaki

In the last two years global criticisms against the Afghan government have been focused on administrative corruption prevailing in the country. The government of Afghanistan admits the existence of corruption within state administrations; however, it does not see itself as the only reason for the corruption implicating some other international institutions and donor country in the corruption.

This fact has been confirmed by the reports and investigations conducted by the donor and non-state insinuations. The fact that corruption has crippled Afghanistan and prevented it from progressing is well perceived by all, however the more important issue is to know what approach are adopted to tackle it. No tangible change would be conceivable in the current situation in the country unless a serious resolute will is formed by the international donor institutions and countries. If not dealt with properly, the current situation will continue and like the trend practiced for several past years; allegations are made against some specific people as a means for reaching political benefits. Given such situation, it is by no means a surprise for Afghanistan to be ranked as the second, third, or even the first corrupt country globally.

Kabul Bank on the verge of bankruptcy resulting from family and political corruption

8 AM Daily, No 1136, Page Four, 19 April 2011

When Mr.Karzai was promising to clear the financial scandal and corruption in Kabul Bank at a press conference, he accused foreign bank inspectors of being involved in creating this \$900,000,000 bank crisis which inflicted huge loss upon the economic and properties of the country. He said international advisors of the country have failed in helping establish a stable financial system and monitor bank transactions. Here the question is:

Who had concealed this very financial scandal?

Now, our president tells the people that he has had the international advisors and an American financial institution to monitor Kabul Bank affairs and performance and they, in return, have ensured of the compliance of Kabul bank's performance with standard rules and procedures. He has done this instead of entrusting monitory task with the Central Bank and other authorized organs. Such remarks of the president are a clear indication of the dysfunctional and weak financial and banking system of the country and poor control of the government on it. The government of Mr.Karzai and the presence of his partners in Kabul Bank and the manner by which the Kabul Bank crisis is being dealt, are serious and alarming issues for the financial system of the government. Instead of talking about the shortcomings and weakness of the financial system of the country, Mr.Karzai puts the major blames and problems on the international inspectors. The taking out of loans which are worth millions of dollars by the shareholders of the Kabul Bank who hold high and deep political and family relationship with the government, is an obvious act of breach of financial and banking rules and laws. Therefore, Mr. Karzai is expected to consider some judicial and monetary disciplinary punishments for the managers and shareholders of the bank so as to safeguard and maintain the credibility of the banking system in the country.

Anyhow, one day we might be informed by American newspapers that the loans taken by the shareholders which are worth \$ 900,000,000 from the Kabul Bank, has been returned to the bank by the payment of either the government or another entity and the shareholders and the head of the banks will return to normal life again without being prosecuted.

Deputy of Revenues & Custom Department of the Finance Ministry:

“Interferences of other organs into the affairs of this department has caused increased corruption”

Afghanistan Daily, No 1377, Page One 23 April 2011

Sayed Mobin Shah, the Deputy of Revenue and Custom Department of the Finance Ministry says: “interferences of

several state organs have caused increased corruption in the offices of Revenue and Customs Department.

According to him, Ministries of Agriculture, Public Health, Refugees and Education tend to partake in monitoring and controlling the properties and reforms process and as a result of their interferences; disorder has been caused within the Customs and Revenue Department. Officials of the Finance Ministry say that cooperation and coordination has been established between the Directorate of Revenues & Custom and other organs, in particular with Anti-Corruption Department and the Attorney General's Office, in order to prevent administrative corruption and to uproot the current corruption within the Revenue & Custom department.

It is to be mentioned that combating corruption is among the top priorities of the government plans. The existence of corruption within the state administrations is counted as one of the major concerns of the international community. So far, state administrations have failed to properly combat corruption at their full capacity and make the international community fulfill their pledges towards Afghanistan which is having the government of Afghanistan spend 50% of their donation funds.

Articles & Interviews

Reconciliation, Impunity and Justice in Afghanistan



By Husain Moen, a Human Rights Analyst

It is clear that justice and peace are among the most desired and universal values of human beings. Also, it is clear that these two values are vague. In some cases, numerous interpretations of these two values have caused contradiction for some people and compatibility for some others. Some people think that in case of having peace and reconciliation, justice is sacrificed. We should not prefer peace to justice. Some others think that there would be no justice without peace. Many others are of the opinion that in the absence of justice, peace would not remain stable. Now the question is this that, apart from different interpretations and conceptions from peace and justice, which one of the above stands can better match the current socio-political circumstances in Afghanistan and which one should be preferred for the time being?

First, we have to make it clear that reconciliation should not be interpreted as immunity of human rights' violators from justice; meaning that if reconciliation and negotiation are made with individuals and groups who are accused of violating human rights, their lives

Stable peace and state building pertain to implementation and restoration of justice. If justice is not secured, the Afghan government would lose peoples' support.

and properties should be immune for the time being and they should never be granted legal amnesty in the long-term. In other words, these perpetrators of crimes should be brought to justice in the right time. Also, in reference to basics of law, no one and no authority can ignore the wasted rights of the people and release perpetrators of human rights violations. Thus, negotiation and reconciliation does not mean amnesty; it means that justice will be secured in an appropriate time with establishment of necessary mechanisms for prosecution of perpetrators. Otherwise, justice has always priority and preference over peace.

One has to know that if justice is sacrificed and perpetrators of human rights violation are granted amnesty, peace would not be stable and this kind of peace would be like a truce between two wars.

Experiences of various countries including Afghanistan have shown that amnesty and immunity granted to criminal individuals, gangs and perpetrators of human rights violation have destabilized peace, and have stirred another round of war. Amnesty granted to perpetrators of human rights violation leads

to socio-political disorder, loss of peoples' trust and confidence in the government and further distance between people and government. Particularly, the victims of past wars who expect/expected justice more than others are frustrated from the government. In this case, since they have lost their family members and have suffered grievance for many years, they protest, ready for revenge and eventually join the insurgents. It's said that most of Taliban insurgent members, are the people who have lost one or several members of their families in the past conflicts and since they have been denied justice, they have joined the insurgents to take revenge or at least, avoid further cruelties that might be committed against them.

Stable peace and state building pertain to implementation and restoration of justice. If justice is not secured, the Afghan government would lose peoples' support. Having stable peace without cooperation and support of the citizenry is very hard and even impossible. Conversely, securing justice increases transparency and accountability and cherishes the hope for future. And the people would be supportive of the government. It is worth mentioning that one of the major reasons of peoples' discontent today is amnesty granted to persons and groups accused of human rights violations. Amnesty given to corrupt and bribable people, kidnappers, thieves, bandits and other ordinary criminals also has added to discontent and has taken away the peoples' trust from the government.

The Afghan people are tired of war and support peace undoubtedly. But at the same time, they demand justice too. Presumably, taking the following initiatives and strategies can bring peace and justice, and make sure that reconciliation won't turn into amnesty:

First, reconciliation and negotiation with the opposite groups should not be subject to amendment of the Constitution; because, the Constitution has respected most of the international charters of human rights. With enforcement of the Constitution most of the rights violated both in the past and present can be looked into, and the peoples' rights can be defended. Probably, the ruling authorities and officials prefer peace to justice and ignore justice and the Constitution in order to get peace. But the civil society networks with coordinating and conducting appeal programs can prevent this. Promotion of people awareness is also very important. For this purpose, some awareness-raising programs and activities should be designed and carried out so that the authorities are put under the public opinion pressures and avoid violating and ignoring the victims' rights and justice.

Documentation of ongoing conflicts is also of high importance. Documentation helps reconciliation and justice process and is of particular importance in securing justice. Collecting documents and evidences on war crimes and crimes against humanity leads to awareness promotion led by civil society networks and media groups. This way, the authorities would be pressured not to grant amnesty and immunity to the war criminals.

Yet, it is not clear that how many organizations or individuals have taken measures for collecting documents and evidences. But it is noticed that for the purpose of threatening and intimidating the people, the insurgents themselves also have collected, circulated and broadcast films and evidences about their crimes that are very effective for documentation purposes and finally their prosecution.

Consultation Conference with Civil Society Organizations And Victims of the Massacre of 24 of Hut, 1979

On Monday, May 2, 2011 Afghanistan Watch organized a Consultation Conference with Victims of 24 Hut Uprising of March 1979 and Civil Society organizations based in Herat. The event was held at the conference room of the Regional Office of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in Herat.

The event brought together some 47 participants of different social, historical and political groups in Herat. They included participants and witnesses of the uprising as well as authors, cultural figures and representatives of civil society organizations with knowledge and keen interest in the history of the region.

The conference was a key component of Afghanistan Watch's ongoing efforts to document and investigate the popular uprising of 15 March 1979 in Herat against the Soviet-backed government of Hizb-e Demokratik Khalq or People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Since November 2010, when Afghanistan Watch opened a field office in the city of Herat it has been making systematic efforts to document and establish the truth of the 24 Hut uprising and the government response to those participating in the bloody revolt. During the past months, the organization through its dedicated team in Herat has been collecting hundreds of testimonies of victims and witnesses of the uprising. In addition to these crucial personal stories, information and evidences have been gathered from a number of secondary sources.

The main purpose of the consultative conference was to discuss various aspects of the uprising with participants and victims of the uprising as well as analysts, authors and members of the local civil society organizations.

The conference was opened by Niamatullah Ibrahim, Program Director of Afghanistan Watch who introduced the participants to the organization's documentation program, goals and methodology. In his opening remarks, he stressed the need for investigating, documenting and remembering painful periods of the history of war and violence in the country. He explained how the discussions within the conference would help shed light on different aspects of the 24 Hut Uprising and supplement and strengthen information obtained through personal stories of the victims and witnesses of the uprising.

Two important sessions of the conference were opened by remarks of Mr. Abdul Qadir Rahimi, the Head of Regional Office of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in Herat. Mr. Rahimi himself a native of Herat and a witness of the uprising, opened the sessions on Background and Reasons of the Uprising and the Government Response toward the Participants of the Uprising with his personal experiences as well as broad historical analysis of the situation at the national level. Colonel Majidi and Colonel Waziri both leaders of a revolt



within the military division 17 in Herat that played a key role in support of the popular uprising within the province opened sessions on the Nature of 24 Hut Uprising and How to Confront the Legacies of the Uprising respectively. The two speakers opened the sessions with remarkable personal stories and observation of the environment before and during the uprising.

In each session short speeches by the main speakers were followed by open discussion by all participants. These discussions revealed different and sometimes contradictory narratives of the uprisings and its legacy that continue to provoke intense feelings until the present day. Despite some differences, the participants stressed the importance of documenting and telling and remembering stories of painful incidents like the 24 Hut.

The conference was concluded following a discussion of the relationship between peace and justice. This session was opened by a presentation of Sayed Fahim, Transitional Justice Officer of the AIHRC in Herat. Mr. Fahim discussed two important documents: the Action Plan for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation and the Amnesty Bill passed by Lower House of the National Assembly of Afghanistan in 2007. He discussed how the two documents are representatives of two approaches with regard to coming to terms with the legacies of war and conflict in the country.

The final discussions centered on what should and can be done to document and learn from the history of war and conflict in the country. The participants praised documentation initiatives taken by civil society organizations like Afghanistan Watch and called for expansion of such efforts to cover other parts of the country.



New publications

Analysis: Pakistan military strives to secure central Afghan role

Reuters / By Chris Allbritton / April 19, 2011

The Pakistani military is scrambling to shore up ties with Afghanistan to ensure a central role in a negotiated settlement of the conflict as the beginning of a U.S. military withdrawal draws closer.

Uneasy neighbors Pakistan and Afghanistan took an important step last weekend, agreeing to include Pakistani military and intelligence officials in a commission seeking peace with the Taliban, giving Pakistan's security establishment a formal role in any talks.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/19/us-pakistan-usa-idUSTRE73I3T820110419>

Missed Opportunities

The Impact of DDR on SSR in Afghanistan

United State Institute of Peace (USIP) / April 2011

This report reviews the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in Afghanistan, assessing the extent to which the DDR program met its goals and the effect this had on security sector reform (SSR). The report also focuses on the international community's failure to include DDR as part of the initial power-sharing settlement embodied in the Bonn Agreement, the implications this posed for rival groups' security, and the effects this had on both DDR and SSR. This report is one of a series focusing on DDR and SSR organized by the United States Institute of Peace's Security Sector Governance Center.

http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR270-Missed_Opportunities.pdf

The Ongoing Saga of the Parliament and the Special Court

Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) / by: Martine van Bijlert / April 22, 2011

Seven months after the Wolesi Jirga vote, and three months after the inauguration of Parliament, MPs are still not sure who will finally be declared the winners and losers of the election. Rumours surrounding the investigations by the Special Court have been wildly contradictory and have kept them on edge. It is a perfect example of Afghan politics: pressure, ambiguity, negotiations, posturing, confusion and suspicions of double-dealing. In the tug-of-war between the executive and the legislative, the President for the moment seems to be coming out on top – again.

<http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=1642>

Afghanistan: UN Says Political and Humanitarian Concerns Don't Mix

EurasiaNet / by Aunohita Mojumdar / April 18, 2011

Humanitarian agencies working in Afghanistan have been saying it for years. Now the United Nations is also admitting it: Humanitarian aid workers are facing increasing risks in many conflict zones where assistance is most needed and not much is being done to protect them.

A new report, released on April 12 by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), says the UN has failed to maintain neutrality by playing both a political and a humanitarian role in Afghanistan, a fact that the UN's political leadership may find an embarrassing admission, and says Taliban militants now see the UN as a legitimate target.

<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63318>

Lack Of Trust Among Afghans Is Major Stumbling Block To Peace Talks

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty / By Abubakar Siddique / April 16, 2011

Lack of trust is emerging as the No. 1 problem as Afghan President Hamid Karzai pushes for a national reconciliation with the Taliban.

Faced with increased international military operations, Taliban elements appear to be extremely skeptical of the peace overtures that Afghan and international officials have made to entice the insurgents into negotiations.

While Western media have periodically reported on secret talks, there have been no formal negotiations.

http://www.rferl.org/content/lack_of_trust_afghans_major_stumbling_block_peace_talks/4745567.html

Regional Powers Gear Up For Afghan Intrigue -- Even As West Looks Away

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty / By Daud Khattak / April 30, 2011

To hear the Americans and Europeans talk, it's the beginning of the end game in Afghanistan. The United States and its allies are rushing for the exit. In Western capitals the discussion is all about troop withdrawals, political settlements, and negotiations with the Taliban.

But that's only how the West sees it. The picture looks rather different from the vantage point of leaders in South Asia and the Middle East. Regional powers are gearing up for a period of renewed intrigue. The rest of the world should prepare itself for an intensification of long-established rivalries and a rise in instability inside Afghanistan itself.

http://www.rferl.org/content/regional_powers_gear_up_for_afghan_intrigue_even_as_west_looks_away/16798710.html

Don't Negotiate Over The Heads Of The Afghan People

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty / By Muhammad Tahir / April 22, 2011

Everywhere you turn, it seems, someone is talking about talking with the Taliban.

The Europeans have been in favor of the negotiating with the Taliban for years. Now Washington has jumped on the bandwagon. And it's not just U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who recently gave a much-noted speech about the impossibility of winning the war in Afghanistan by military means alone. She's supported in that by David Petraeus, who commands U.S. and international forces in the country, and other U.S. generals. The Obama administration recently approved \$50 million in support of Afghan government efforts to "reintegrate" the Taliban into society.

http://www.rferl.org/content/commentary_dont_negotiate_over_heads_of_afghan_people/9502595.html

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ABOUT AFGHANISTAN WATCH

The Afghanistan Watch is an independent, non-governmental and non-political organization registered with the Ministry of National Economy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It envisions a democratic, peaceful, tolerant and just society in which all citizens have equal opportunities to realize their human potentials.

Its mission is to undertake activities that will promote peace, justice, and a culture of mutual tolerance and respect for human rights in Afghanistan. As its core values the organization is strongly committed to democracy, justice, human rights, sustainable and balanced social and economic development of the country and impartiality, independence and professionalism as guiding principles of its activities.

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