

# INTRA-AFGHAN DIALOGUE AND THE ROADMAP TOWARDS PEACE

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Based on the peace agreement between the Taliban and the US, the intra-Afghan dialogue was planned to commence on 10th March, 2020. However, the dialogue was postponed due to disagreements over the prisoners' release.

On 2nd September, 2020, the Afghan government announced that all prisoners of the Taliban have been released, except 7 prisoners who are convicted of killing 7 French and Australian soldiers and might be shifted to Qatar. Here, Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) analysis the intra-Afghan dialogue.

## **Issue of Prisoners and American Troops**

The intra-Afghan dialogue was supposed to commence after the agreement of peace between the US and the Taliban. As the prisoners release issue was the main obstacle towards the dialogue, the latest development in this regard was welcomed by the countries in region, the UK, Germany and the US.

Zalmi Khalilzad, US special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation has commented on prisoner release issue and has said that Afghans are currently much closer to a golden opportunity of bringing peace to Afghanistan and the must take advantage of it. In addition, declarations of Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of high Council for National Reconciliation about prisoners' release and

commencement of intra-Afghan dialogue indicate that Afghans are truly presented with an opportunity for peace, which should be efficiently utilized.

According to the agreement between the Taliban and the US in Doha, the US will withdraw all of their armed forces from five bases of Afghanistan. Although the US has pulled out a number of soldiers, but on 3rd September, 2020, the US secretary of defense proclaimed that 3,000 additional soldiers will be withdrawn from Afghanistan in the near future. If the drawdown of US forces continues and the withdrawal is accomplished according the schedule, it will be considered as a great development in the peace process. Although the US president has given green light to the pullout and has stated that number of US soldiers will be reduced from 5,000 to 4,500 before the presidential election in US, but the US department of defense may have different viewpoint in this regard.

### **The Ceasefire**

Based on the Doha agreement, the Taliban will discuss ceasefire with the Afghan delegation during the dialogue. Although the prisoners release process has been completed, but war is still intensely in progress and both sides are facing heavy casualties.

Despite the release of the last group of inmates, the ongoing hostilities in Nangarhar, Baghlan, Sar-e-Pol had heavy casualties to both sides including civilians. Implementation of a proper mechanism for ceasefire can prevent those who are striving to sabotage the peace process. If ceasefire is not implemented, continuity of war will give opportunity to those local and international elements, whose interests are at risk, to create obstacles for the Afghan peace. For instance, attempts might be made to increase violence or assassinate prominent political figures, which may cause distrust between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Therefore, an environment of trust should be established so that any potential risks and obstacles can be avoided.

### **Members of Negotiating Teams; Familiarization and Comparison**

The Afghan government has appointed 20-member delegation for the intra-Afghan dialogue which include scholars, political parties, youths, women and civil

activists. The delegation contains members who seem to have insufficient experience in resolving peace-related and national matters. Still, the government expects the delegation to attain remarkable achievements in bringing peace to Afghanistan. This is also due to the fact that Masoom Stanikzai, the leader of negotiating team is an experience person and has worked as a high ranking official of many key positions of the government.

Although the government has appointed a balanced team by including various political parties, but Hezb-e-Islami party has declared that they will also participate in face to face negotiation with the Taliban. Such viewpoints not only raise questions about the authorities of the delegation, but indicate diverse ideologies and standpoints of the nation. Therefore, in order to establish an integrated viewpoint about peace, the government needs to closely work with prominent political figures, representatives of different tribes and academic personalities and obtain their support.

Led by Masoom Stanikzai, member of the negotiating team includes: Zakia Wardak, Shahla Farid, Mohammad Natiqi, Nadar Nadari, Abdul Mateen Baig, Batoor Dustam, Khalid Noor, Sharifa Zurmati, Rasool Talib, Ayoub Ansari, Kalimullah Naqibi, Amin Ahmadi, Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, Habiba Sarabi, Enayatullah Baligh, Hafiz Mansoor, Zainab Muahed, Zarar Ahmad Moqbal and Ghairat Baheer.

On the other hand, the 20-member delegation of the Taliban mostly contain high ranking officials of their movement. 13 members of their negotiating team are members of the committee (Shura) of the Taliban, indicating that the members of negotiating team have ample authority in decision making.

Sher Mohammad Abas Stanikzai as the leader, the negotiating team of the Taliban include: Shaikh Abdul Hakim, Mawlavi Abdul Kabir, Mawlavi Noor Mohammad Saqib, Mulla Mohammad Zahid Ahmadzai, Mulla Sherin Akhond, Mulla Abdul Latif Mansoor, Qari Din Mohammad, Mulla Abdul Salam Hanafi, Mulla Abdul Manan Omari, Shaikh Mohammad Qasem Turkman, Mulla Mohammad Fazel Mazloom, Mulla Noorullah Noori, Mulla Abdul Haq Wasiq, Mawlavi Matiulhaq Khalis, Mohammad Suhail Shaheen, Molla Mohammad Nabi Omari, Anas Haqqani, Khairullah Khairkhwa, Mawlavi Shahabuddin Dilawar and Mulla Farid.

## Priorities for the Intra-Afghan Dialogue

During the intra-Afghan dialogue, discussions over interim government, structure of the government, parliament, the senate, provincial and district councils, municipality selections, public health, education, reconstruction, working women at governmental offices, freedom of speech, academic ranking of religious scholars, water flow control, electricity, gas, trade, and some other matters will require longer period in order to reach an agreement.

Therefore, both sides should commence discussion about narcotics, security, all-inclusiveness of the government, corruption, transparency and accountability in an effective manner, so that the people can enjoy peace and security as soon as possible. This is because the mentioned matters have always threatened the security, social stability and economic development of Afghanistan. In this regard, the international community also encourages Afghan officials to take actions about these matters. However, implementation of a comprehensive ceasefire can eliminate many obstacles on the way towards resolving these matters. If ceasefire does not happen, Afghans might lose the opportunity for peace.

Also, neighboring countries are expected to stand beside Afghans during the historic period of bringing peace. This is because a lasting peace is not only advantageous for Afghanistan, but will have positive effect on the economic development and prosperity of the region.

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## THE LATEST FLASH FLOODS IN AFGHANISTAN AND A PERSISTING NEED FOR HUMANITARIAN AIDS



Last week, 14 provinces of Afghanistan were affected by flash floods, causing heavy losses to civilians. Charikar city of Parwan province was the most affected area, while Kapisa, Kabul, Maidan Wardak, Panjshir, Logar, Paktia, Paktika, Nangarhar, Khost, Nooristan, Bamyan, Laghman and Ghazni have also witnessed various losses.

Although Afghanistan is among the countries which experiences various natural disasters every year, but the recent catastrophe caused by flash floods were distinctively harmful since similar disaster has rarely occurred within the last decade. Here, we evaluate the latest floods of the country.

### **Casualties and Damages**

On 1st September, 2020, Ghulam Bahauddin, Minister for disaster management of Afghanistan stated that the flooding in Parwan, Kapisa, Panshir, Maidan Wardak, Logar, Kabul, Nangarhar, Paktia, Khost, Nooristan, Kunar, Laghman, Bamyan and Ghazni has killed more than 190 people, inured 172, and 1055 homes

and buildings got completely washed away and 2960 homes were partially harmed.

In addition, 10 thousand quadrupeds were killed, thousands of hectares of agricultural land, gardens and markets were washed away, and many vehicles were harmed the floods in 14 provinces.

Among the affected territories, Charikar city of Parwan has experienced the highest number of casualties and damages. According Ghulam Bahaudin Jailani, minister for disaster management, 121 people are killed, 136 got injured and 15 are missing due to floods in Parwan. Most of the injured and killed people were children and women. According to minster Jailani, rescue teams are still operating in the area and the number of casualties may rise.

Due to the flash floods in Parwan, around 500 houses, shops, hundreds of hectares of agricultural land and gardens, and a number of vehicles were also damaged and washed away. Since the rescue operations have not been concluded, the reports of casualties and financial losses may vary in the forthcoming days.

Also, the canal of charikar city has also been damaged. The canal was a key source of watering agricultural lands, gardens and underground water reserves for most of the people of Parwan.

In addition to Parwan province, Kapisa, Kabul, Nangarhar, Maidan wardak, Paktia, and Panjshir respectively had 20, 10, 8, 8, 1, and 3 casualties due to floods. Although the financial losses have not been estimated, but the floods have possibly caused hundreds of millions Afghanis worth of losses to the people.

### **Situation of Humanitarian Aids**

In order to combat the disaster in the affected 14 provinces including Parwan, many renowned figures, government officials, charity organizations, compassionate individuals and security forces stepped up to help the victims of the flash floods.

Tamim Azimi, Spokesman of the state ministry for disaster management of Afghanistan has stated that food supplies have been distributed to 14 thousand

affected families in the 14 provinces. He has further added that the relief operations of the government will include distribution of 50,000 AFN to the families of each martyred and 25,000 AFN to the families of injured individuals. So far, 106 families have received the monetary assistance in Parwan.

The Afghan National Army has also contributed in various ways, including rescuing the victims who were stuck in the affected areas.

Likewise, international organizations such as USAID, UNICEF, WFP, the Red Crescent society of Iran and the NATO have also announced aids for the victims of the flash floods in Afghanistan. Also, some prominent political and non-political figures, charity organizations, companies, and civil societies of the country have presented their humanitarian aids to the victims in 14 provinces. Among them were Ehsas charity organization and the AIMA (Afghanistan Islamic Medical Association) whose volunteers have taken part in rescue and relief operations in Parwan and Maidan Wardak and financially assisted 110 affected families in Parwan. In addition, volunteers of AIMA have provided health services for the affected families of Parwan province.

### **Need for Decisive Steps**

Families are undoubtedly suffering from the effects of flash floods in 14 provinces of the country. Millions of dollars need to be spent in order for the people to recover from the damages. Therefore, humanitarian aids must be spent transparently and should be kept away from corrupt individuals. In addition, affected territories should be categorized and should be prioritized according to urgency of assistance.

Firstly, roads, streets, residential areas, agricultural lands, gardens, shops, canals and gutters should be cleaned, which according to government official, the process has already commenced and some roads and streets have been cleaned up and re-opened transportation. President Ashraf Ghani has assured the governor of Parwan that he has appointed the ministry of finance and operations unit of the president's office to prepare a reconstruction plan for Charikar River.

Secondly, the affected families should supported to an extent so that their homes can at least become fit for living, though, such action requires sufficient budget



and assistance from the society. In addition, distribution of residential lands to victims might be necessary as the washed away homes and lands may not be habitable.

Thirdly, the affected families should be helped to return to their homes. In this regard, assistance from the government and the people is undeniably needed.

Some affected families have utterly or partially lost their properties. Therefore, they should be helped so that they can stand on their feet once again.

## **Conclusion**

The country got hit by floods when it is still recovering from the severe effects of the coronavirus pandemic. To support the survivors of floods, many national and international organizations, individuals, political and non-political figures contributed to the emergency disaster relief operations, which is appreciated. However, after the basic emergency relief services, supporting the survivors to get back to their normal lives is vital and will cost millions of Afghani.

Although it is the responsibility of the government to facilitate normal lives to the victims of the flash floods, but it is also a moral responsibility of national and international establishments to honorably back the people of Afghanistan in difficult conditions. Aids from local charity organizations, businessmen, and compassionate individuals of the society are also valuable. In addition, the role of mosques to media centers in shaping the thoughts and monitoring relief operations of the government is key and vital. Also, research institutes can uncover the roots of the disaster, prepare innovative strategies and plans for resolving disasters related matters, and propose precautionary measures via researches to the authorities for decision making.

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