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REVIEW

On 19 December 2005 the Afghan Parliament came together for the first time in three decades. The inaugural gathering began with a reading from the Koran and was followed by a brief speech by the ageing former King *Zahir Shah*, who was ousted in a coup in 1973. "I thank God that today I am participating in a ceremony that is a step towards rebuilding Afghanistan after decades of fighting. The people of Afghanistan will succeed!" the 91-year-old *Zahir Shah* told the assembly to applause. The parliamentary and

provincial council elections were held on 18 September 2005. Afterwards, the first results were declared on 9 October. Final results were delayed by accusations of fraud, and were announced on 12 November. Former warlords and their followers gained the majority of seats in both the Lower House and provincial councils. Women won around 28% of the seats in the Lower House, six seats more than the 25% guaranteed in the Afghan Constitution which was launched in 2004. Approximately twelve million voters



were eligible to vote for the 249 seats of the *Wolesi Jirga*, the Lower House of Parliament, and the 34 provincial councils.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FEBRUARY 2007

In the month of February, the MPs of the *Wolesi Jirga* wanted to discuss the government budget for the year 1386 (2007/8). However, the issue of insecurity in the country, MPs personal security and

the controversial reconciliation bill came to the surface. Former *Mujahideen* tried to give the reconciliation bill support and conducted a demonstration to put pressure on President *Karzai* by a relatively disappoint-

ing turn out of about 15,000 former *Mujahideen* in the Kabul Stadium. President *Karzai* has said that he will consult some experts before signing the bill. *Mujahideen* leaders were expecting a much



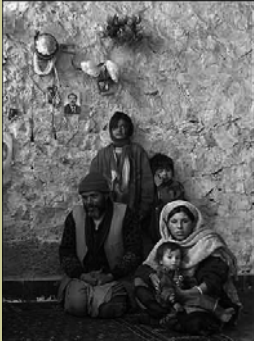
larger turn out than this. WJ MP *Shakila Hashami* appeared on a private television channel to discuss her own personal security concerns after her daughter was killed a few months ago, and to inform the public not only about her own personal security concerns but to let the public know about the need for reform in the Afghan National Police (ANP) force, not only in the higher posts but the need to reform the policemen who are in daily contacts with ordinary Afghans. The month of February was also witness to the announcement of a newly formed Parliamentary Group called "*khat-e-seowom*" (Third-Line). This group is made up of moderate to pro democracy MPs. The budget was still in the WJ - MPs say that they will only approve the budget if the salaries of the public employees are raised. The Ministry of Finance has proposed a raise of US-\$ 4 in the monthly salaries of the government of Afghanistan in the proposed budget for the year 1386 (2007/8).

MARCH 2007

In the first week of March, coalition forces were involved in shooting of civilians in the province of Nangarhar, following a suicide attack. Lower House MPs from the province of Nangarhar were very vocal on the incident happened on the 4th of March, when coalition forces allegedly fired on civilians after they claim to have come under attack from a suicide bomber and afterwards from small gun fire. Local people said that coalition forces then fired on the civilians killing between 8 - 16 people and wounding more than 20. Coalition forces said they returned fired after small

arms were fired at them. MPs from Nangarhar province accused the coalition forces for indiscriminately firing on the civilians. Some MPs have said that incidences such as this one have kept repeating over the past five years and it was time to stop the killing of innocent people. One MP said that the Lower House should call in American Commander General *McNeil* for questioning. Another MP said, "the Human Rights Watch (HRW) kept bringing up old wounds to the attention of the people, why isn't the HRW not reporting on incidence such as this one." An MP said that those behind the killing of the civilians should be prosecuted in Afghanistan under Afghan laws. Media reported that soon after the incident Thousands of people took to the streets and demonstrated. Two days later Nangarhar provincial officials and elders asked for the prosecution of those behind the killings. Two days later, media reported that NATO forces were involved in bombing two houses killing 9 civilians in the province of Kapisa.

Following the two incidents, the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House) issued a statement, the statement said: the Meshrano Jirga condemns the killing of 9 civilians in Kapisa province and the killing of 10 and injuring of 35 in Nangarhar province, as well as similar incidents that had taken place in other parts of the country, which had killed many of innocent people. Media reported that the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House) condemned the searching of *Muhammad Afzal Ahmadzai*, Upper House Senator two days ago in the Khak-i-Jabar district of Kabul by ISAF and local police force. Mr. *Ahmadzai* said to the media that foreign troops



accompanied by local police entered his home Friday afternoon and searched the house without finding anything. He added that foreign forces were often misguided by misinformation and wrong intelligence, which was the reason behind people distancing themselves from the government.

On the 5th of March, the Lower House called in the Minister of Interior, *Zarar Ahmad Moqbil* for questioning. Just prior to questioning some Lower House MPs questioned the competency of the executives of the Lower House. They said that Lower House Speaker was not informing them about the agenda of the day prior to the meeting and only announced the agenda minutes before the start of the session.

MPs directed many questions to the Minister of Interior about insecurity in the country, lack of coordination between ISAF, Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army and the continued appointment of unmerited officials to the posts of provincial governors and chiefs of police. Minister *Moqbil* said that the reform in the Ministry of Interior was continuing and he is doing his utmost best to appoint suitable officials. Mr. *Moqbil* added that the Ministry of Interior was a difficult institution to reform for the reasons that this ministry was once working for one party during the communist government and then the Mujahideen took over this ministry, he did not elaborate further on this. Minister *Moqbil* also said that for better public organization the number of the police force will be raised from 62,000 to 80,000.

The now infamous reconciliation bill was amended by President *Hamid Karzai* and sent to the WJ for re-

approval. The President shortened the original bill from 11 articles to 6. The WJ approved the amended bill on 10th of March. Here is the unofficial translation of the amended text: Since the jihad, resistance and the just struggles of the people for defending the religion and the nation are the highest glory of the history of our country and are considered our outstanding national honours, and from a different point it is necessary to give the national reconciliation policy certainty, end fighting, bloodshed, strengthen national unity and create trust between the various groups of the society, therefore the following articles will be approved:

Article one:

This bill has been adopted for the purpose of strengthening reconciliation and national stability, ensuring the highest national interests of the country, ending hostilities and creating trust for all those who have been involved in the fighting, based on ensuring security for them, as long as they remain obedient to the constitution and binding laws of the country.

Article two:

The National Assembly of Afghanistan for the purpose of strengthening peace and stability and ending fighting invites all armed groups opposed to the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to join the strengthening of stability and national reconciliation process of Afghanistan and participate in the strengthening of the government and reconstruction.

Article three:

1- All political sides and opposition groups who have been fighting each other before the establishment of the Interim Administration, for the purpose of reconciliation between the various groups of the society, strengthening peace and stability and beginning a new life in the contemporary political



history of Afghanistan, are included in the national reconciliation program and general amnesty, as well as benefiting from all the legal rights and will be immune from prosecution.

2- A number of persons and groups that are still armed and opposed to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, after this bill is approved, leave their armed opposition, join the national reconciliation, respect the constitution and other laws of Afghanistan, as well as obeying them, will take advantage from the benefits of this bill.

3- The provisions of item 1 and 2 of this article do not interfere with personal cases and crimes of a person against a person.

Article four:

1- Persons under prosecution for crimes against domestic and foreign security of the country will not be covered by this bill.

2- Persons convicted by courts for allegedly committing domestic and foreign national security crimes, on the basis of a proposal from the strengthening of peace commission and the commitment of the mentioned persons on the basis of ending anti government activities and the guarantees of the mentioned commission will be given amnesty or decreased punishment in accordance with individual decrees.

Article five:

To help end hostilities and lack of trusts between the government and armed opposition sides, strengthen stability and national reconciliation, an extraordinary commission will be appointed to cooperate with the strengthening of peace commission and pave the ground for the oppo-

sition sides to join the strengthening of stability and national reconciliation process.

Article six:

This bill is binding after signed by the President and will be published in an official publication.

On the 12th of March, the Lower House commission sent to the province of Nangarhar on a fact finding mission reported to the House. Members of the commission were mostly MPs from Nangarhar Province. The two members of the commission who spoke said that according to local people 10 to 16 people were killed and more than 20 were injured when coalition forces opened fire on the civilians. A members of the commission said that the action of coalition forces were unacceptable for the reason that they are here in Afghanistan to protect the Afghan people, so they should not be afraid of the Afghan people. The same member said the coalition forces kept firing on the people for as much as 10km from the initial point of attack; many cars were still there with bullet marks on them. In this attack not only the people of Nangarhar feel victim but many others from other provinces who were travelling were killed and injured. Another member of the commission said that coalition and NATO forces should try to adapt themselves to the lives of the Afghan and not make life difficult for the Afghans.

The same member said that Afghans cars were not allowed to pass coalition and NATO cars and tanks even if they have a seriously ill passenger who needs to be taken to the hospital. Members of the commission also called for the prosecution of coalition soldiers





under Afghan laws and they asked that NATO and coalition commanders should come to the Lower House and answer MPs questions.

After the new-year holiday on the 21st of March, the Third-Line parliamentary group in the Lower House said that the exchange of Taliban prisoners for the Italian journalist showed that the Afghan government has a double standard policy for Afghans and foreigners. The Afghan interpreter is still being held by the Taliban. This action of the Afghan government would give the Pakistanis this hint that they do not need to cooperate with the Afghan government in the future and would blame the Afghan government for the problems in Afghanistan, and threats to journalists would increase.

Media reported that the coalition and Afghan police forces searched the house of *Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayaf*, Lower House MP from Kabul and former Jihadi Leader on the 23rd of March. On Sunday the 25th of March following this incident, a number of MPs were very vocal and asked the government to stop these kinds of searches by foreign forces. The Third-Line group said that the agenda to discuss the searching of one of the MPs house was an indication that the WJ was busy working for the MPs and not representing the people of Afghanistan. Later on the Afghan Ministry of Interior said that the house of Mr. *Sayaf* was not searched but the security guards hut was searched, which is located a long distance from the house.

On the 2nd of April, the formation of the National United Front (NUF) was announced by the media. This Front was launched at the five star intercontinental hotel. Majority members of this Front are members

of the former northern alliance but there are some new members like the grandson of the former King, *Mustafa Zahir* and two former high ranking officials of the communist government, *Sayed Mohammad Gulabzoy* and *Noorulhaq Olumi*, in this new Front. Media reported that the following persons are members of the steering committee of the National United Front:

- *Burhanudin Rabani*, Head of the Front, Jamiate Islami Party Leader, former President from 1992 to 1996 and Lower House MP from Badakhshan province.
- *Ahmad Zia Massood*, current First Vice President and former Ambassador to Moscow during the Interim and Transitional governments.
- *Mohammad Yunus Qanooni*, Lower House Speaker and MP from Kabul.
- *Mohammad Qasim Fahim*, advisor to the President on Security Affairs and former Minister of Defence in the Transitional government.
- *Mustafa Zahir*, current Head of the Environment Protection Agency and grandson of the former King.
- *General Abdul Rashid Dostum*, Junbish Party Leader.
- *Noorulhaq Olumi*, Lower House MP from Kandahar province and former high ranking communist general.
- *Sayed Mohammad Gulabzoy*, Lower House MP from Khost province and Minister of Interior during the communist.



- *Sayed Mustafa Kazemi*, current speaker of the Front and Lower House MP from Kabul.
- *Mohammad Ismail*, current Minister of Water and Energy.
- *Mohammad Nayeem Farahyee*, Lower House MP from Farah province.
- *Mohammad Akbari*, Lower House MP from Bamyan.
- *Hilaludin Hilal*, Lower House MP from Baghlan province and former communist.
- *Qaderia Yazdanparas*, Lower House MP from Kabul.
- *Mohammad Amin Oqad*, former Deputy Leader of Hezb-e-Islami.
- *Manssor Naderi*, Lower House MP from Baghlan province.
- *Fazal Karim Imaq*, Lower House MP from Takhar province.
- *Taj Mohammad Wardak*, Minister of Interior for short time in the Transitional government.
- *Amir Lalay*, Lower House MP from Kandahar province.
- *Hamidullah Tokhai*, Lower House MP from Zabul province and former Hezb-e-Islami commander.
- *Shakir Kargar*, Lower House MP from Faryab Province and former communist.
- *Sidique Chakari*, Jamate party Deputy Leader, Headed

by Rabani.

- *Khudai Nazari Sarmachar*, Lower House MP from Farah and former communist.
- *Shahmardan Qol*, Lower House MP from Balkh province.

One day after the NUF was formed, some members of the Lower House criticized the formation of this Front and said that this Front wants to amend the constitution; this is clearly against the constitution because members of this Front are behind putting the current constitution together and approving it. Another MP said to the media that members of this Front are supported by foreign countries and have armed militias. *Mustafa Kazemi*, the Front spokesman said that whoever makes this claim that members of this Front have armed militias or get support from foreign countries, they have to prove that or they are guilty for making false claims. After attending the South Asian Association Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meeting in India, where Afghanistan became a member of the SAARC, *Hamid Karzai*, the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in his first ever reaction to the newly formed National United Front said, "Parliamentary system is a good system, however, a Parliamentary system needs strong institutions, a true national army and police. For Afghanistan we chose the Presidential system to protect Afghanistan from the interferences of the neighbouring countries".

CONCLUSION

Lower House MPs at least in the Parliament tried to raise their voice on the continuing loss of the Af-

Mr. Daoud Sultanzoy comes from the province of Ghazni. He was elected to the Lower House of the Afghan Parliament. He is a member of the Economic Commission in the Lower House and member of the Third-Line parliamentary group in the Lower House. He worked as a Pilot with the Afghan national carrier, ARIANA prior to 1978, when the communist took the government in a coup. He lived in the United States during the former Soviet Union occupation of Afghanistan. He returned to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in late 2001.



„In their declared objectives they are long on criticism and fall way short on practical and realistic answers in resolving the problems they point out to. This is even more noteworthy in light of the fact that the problems they point out to were of their own creation to begin with and continue to be so as we speak.“

ghan civilian lives, which is becoming a concern to the government as well as the Afghan public and the end result could be loss of reputation and lack of the Afghan public confidence in NATO and coalition forces. The reconciliation bill made allot of news in the month of February and the month of March 2007. The Lower House re-approved the amended bill; the bill is now in the corner of the President to be signed by him into a binding law.

The other issue that made news in the lower House was the searching of the guards hut outside the house of former Jihadi Leader and Lower House MP from Kabul, *Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayaaf* by a mixed coalition and local police force. Issues such as this one pre-empt the regular agendas of the Lower House and some time take most of the time and not much time is left for the prepared agenda. The Lower House internal rules of procedures are still not approved almost a year and half after the Parliament was inaugurated; some new articles are added or amended. On legal issues, there are a handful of MPs who make a contribution to the discussion. The announcement of the National United Front made news inside and outside the Lower House and it continues to make news.

GUEST CONTRIBUTION

Written by *Daoud Sultanzoy*, MP of Wolesi Jirga

Recently the expected announcement of the “National United Front of Afghanistan” became official. Familiar faces with known backgrounds were paraded as the shining stars of this Front. This could be construed as a national affront to this nation. After all, some of these exact same people have been

responsible for many sicknesses this nation suffers from to say the least. According to the list they have published here are some of the names: *Burhanudin Rabani* the ex President, *Zia Masoud* The Vice President, Marshall *Faheem* the ex Defense Minister and currently President Karzai's chief advisor on security matters, *Yunus Qanuni* the Speaker of Parliament an ex Interior and Education Minister, General *Dostum* President's Military Chief of Staff, *Mostafa Kazimi* a Member of Parliament and an ex Commerce Minister, General *Noor al-Haq Olumi* a Parliament Member and the military ruler of the western zone in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, *Gulabzoy* a Member of Parliament and Interior Minister during the Soviet occupation. These are the names of some of the star members of the Front.

Many opinions have been expressed about this “Front”, a vast majority very critical and negative. As a whole every one points out to the credibility factor. None of the individuals and or parties, party to the front gets even close to a passing grade when it comes to credibility, ability, transparency, and any attributes that can make an alliance look half way decent. So those who have joined hands in this unholy alliance will be facing an uphill battle convincing this nation about the national sincerity of the group or any other claim they are making on behalf of a nation who has been held hostage by the group directly and indirectly for many years. In their declared objectives they are long on criticism and fall way short on practical and realistic answers in resolving the problems they point out to. This is even more noteworthy in light of the fact that the problems they point out to were of their own creation to begin with and continue to be so as we



speak. As an example let us look at one of their stated objectives:

"Failure to form a competent and effective management body, lack of comprehensive working programs and the current administrations weakness have not only squandered the meritorious opportunity but also undermined commitments to involve all national forces in political, social life, reconstruction of infrastructural institutions , generating employment opportunity, empowering national police and national army, combating narcotics cultivation and organized crime as well as supervising the military operations of forging troops in Afghanistan, which have claimed civilian lives, inability in above mentioned areas have sparked into growing public resentment, benefiting the enemies of Afghanistan" .



A quick glance at the above statement will tell us that all ills they point out to do not appear over night and in a vacuum. The problems they point out to, are in a major way the result of the participation of some of the same key figures of today's" Front" in key positions of government, past and present. They are and or were in charge of policy making and decision making in this country. Directly and indirectly things are and were happening on their watch and for them to hide their heads in the sand does not wash well with anyone who knows about the past decade or two of this country's history and these individuals direct involvement in it. Now for them to use the blame game is to take hypocrisy to a new high and they continue to break their own record in this, consistently. They still are



contributing to the instability, bad management, corruption, nepotism, monopolistic Mafioso behavior not only in government but also are trying to corner the socio economic activities of the country in their favor.

It has been said that in their efforts they are in close coordination with some foreign embassies. This is nothing new. All their abilities capabilities and activities are subject to in depth scrutiny. We can suffice to say that the motives and even their stated objectives are suspect and are "a none starter" in this stage of Afghan political life. Not only will it derail our efforts in the beginning of this new journey towards democracy by disillusioning our nation as a whole, it will also create a climate of confusion which is lethal for our efforts in trying to stabilize the nation and bring the much needed security and there by reform and reconstruction.

I urge our friends in the international community to make sure they know who these players are in this proposed dangerous game and if they are not sure about the motives of this Front then they should take a look at the resume of the individuals in this group and their past and present records. If our international friends still have questions then I propose we start an open debate whereby the citizens of this nation under the protection of law and order away from this group's military threat, can ask questions and receive answers in a convincing way, at which time much of the hidden skeletons will come out of the closets. This will not only give our citizens a chance to air their opinions and grievances democrat-



ically and openly, it will also allow them to exercise their suppressed rights. Another byproduct of such an opportunity will be that many of the victims who have suffered in the hands of some of the stars of this "Front" will have an opportunity to face these newly converted champions of change and hopefully we can then begin the long awaited, true and meaningful national healing process which will be a major contributing factor in bringing real peace and stability to the this nation. Then we could really embark on nation building, reform and reconstruction.

The one positive outcome from all this has been the emergence of a prominent fact that some of the democratic forces in this country are the only alternative who have proven to have the credibility, ability and the forward looking vision in solving problems. They are the energy who can contribute to the international efforts in resolving the Afghan crisis and fulfill the long awaited hopes of a nation who has contributed so much to the world peace at the expense of their own.

In conclusion we should urge the Afghan leadership and the international community to spend some of their resources in helping the real democratic forces in this country. This can and will provide the much needed and long awaited infusion of energy the country needs in creating real and meaningful institutions for a viable and lasting democracy for Afghanistan.

(04/14/2007, Daoud Sultanzoy)



CONTACT

Email: kas.kabul@ceretechs.com
Phone: +93 - 700 - 277943



PARLIAMENTARY BULLETIN

The Bulletin covers on a monthly base issues discussed in the Afghan Parliament. Additionally, chosen Members of Parliament make a contribution to the bulletin on issues discussed in the previous month.

Abdul Samad Khan

Born in Kabul in 1961 Abdul Samad Khan graduated from the Afghanistan Military Academy. After the end of the Taliban regime he started to work with foreign media organizations like BBC, Süddeutsche Zeitung and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. In 2003 he worked with the EU Commission as a media analyst then he served as a political officer at the Canadian Embassy for three years. Since 2006 he is in charge of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation's Parliamentary Program. He is fluent in English, Pashto and Dari.

Dr. Babak Khalatbari

Born in 1975 in Germany, he started his studies on the Middle East after his military service. He was a scholar of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation and studied at the University of Muenster, University of Cologne and Kuwait University. Since 2005 he heads the Kabul Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation. He speaks German, English, Arabic and some Dari.