

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	700
Land:	Afghanistan
Kilde:	British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group
Titel:	Afghanistan in January 2017
Udgivet:	februar 2017
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	10. maj 2017



Afghanistan in January 2017

Politics

A day before the transition of power in the US, President Obama called the National Unity Government (NUG) leaders. Expressing his deep appreciation for the steadfast partnership between the two countries, he called on the Afghan leaders to enhance unity and support peace and stability in Afghanistan. On the same day, former vice president Younus Qanooni complained about the centralised political system where power is monopolised by the President.

'Decentralisation' and 'more local democracy' were the theme for a diplomatic exchange on Twitter between Franz Michael Mellbin, EU Special Representative in Afghanistan, and Hamidullah Mohib, the Afghan Ambassador to the US. Mellbin was quoted as supporting decentralisation in Afghanistan, which Mohib commented was interfering in the host country's internal affairs. Mellbin responded that his comments were in line with the Afghan Government's sub-national governance policy.

On the 1st, Balkh strongman and Acting Governor Atta Mohammad Noor signalled the end of his support to Abdullah. He will be leaving the governor position to continue politics from the capital. This shows widening rifts in the NUG. Noor even said certain government leaders have suggested he could replace General Abdul Rashid Dostum as the First Vice President.

On the 23rd, the Attorney General ordered the arrest of nine of First Vice President Dostum's bodyguards on charges related to the alleged abduction and sexual assault of a political rival. The accuser claimed the Vice President sodomized him with a rifle. General Dostum has denied the accusations and did not appear in court.

Peace and Security

On the 3rd, Afghan officials accused Russia of delaying the removal of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar from a UN sanctions list. Russia's request for time to consider the request is seen by some as an effort to counteract US influence in the country, potentially damaging the Afghan peace process. Russia has confirmed it has open lines of communication with the Taliban to stop the threat of Daesh (Islamic State) reaching Central Asia.

In an open letter to President Trump on the 25th, the Taliban called again for the withdrawal of American forces from the 'quagmire' of Afghanistan. The letter encourages Trump to accept the bitter reality that the US can never win the Afghan war, and also says that Afghans 'sincerely' want to bring this war to an end. As infighting continued between Afghan forces in the restive Helmand, on the 6th the US army promised to deploy 300 more marines to the province. They will form part of a new task force of military advisers who could also face combat.

Daesh continues to be a threat. On the 6th unknown gunmen in Baghlan, alleged to be affiliated to Daesh, shot at least thirteen Hazara coal miners, killing eight. Days earlier, a Shia cleric was shot dead in a mosque in Herat. Officials on the 14th announced that Daesh fighters set fire to at least 60 vacated houses in Kot district of Nangarhar. The locals had already fled the area before the attacks.

The 10th was a deadly day for Afghanistan as multiple Taliban attacks killed and injured over 100 people. Targets included the Afghan parliament and a high-profile meeting at the Kandahar Governor's guesthouse. Eleven United Arab Emirates diplomats and Afghan officials were killed in the latter, whilst the UAE ambassador to Afghanistan and the Kandahar governor are among the wounded.

Rights

This report is developed based on media reports. Although BAAG has taken necessary precautions to include only credible sources, it does not take responsibility for incorrect content

On the 28th local Helmand officials said violence against women has sharply increased in the province. At least 20 cases of violence were registered last month, most of which involved 'baad', where female family members are given to settle a dispute. In this conservative province where domestic violence is seldom reported, 20 cases represent a high level of reporting. On the 31st Zarina, a 23-year-old from Balkh, fell victim to brutal domestic violence when her husband tied her up and cut off both her ears. Zarina was married at the age of 13. Police say her husband is on the run.

Despite a ban, reports this month state Afghan women and girls still undergo virginity tests as part of forensic procedures. Rights groups claim this practice is tantamount to sexual abuse. Last month a man in Nangarhar accused his wife on their wedding night of not being a virgin, sent her back to her father, and kidnapped and forcibly married her sister.

On the 28th the International Monetary Fund expressed concern over Afghanistan's ability to cope with massive numbers of refugees returning to the country. More than 700,000 Afghans, mainly from Pakistan, returned in 2016. Afghans are the second largest refugee group after Syrians.

On the 23rd, the second batch of rejected Afghan asylum seekers were deported from Germany. 25 young men were flown out from Frankfurt airport whilst protestors called the deportation to war zones 'inhumane' and 'irresponsible'. There are about 250,000 Afghans living in Germany. About 11,900 will be deported, according to the German Interior Ministry.

Humanitarian and Development

The UN announced that the continued deepening and geographic spread of the conflict has prompted a 13% increase in the number of people needing humanitarian assistance. The UN estimates at least 9.3 million Afghans, or nearly a third of the population, will need humanitarian assistance this year. According to the UN deputy special representative in Afghanistan, an average of 1,500 people are newly displaced by fighting every day.

On the 2nd President Ashraf Ghani suspended the Minister for Telecommunications and Information Technology over allegations of corruption. He was accused of not cooperating with a commission auditing the collection of a 10% tax on mobile phone top-ups. Minister Wahidi has denied any wrongdoing. Recent anti-corruption efforts also included sentencing a general of the Ministry of Interior for embezzlement, investigating a high ranking official in the Ministry of Public Health and registering the assets of the remaining 15 provincial governors.

On the 16th the Lower House of Parliament ratified the national budget for the fiscal year of 1396. The \$6.4 billion budget consists of \$4 billion in ordinary and \$2.4 in development budget. \$3.9 billion, nearly 61% of the budget, will be funded through international aid.

Qatar's Alghorafa Charity Foundation will invest \$20 million in Farah province to improve the agriculture sector. The Foundation is investing in dates, pistachio and livestock, having already built schools and mosques in the province.

Freezing weather this month killed 27 children in a remote district of Jowzjan and four people (three women, one man) in Pamir area of Badakhshan.

On the 1st the Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament said high levels of pollution especially in the winter season are causing serious health problems for Kabul residents. In a city with little central heating, many people burn coal, wood and even plastic to heat their homes. Currently Kabul is ranked as the 7th most polluted capital in Asia.

People and Culture

On the 20th Zohra, Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra, brought down the curtain on this year's World Economic Forum in Davos. Applauded for their culture-crossing performance, Zohra is an ensemble of 35 young musicians aged 13 to 20, some orphans or from poor families.

Abdulwadod, a 63-year-old teacher from Ghazni, earned his bachelor's degree from Kabul, making him one of the oldest graduates in the country. He said his graduation day was the "greatest day of his life". Abdulwadod, a father of six sons and four daughters, made sure all his children received an education. But he said none of his children's graduation ceremonies were as exciting as his own.

This report is developed based on media reports. Although BAAG has taken necessary precautions to include only credible sources, it does not take responsibility for incorrect content