

Afghanistan (1)

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Subject: Afghanistan: Current situation of Wahadat Party supporters
Regional Office: 5

From: Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Research Directorate was unable to find references to an Afghan "Wahadat Party"; however, there is a Hezb-e Wahdat (Hizb-i Wahdat or Party of Unity) (Afghanistan Online 16 Apr. 2001; *ibid.* 19 Mar. 2001) acting as a "key figure in the coalition which brought down the Taliban" (*Financial Times* 28 Dec. 2001). Formed in 1988, the Hezb-e Wahdat, primarily consists "of the political [representation] of ethnic Hazara chiefs" (Federation of American Scientists 8 Aug. 1998). Its official name, according to its Website, is Hizb-e Wahdat Islami Afghanistan (Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan) (26 Dec. 2001) and it has "as many as nine" extant factions who "tend to cooperate against non-Hazaras, especially [the] Pashtun in the Taliban" (IISS 10 Dec. 2001, 2). Of these, there are two main factions including the "Khalili" headed by Mohammad Karim Khalili, "[a] Hazara chieftain ... based in the central Hindu Kush [who enjoys] a considerable following in both Mazar-e Sharif and Kabul" (*ibid.*). Khalili is also the Secretary General of Hezb-e Wahdat (Hizb-e Wahdat Islami Afghanistan 26 Dec. 2001).

The second main faction, the "Akbari Faction", formerly led by Mohammad Akbar Akbari (Afghanistan Online 19 Mar. 2001) reportedly, split from the [Hezb-e Wahdat] in the early 90s ... [but after] the appearance of the Taliban [Akbari rejoined] Khalili faction, and fought against the Taliban. After the fall of Bamiyan to the Taliban in mid 1998, Akbari surrendered to the Taliban and proclaimed loyalty to them (*ibid.* 16 Apr. 2001).

Human Rights Watch reported in 2001 that "some observers" consider that Akbari's decision to surrender and support the Taliban after the fall of Bamiyan ensured "far fewer civilian casualties than had been the case" in localities occupied by the Taliban successes (Human Rights Watch Feb. 2001).

Now headed by Haji Mohammad Mohaqqueq [Mohaqeq, Mohaqiq] (IISS Dec. 2001, 2), the Akbari faction rejoined the opposition following the fall of Kabul (Tehelka.com 17 Nov. 2001) on 13 November 2001 (BBC 13 Nov. 2001). Mohaqqueq is also the Chairman of the political committee of the party's Shura-e Markazi (Central Committee) (Hazara.net 8 April 2002 Hizb-e Wahdat Islami Afghanistan 26 Dec. 2001). Seen as a rival to Khalili (IISS Dec. 2001, 2), Mohaqqueq commanded "more than 6,000 fighters across northern Afghanistan" according to the Associated Press (3 Feb 2002).

With the Harkat-e Islami [Islamic Movement], Hizb-e Wahdat represents the Shi'a Hazara population of Afghanistan (AFP 27 Dec. 2001). The party described itself on its official website as representing the most suppressed people of Afghanistan, the Hazaras. Hazaras are based mostly in the central remote areas (Hazarajat) and as well as in ... Northern Afghanistan with a reasonable population. Hazaras, under the flag of Hizb-e Wahdat, [have been] playing [a] very crucial role in all the political and military events, in defending the rights of their people, [over] last ... decade. Hizb-e Wahdat claims that it is the most committed and dedicated party in the war against the foreigner invaders and the terrorist circle in Afghanistan. Hizb-e Wahdat believes that Afghanistan should be for Afghans and all the [foreign] terrorists should vacate our country and let the Afghans live with dignity and honor in their country. Hizb-e Wahdat supports ... the move for peace, brotherhood, equal rights, national unity and justice for all people of our dear country Afghanistan.

Hizb-e Wahdat is a vital and key member of the United Front for [the] salvation of Afghanistan, which is composed of all the ethnic groups of Afghanistan, together, united, they are resisting against the Pakistani-backed Taliban and Osama bin Laden terrorists (Hizb-e Wahdat Islami Afghanistan 26 Dec. 2001).

Mohamed Mohaqqueq in an "e-mail interview ... before the takeover of Kabul" was quoted in *al-Ahram* as stating that the goals of the party were:

"really and seriously in favour of a peaceful settlement of the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan as soon as possible, because we [Hazaras] are the people who have really faced all the tragedies of war." Citing age-old ethnic feuds and misrepresentation as the "root cause" of all crises inside Afghanistan, Mohaqiq maintains that there will never be a successful government in Kabul until there is an adequate system that deals with all ethnic minorities equally. Only then, he says, will minorities begin to think of Afghanistan as their "common home, not a prison."

...

"We are telling these people who are so fond of jihad [that they] should select some other area for their jihad. Leave the Afghans alone. They can solve their problems by themselves; we don't need the presence of any radical on our soil. Afghanistan is for Afghans and they should immediately vacate Afghanistan and leave us to live peacefully" (22-28 Nov. 2001).

Following the completion of the United Nations-backed Bonn negotiations that constructed a post-Taliban interim administration for Afghanistan, Khalili and Hezb-e Wahdat leaders were initially unhappy with the outcome (*Newsday* 1 Dec. 2001; AP 10 Dec. 2001). However, Khalili later stated that he "support[ed] the new government and [the] Bonn conference" (AFP 27 Dec. 2001). Hizb-e Wahdat is currently represented in the ruling coalition, defined in the 2001 Bonn agreement (*ibid.* 15 Dec. 2001; Vereinte Nationen Informationszentrum Bonn 10 Apr. 2002), and in the Afghan interim cabinet by Muhammad Mohaqqueq (Planning) and Ghulam Muhammad Yailaqi (Education) (AP 5 Dec. 2001). Yailaqi is listed as an economist and member of the party's Central Committee (Hazara.net 8 Apr. 2002).

Two other Hazaras are also hold cabinet portfolios on the interim administration under Hamid Karzai, including Sima Samar (Women's Affairs), and Sultan Hamid Sultar (Transport) (AP 5 Dec. 2001). However, the Research Directorate was unable to ascertain whether these were also members of members of the Hezb-e Wahdat's.

A list of members of the party's Shura-e Aali Nuzarat (Supreme Supervisor/ Committee), Leading Council of the Central Committee and other members of the latter, is available at <<http://www.hazara.net/hazara/organizations/wahdat/wahdat.html>>.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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