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## Karzai hopeful of negotiations with HIA

By Ahmad Shah Irfanyar & Abasin Zaheer

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KABUL - President Hamid Karzai on Saturday reiterated his call for the Taliban to stop fighting, saying that Afghans alone were suffering because of the ongoing conflict in the country.

The Afghan government and High Peace Council would continue their efforts for peace, the president promised during his address to the Wolesi Jirga that entered its second legislative year on Saturday.

"We hope that our brothers, who are fighting against us, will soon come to realise that this war is in others' interest and they shall stop fighting soon," Karzai remarked.

All Afghans wanted the Taliban to open their political bureau in an important Islamic state like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or Turkey, but they agreed to plans for the militants' office in Doha in the hope of stability in their country, the president added.

About the visit of a Hezb-i-Islami of Afghanistan (HIA) delegation from Pakistan, Karzai said: "We have had a meeting with the representatives of Eng. Gulbadin Hikmatyar's party. Both sides expressed their views in a candid manner and we hope the talks will continue."

The delegation also met several government officials, including Vice-President Muhammad Qaseem Fahim. The HIA political office head in Europe, Qaribur Rahman Saeed, called the meeting "very important and beneficial". He said they were optimistic about the outcome.

"Afghanistan reserves the right to negotiate and continue peace talks with different groups and no one can snatch that right," the president said of the negotiations with the HIA.

Several noted figures, including High Peace Council chairman and former president, Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, were killed last year, the president lamented.