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Karzai says Pakistan pursuing double game

Lamenting lack of co-operation from Pakistan, Afghan president says only talks with governments can lead to peace.

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Hamid Karzai, the Afghan president, has accused Pakistan of "pursuing a double-game", saying Islamabad is not co-operating in the battle against armed groups to establish peace in Afghanistan.

In a primetime national address on Monday, Karzai said he had always stood by friendly relations with Pakistan, hoping to face the challenge of cross-border extremism together, but his neighbour had failed him, continuing to use "terrorism as a means".

"The Islamic republic of Pakistan has not co-operated with us to bring peace and security to Afghanistan, which is unfortunate for us," he said.

He also called for a review of his country's plans to pursue peace with the Taliban, saying he will focus on talking to governments and not specific groups related to them.

Karzai acknowledged that his efforts for peace had failed as his overtures were met with more violence and targeted killings, most recently of his chief peace negotiator, Burhanuddin Rabbani.

"The killings show that our call for peace has not seen a positive response. One-sided desire for peace will not bring a resolution. Peace can only be achieved with those who believe in it."

"We have to fight decisively against those who do not believe in peace."

US criticism

Karzai's comments follow Pakistan's criticism by Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint chiefs of Staff, who accused Pakistan's intelligence agency last month of playing a role in the recent attack on the US embassy in Kabul.

Mullen called the powerful Haqqani network, operating out of Pakistan's borderlands, a "veritable arm" of Pakistan's military intelligence.

The comments did not go down well with Pakistan.

Yousuf Raza Gilani, the Pakistani prime minister, convened an all-party conference to discuss the US allegations and draft a strategy on how to move forward in the relationship.

In particular to accusations from Afghanistan, Pakistan has asked for the "blame game" to be stopped.

"Certain forces are at work to destabilise Afghanistan and Karzai should not play in their hands. Instead we should get united to foil their machinations," Gilani said on Sunday, according to the Pakistani paper, *Daily Times*.

Gilani added that his government was committed to bringing peace through dialogue with Taliban in the tribal areas. They would not disarm but only "decommission" the Taliban, he said.

"No ties with ISI"

Meanwhile, the leader of the Haqqani network rejected US allegations that his group was currently linked to Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI.

Sirajuddin Haqqani, in an interview with BBC Pashto, also denied that the Haqqanis, blamed for the recent high-profile attacks on Western targets in the Afghan capital, were behind the killing of Rabbani, the peace envoy.

"We haven't killed Burhanuddin Rabbani and this has been said many times by the spokespersons of the Islamic Emirate," he said, referring to the Taliban.

Afghan officials have blamed the Taliban for the September 20 turban bombing, saying Rabbani's killer was Pakistani and that the attack was plotted by the Afghan Taliban's leadership body, the Quetta Shura, in Pakistan.

However, no Afghan officials have specifically accused the Haqqani network over the killing.

The network is considered loyal to Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar and has a seat on the Taliban leadership council.

Afghan officials say they have shared their investigation with Pakistani authorities and that they will request a UN inquiry into the murder if Islamabad refuses to co-operate.

Karzai is scheduled to visit India on Tuesday, where he will hold talks with Indian officials on streamlining various assistance programmes through a strategic partnership.

Source:

Agencies