

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نښاد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

EurasiaNet

Karzai Puts Peace Hopes in Hands of Warlords

By Aunohita Mojumdar

10/13/2010

The High Peace Council, Afghanistan's new vehicle for promoting reconciliation between President Hamid Karzai's administration and Taliban militants, is set to convene on October 13. But even before its first session gets underway, civil society activists in the country are condemning the council as a charade.

The council comprises 68 members -- all appointed by Karzai. The president has indicated that the council will have broad authority to engage Taliban representatives in the search for an end to the Islamic militant insurgency. The council's specific powers and duties have not yet been defined, although members on October 10 chose a chairman, former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani. An ethnic Tajik, Rabbani is closely associated with the Jamiat-e Islami faction, which gained fame for its resistance to Soviet occupying forces during the 1980s.



It is unclear whether the High Peace Council will act as an advisory body or whether its decisions will be binding and subject to oversight. “The commission will develop its own rules and procedures,” presidential spokesman Waheed Omer said during a September 28 news conference, referring to the body’s powers of enforcement. The council’s only clear function is to administer the Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund, some \$500 million in donor money earmarked to reintegrate Taliban foot soldiers. Western donors announced the fund in January.

Like Rabbani, many of the council members played prominent roles in 1992-1996 factional fighting that followed the collapse of Afghanistan’s Moscow-backed Communist regime. Several council members are suspected of having carried out human rights violations, but have never been convicted. Most members also were involved in efforts to resist Taliban attempts in the mid-1990s to establish control over all of Afghanistan.

The fact that the Peace Council is packed with past fighters does not inspire confidence among non-governmental organization (NGO) activists in Afghanistan. In an unprecedented show of unity, over 300 NGOs publicly criticized the composition of the council, saying a number of the members had “better experience in war rather than peace.” The composition of the council could “not only slow down the progress of the peace process but will ultimately result in its failure,” the NGOs said the October 4 joint statement.

“We have the usual faces,” said Nargis Nehan, Director of Equality for Peace and Democracy, a civil rights group. “We have been calling them warlords, and now they are on a list to bring peace and democracy. The list does not have any of the people who are working for peace and democracy.”

Defending Karzai's selections, Omer, the presidential spokesman, said that council members "have their own importance and influence on the peace process."

Of the 68 members, nine are women and only a handful come from the non-governmental sector, critics say. Perhaps the most notable figures omitted from the council are reconciled Taliban leaders, including Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil and Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef.

Publicly, the international community has welcomed the High Peace Council. Only Norway has noted concern about its "narrow composition." But many foreign observers and diplomats stationed in Kabul are quietly dismayed.

"The composition [] reflects the group of people who President Karzai thinks are power brokers and is a reflection of the current set-up of the 'Karzai Coalition.' It is Kabul and government-centric," Thomas Ruttig co-director of the Afghan Analysts Network, an independent think-tank in Kabul, told EurasiaNet.org. "Most of the people are those he [Karzai] is consulting anyway." The council "is an effort to placate the international community with the names they know," Ruttig continued. "It is not good enough."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a European diplomat said the High Peace Council was comprised simply of "the usual suspects and that, in itself, is not encouraging. These are the people who have been in charge for the past nine to 10 years. They fought the Taliban. Why would the Taliban want to talk to them?" Editor's note: Aunohita Mojumdar is an Indian freelance journalist based in Kabul. She has reported on the South Asian region for the past 19 years.