

Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, June 2002*

June 1

One injured in bomb blast in Kandahar. (Associated Press / AP)

A bomb exploded outside the palace of Kandahar's provincial governor, injuring one man and causing light damage. A spokesman for Governor Gul Agha blamed the attack on extremists seeking to disrupt the election of delegates to represent Afghanistan's southern provinces at the national grand council, or Loya Jirga, that will select a new government.

10 killed in factional fighting in Nimruz province. (Reuters)

Rival factions fought with rockets and small-arms fire in Zaranj, the capital of Nimruz province, killing at least 10 people. The fighting between the two factions started [on the night of May 31] in the provincial capital, Zaranj. The fighting raged the night after a force led by provincial security chief Mohammed Yaqub Barakzai was attacked by a force loyal to commander Abdul Quddus. Eight people were killed inside a house hit by a rocket, while two soldiers died and 20 were wounded in gun battles between the two factions. A resident of Nimruz said the forces of Barakzai, a close relative of Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Shirzai, were being surrounded by those of Quddus. Shirzai, an ally of Afghan interim Prime Minister Hamid Karzai, has sent reinforcements for Barakzai.

Afghanistan frees prisoners from overcrowded jails. (Reuters)

Twenty-eight prisoners filed out of Kabul's main detention centre as interim authorities implemented an amnesty decree issued on May 24 ordering amnesty for the old and young, for girls and for minor felons accused of misdemeanours. The amnesty was expected to ease overcrowding in the country's squalid jails. The released prisoners included a woman who had been arrested for adultery, still a crime under Islamic law. She was freed after convincing a prison review commission the man with whom she was involved was her fiance. Prisoners over 60, children under 18 and minor felons serving terms of less than a year are being released as Afghanistan reverts to a 1976 penal code that blends Islamic law with Western concepts of justice, Chief Justice Mawlavi Fazil Hadie Shenwary said. Stinking of urine, crammed with up to 50 inmates per cell and so filthy that it makes human scalp crawl, Kabul's main detention centre was never meant to hold convicted criminals, only the accused. Brigadier General Abdul Salam Ismat, chief of courts at the Interior Ministry, said the authorities had no choice but to put untried defendants in with hardened convicts because the capital's main prison at Pul-i-Charkhi had no water or sewers. Kabul commission chairman Mahmood Big said 16 children, including three girls, were released on the first day, and another 28 people were freed on the second

* *Disclaimer: Reports contained in this document are selected from publicly available resources and edited by country experts. The information provided here is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country of origin surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim. Further information may be obtained from BO Ankara.*

day. On the implementation commission's fourth day of work, 27 men and the woman accused of adultery were freed from the jail.

Emergency Loya Jirga elections completed in 22 Afghan provinces. (Iranian Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

The second and final round of Afghanistan's Loya Jirga "emergency" elections were completed in 22 provinces of the country, while elections are still in process in nine remaining provinces. In Balkh, Qandouz, Jowzjan, Faryab, Sarpol, Samangan, Baqlan and Badqyes provinces all Loya Jirga representatives have been already elected, and in Badakhshan and Takhar provinces the elections are still in process. Elections are also finalized in Kanz, Nouristan, Loqman and Nangarhar provinces, but they are still in process in Paktia, Khost and Zabul. Among the other provinces in which the Loya Jirga elections have been completed are Parvan, Kapisa, Bamyan, Qour, Qazney, Vardak, Faorah, and Neemroze. The second round of Loya Jirga elections will start on June 2 morning in Herat and Kandahar provinces, and in seven other remaining provinces it is already in process, but they will be over by June 5th all over the country. Afghans living in Iran and Pakistan have already cast their votes and those living in other countries, too, will cast their votes in due time.

June 2

UN calls Loya Jirga elections flawed but fair. (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty RFE/RL *Afghanistan Report*)

In the weeks of local elections to choose delegates to Afghanistan's emergency Loya Jirga, there have been scattered but repeated reports of local power holders intimidating or bribing some rivals to withdraw their candidacies. UN said it was "deeply disturbed" at reports that participants in district elections in western Herat province were being intimidated, threatened, and even detained. UN officials also said that, nationwide, eight Afghans associated with the run-up to the Loya Jirga were killed in May. They added, however, that they had no direct evidence that the killings were related to the delegate selection process.

At the same time, one of Afghanistan's most powerful warlords, Abdulrashid Dostum, has been elected as a delegate by voters in one of the northern districts he controls. His election has gone unchallenged by the Loya Jirga organizers, though it appears to conflict with guidelines meant to bar from participation any commanders responsible for killing civilians during Afghanistan's two decades of warfare.

Manoel de Almeida e Silva, a spokesman for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) that is helping the Independent Commission to organize the Loya Jirga, characterized the election process as largely democratic despite its problems. Almeida said one sign of the success of the process is that the Independent Commission -- made up of 21 prominent Afghans -- looks likely to rule out the results in just 15 districts because of irregularities. He said that in those districts, the commission will use its right to intervene and appoint delegates instead. A top adviser to Afghan interim-administration head Hamid Karzai said earlier this month that fraud has been reported in up to 10 percent of the polls. Shahzadah Masood said that, "in about 5-10 percent of cases, there have been some difficulties involving the use of money and use of force."

Pashtun candidates for Loya Jirga arrested in Herat. (Institute for War and Peace Reporting / IWPR)

Several local candidates have been arrested in Herat, including Mohammad Rafiq Shaeed, chair of Herat's business council, and Mullah Mohammad Malik Khan Alizai, a religious leader in the provincial border town of Toreghundai. Challenged to justify the arrests, Ziauddin Mahmoodi, the province's security chief, rejected criticism as "rumours from our enemies and al-Qaida. They only want to disgrace us. We have jailed only those who create problems and help terrorism". The region's ethnic Pashtun minority has accused the commission of bowing to Khan, by refusing to increase the number of jirga representatives in districts where their community is large enough to win seats that they could not hope to secure elsewhere in Herat. "The Herat authorities capture our leaders to frighten us," a Pashtun resident of the Kushk district said. "They say we are Zahir Shah's friends and that all Pashtuns are Taleban. They don't want our leaders elected because they are afraid votes will go to the king." Pashtuns boycotted some phase-one elections after disputing the allocation of seats between the ethnic communities. In the district of Gulran, Pashtuns were allocated three of the 19 local seats for the second phase, though they say they make up 50 per cent of the area's population. There were even sharper disputes in Shendand district, where the brother of the local Hezb-e-Islami military leader, Commander Amanullah, was jailed along with the then favourite to win the district Jirga elections, Ghullam Farooq.

June 3

First return of Afghans from non-bordering country, Kirgystan. (UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network / IRIN)

The first group of Afghan refugees left Kyrgyzstan for their homeland. The Bishkek Office of the UNHCR said that this was the first organised repatriation of Afghans from a country that does not share a border with Afghanistan. "Although we are talking about 33 returnees in the first instance, the will to return home is very, very strong," James Lynch, head of UNHCR in Kyrgyzstan, stated. The Afghans were provided with transport and transit visas by UNHCR and each refugee will get 150 kg of food plus aid in Afghanistan from international organisations for housing. Although most Afghans have integrated well, with most holding jobs, there has been strong pressure on the UNHCR to facilitate repatriation ahead of the Loya Jirga meeting in Kabul. All those returning have expressed their eagerness to return home and take an active part in the reconstruction process.

June 6

Authorities ordered release of 33 convicts in Balkh under amnesty resolution. (Afghan Balkh radio)

A special commission for the implementation of a resolution of the interim government on amnesty for prisoners and on commuting their prison sentences has instructed the prison officials [in Balkh] to release 33 convicts to whom the resolution applies. During a meeting of the commission, the acting head of the court of appeal and head of the commission, Mawlawi Abdolsatar Samadyar explained resolution No 256 of 2 Jawza [23 May 2002], and gave recommendations to prisoners. Then the

general director of the Balkh prison, General Akhizadah expressed the complete readiness of the personnel of the prison to implement resolutions of the interim administration.

June 7

Security forces seize tapes, postcards from shops in Herat Province. (Afghan Herat TV)

The officials of the department of Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue of Gozara District [Herat Province] collected a number of cassettes and postcards which were on display in shops in that district, with the cooperation of the security personnel of that district. They advised the shop owners to “avoid selling such decadent objects in future”.

June 12

Afghans demonstrate in Spin Boldak, Takhta Pul demanding king's election. (Reuters)

People in southern Afghanistan held demonstrations and blocked a highway, demanding that former King Zahir Shah be elected president at Loya Jirga. They took to the streets in Spin Boldak and in the Takhta Pul area to urge the Loya Jirga to elect him the new president of the war-ravaged country. The majority Pushto-speaking protesters waved pictures of the former monarch and shouted slogans in his favour. They also blocked the main highway leading to Kandahar for several hours.

June 13

Khost shopkeepers close business in protest against insecurity. (Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency / AIP)

The union of the Khost shopkeepers has announced that shopkeepers are going to keep their shops closed in protest against the ongoing killings and kidnappings. Two leaders of the Khost shopkeepers, Pir Ezzat Khan and Alef Shah Mengal, stated that there is no order and security in Khost and bandits are killing people, looting their properties and kidnapping people every day.

Assault on health clinic in Balkh province. (AP)

Gunmen from two rival factions that are part of the interim administration opened fire on a health clinic in Shulgareh in Balkh province. The nongovernmental organization running the clinic is considering closing down. The incident was reported to local authorities, who refused to take action.

June 15

UN complains of rape, attacks in north Afghanistan. (Reuters)

UN complained to Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai about "alarming level of violence" in the north of the country, including armed attacks, robberies and the gang rape of an international aid worker. "Only yesterday [June 14], the vehicle of a U.S. aid NGO was fired upon while travelling to oversee bread distribution," U.N. spokesman Manoel De Almeida Silva told reporters, saying an Afghan worker had been wounded. The U.N. special representative for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi,

had complained to Karzai saying that despite U.N. intervention with local authorities, nothing had been done to stop the abuses. De Almeida Silva said the "vicious" rape of the aid worker happened last week but was only reported by the NGO two days ago. "Many aid workers, noting the climate of fear and insecurity in the region, are considering reducing or discontinuing their work there," the spokesman said. He also said there had been increased harassment of internally displaced persons.

UNHCR fears refugee disaster in Afghanistan. (Reuters)

UNHCR warned that the return this year of millions of refugees to Afghanistan could lead to a humanitarian disaster, and possible destabilisation. The agency launched a programme to facilitate repatriation in March and almost one million refugees have returned home so far from neighbouring Pakistan and Iran. "We had predicted 800,000 would return this year, half from Pakistan and half from Iran," Yusuf Hassan, UNHCR spokesman in Kabul stated. "Now we predict two million will return this year. "It is too early to say there will be deaths on a large scale, but it will destabilise this country and put pressure on a fragile system."

Agence France Press report on the same [June 19]: UNHCR said it was "not encouraging" Afghans to return home because many parts of the country were unsafe, unclean and lacked enough food. UNHCR spokesman Peter Kessler said the million Afghans who have returned home since March were facing a fresh crisis with the embattled nation now "dropping off the relief agenda". He said: "We think the situation is still too precarious in parts of the country both due to security and land mines and also the lack of food and basic services in many areas. The number of people returning home has completely exceeded expectations. In Afghanistan there is widespread poverty throughout the country and it's important development agencies kick in as soon as possible to ensure there are basic services for the millions of people on the ground."

June 18

Tribal youth to ensure security in Khost. (AIP)

After a five-day strike the tribes of Khost took over Khost's security control today and fired all the security personnel. The spokesman of Khost's shopkeepers and traders union, Pir Ezzat Khan, told that Khost's eight main tribes have decided to take over the town's security control. According to the decisions every tribe will give 30 people to the Khost shopkeepers and traders union. The spokesman added that the armed people began to enter the town in the morning and began to build security check-points. He added that Khost's security command's police are in the office of the command. They have been told not to leave the command with guns. Padshah Khan Zadran's supporters have also been told to not walk with guns in the town. The spokesman of the union of the shopkeepers and traders also announced that their strike would finish in the afternoon, and the town would be opened again. He added that a 40-person council had been set up to decide factors.

The spokesman of the Khost governor, Mohammad Khan Gharbz, stated that: "The security situation was tense in Khost. A particular gang had blocked roads. Fearing bloodshed, the government urged the tribal people to intervene. Therefore, the security situation is being controlled by tribal people at present." Gharbz added: "Six hundred young people have been assembled and are being trained to maintain security in Khost."

June 19

Afghan Transitional Administration leader names cabinet. (Afghan radio Radio Afghanistan)

The Prime Minister of Afghan Transitional Administration named some of the ministers during the Loya Jirga as follows: Defence Minister Marshall [Mohammad Qasem] Fahim [also the Deputy Prime Minister]; Interior Minister Taj Mohammad Wardak; Foreign Minister Dr Abdollah; Education Minister [Yunos] Qanuni [the interior minister in the Interim Administration]; Finance Minister Dr Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai; Planning Ministry Ustad [Mohammad] Mohaqeq; Communications Minister Masum Stanakzai; Border Minister Aref Khan Nurzai; Refugees Minister Enayatollah Nazeri; Mines and Industries Minister Engineer Joma Mohammad Mohammadi; Light Industries Minister Mohammad Alem Razm; Health Minister Dr Sohaila Sediq; Commerce Minister Sayed Mostafa Kazemi; and Agriculture Minister Sayed Hosayn Anwari as well as the Head of the Supreme Court Mowlana Fazl Hadi Shinwari. Other deputies of the Prime Minister are [Abdol Karim] Khalili [leader of Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami] and [Nangarhar Province governor] Haji [Abdol] Qadir.

June 20

Police demonstration in Kabul against appointment of Pashtun Minister of Interior. (Reuters)

Karzai's choice of a new ethnic Pashtun Interior Minister at Loya Jirga could spark tension within the Tajik-dominated police force, uneasy that former minister Yunis Qanuni, a close aide to assassinated Northern Alliance hero Ahmad Shah Masood, was passed over. Demonstrators lined up outside of the ministry when new Interior Minister Taj Mohammad Wardak arrived for work. "Police in Afghanistan have to be disciplined. They have to take orders. Whoever is their minister is their minister, period," Karzai said after the protest.

June 23

Afghanistan's former Women's Affairs Minister under attack. (AP)

Afghanistan's former Women's Affairs Minister said she fears for her own safety because of opposition to her by the country's powerful conservative religious establishment. Sima Sana's opponents, some of them allied with President Hamid Karzai, have even branded her "the Afghan Salman Rushdie". Since her appointment in December to the women's post in the interim administration, Samar, a member of the Hazara ethnic minority community, became one of the most visible women in Afghanistan. Samar says she has been threatened. Men in police uniforms have pounded on the pale blue gates of her home late at night, telling her to leave. She has already moved from the official residence of the women's affairs minister. She is preparing to leave office after deciding to take the less visible post of head of the Human Rights Commission in Karzai's new government.

Samar's troubles began June 10 when an Afghan newspaper owned by the Jamiat-e-Islami party published what it said was an interview she gave to a Persian language magazine in Canada in which she questioned Islam. The party is led by former president Burhanuddin Rabbani, a conservative cleric allied with Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, an outspoken critic who claims of women in politics violates the tenets of Islam.

Samar denied ever making such a statement, but the report has caused a firestorm of criticism among religious conservatives just as the loya jirga was beginning to choose a new government. Copies of the interview were circulated among Loya Jirga delegates. Although she denied the allegations, Chief Justice Abdul Hadi Shinwari said Samar's words, as reported by the newspaper, were "irresponsible and against the Islamic nation of Afghanistan." In an attempt to ease tensions with the conservatives, Samar wrote a letter to the Supreme Court reaffirming her faith in Islam. In the letter, Samar said she believes the doctrines of the religion and its holy book, The Quran. During the loya jirga, she enraged the religious establishment by urging parents not to let their children play "mujahedeen," the holy warriors who fought against the Soviets in the 1980s and then against each other in a civil war that destroyed much of Kabul.

Reuters report on the same news [June 24]: Supreme Court has dropped a blasphemy charge against interim Women's Affairs Minister Sima Samar. Deputy Chief Justice Fazel Ahmad Manawi said the Supreme Court had dropped its case for lack of evidence. Manawi said "many people" had lodged complaints against Samar, accusing her of saying she did not believe in Islamic sharia law in a recent interview with a Canadian newspaper. "We have freedom of expression, but no one has the right to slander Islam, especially one who has been in the government."

June 26

One killed, three injured in clashes in Khost. (AIP)

One person has been killed and three others wounded in clashes between the supporters of Padshah Khan Zadran in Khost. Zadran described the conflict as personal hostility. He stated: "This was not a political issue, it was the result of hostility among individuals." He added: "We have so far detained six people in connection with the conflict." It was reported that Zadran is still occupying the office of Khost Province's governor. A new governor, Mohammad Hakim Tanaiwal, has been sent by the central authorities and he has opened his office in a guest house.

June 27

Factional clashes leave 150 homeless. (AFP)

UN reported that fighting between the forces of rival warlords has erupted again in Afghanistan's volatile north, leaving some 150 families homeless after their settlement was torched and looted. "We have received reports that one settlement of some 150 families has been burnt. These reports also indicate that 17 other settlements have been looted," UN spokesman Silva stated. "There are reports of population displacement, although we do not have numbers." Clashes erupted [on June 24] when supporters of Uzbek strongman Abdul Rashid Dostum launched a dawn attack against loyalists of rival warlord Atta Mohammad in the northern village of Abdrang. Silva said fighting was still raging around Sar-i-Pul and in Sholgara district 50 kilometers south of Mazar. The clashes had forced three foreign aid workers to evacuate from Maimana, the capital of Faryab province adjacent to Jozjan. Atta spokesman Ahmad Jawid said one person was killed in the dawn skirmish by Dostum's supporters. But a Defence Ministry delegation from Kabul had brokered a truce between the rival forces, he added. Jawid insisted Dostum and Atta were themselves in good terms. He blamed the frequent skirmishes between their men on local commanders trying to take land from each other.

June 30

US bombed wedding party, killing at least 40 Afghans. (BBC, Washington Post & Associated Press / AP)

It was reported by Afghan officials that US airplanes bombed a wedding party in a Pashtun village of Deh Rawod in Uruzgan province, killing at least 40 persons and wounding more than 100 [exact figures have not been clarified, since UN and US reports have not been made public]. The incident occurred during a raid by U.S. warplanes and Special Operations troops on suspected hiding places of Taliban leaders in Uruzgan Province, the home region of former Taliban leader Mohammad Omar. According to U.S. military spokesmen, the incident occurred about 2 a.m. local time near the Helmand River village of Deh Rawod, about 70 miles north of Kandahar. Mohammad Omar grew up in the village and the nearby town of Tarin Kowt, and there has been speculation that he has taken refuge in the cave-combed valleys of the region. Among the wounded was Haji Mohammed Anwar, a political ally of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and one of the first prominent local figures who rose up against the Taliban.

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