

Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, October 2002*

October 2

Bamiyan province worried by Taliban resurgence. (Reuters)

Mohammad Rahim Ali Yar, the head of Bamiyan province, said that a force of 400-500 Taliban fighters was protected by troops supposedly loyal to the government in Kabul. He said the fighters had taken control of the district of Kahmard about 60 km north of Bamiyan town in alliance with a smaller government force of 150 men led by Tajik commander Rais Rahmatullah. "At the moment the situation in Kahmard is very bad, the schools are closed, the district administration is being destroyed. We don't want this situation to extend beyond Kahmard." he said. Locals said this Taliban force was led by Tajiks who had played a leading role in the Pashtun-dominated movement. With the Taliban overthrown, they had formed a natural alliance with a pro-government Tajik force looking to bolster its strength in a region dominated by Hazaras. Ali Yar said the Taliban force was led by Maullawee Mohammad Islam, former Tajik governor of Bamiyan. Several locals from Kahmard reported that they were among 159 families, or around 1,500 people, who had fled Taliban control of the district in the past two months. Members of the families in Bamiyan said eight people, mostly civilians, had been killed in clashes between rival fighters in the past two months. Taliban forces reportedly arrested nine people, including five teachers, accused of "teaching heresy" and supporting U.S. forces.

Afghan clerics accused of burning girls' school in Mazar-i Sharif. (Reuters)

Four religious leaders in northern Afghanistan were arrested and accused of having burned down a girls' school. Abdul Majid Roozi, a local commander loyal to General Abdul Rashid Dostum, said the preachers were "Taliban sympathisers" who had also distributed leaflets in the area warning women against discarding the all-enveloping burqa. He accused them of having burnt down the school the night before near the town of Sar-i-Pul. Officials said around 150 girls attended the makeshift school in the Sorkhak Behsud district near Sar-i-Pul. Much of their stationery and textbooks were destroyed in the fire.

Fighting between Ismail Khan and Amanullah Khan resumes in Herat. (Reuters)

Fighting raged near a strategic air base between forces of Ismail Khan, the governor of Herat, and those loyal to rival Amanullah Khan. It was reported that Amanullah Khan's fighters, backed by artillery fire, attacked Ismail Khan's troops some 10 km from Shindand air base in Farah province. It was also reported that Amanullah Khan's men overran several rival positions, but there were no immediate reports of casualties. Ismail Khan, an ethnic Tajik, and Amanullah Khan, from the main Afghan Pashtun

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group, have been rivals for years. The latest round of clashes to the south of the Shindand base came just days after Ismail Khan appointed a new ruler of Shindand district. Residents say the move angered Amanullah Khan, who comes from the region.

Afghan newspaper *Anis* report of the same incident on October 5: Four people have been killed and 12 wounded in heavy fighting which started on October 2 and continued until 9 p.m. on October 4 night in Shindand District between the supporters of Herat governor Esmail Khan and Commander Amanollah. It is said that these kinds of conflicts were resolved to some extent recently through mediation by a delegation sent by the central government.

October 3

Three killed in renewed fighting between Tajik and Uzbek groups in Samangan Province. (Reuters)

Fighting has flared again in northern Afghanistan, killing three people in the second clash in the region in a week, despite United Nations-led efforts to mediate a cease-fire. Groups from the two main factions in the north vied for control of several villages in Samangan Province according to one faction commander. Three people were killed and six wounded as fighting broke out again overnight and continued into the morning, said Gen. Abdul Saboor, operational leader of the Tajik faction. The latest fighting was sparked by an argument between two soldiers, said the UN spokesman in Kabul, Manoel e Almeida de Silva. But General Saboor accused General Dostum's party of bringing 800 troops into the area and seizing control of five or six small villages, looting and damaging property on the way. Both civilians and fighters were injured, he said, but it was civilians who suffered most from the looting. Accompanied by the operational commanders of both factions, General Saboor and his Uzbek counterpart Ahmed Khan, a UN official was just returning from organizing a cease-fire in one region of Samangan, when the latest fighting began in another part. The commission rushed to the area and managed to impose a cease-fire, but fighting broke out again in the night and continued into the morning.

Fighting between Hazrat Ali and Zahir Shah kills one man in Jalalabad. (Reuters)

In clashes between forces of commander Hazrat Ali and commander Zahir Shah in Angour Bagh area in Jalalabad, one man was killed and two wounded in overnight clashes.

October 4

Iran police arrests over 7,000 "intruders" at border with Afghanistan. (Iranian Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Iranian police in Sistan va Baluchestan Province have arrested 7,907 "intruders" at the border with Afghanistan since March. Amir Abdolvand said that border guards had taken "important measures" since the end of last Iranian year on March 21, 2002 to guarantee border security in the region and had driven back 22,869 people who wanted to enter Iran from Afghanistan.

October 6

UNHCR: Afghan refugees heading back to Pakistan. (Agence France-Presse / AFP)

UNHCR said "Since mid-September we are seeing an increase in the number of Afghan families reversing back into Pakistan". UNHCR spokesperson said at least 215 families had been recorded crossing back into Pakistan at the Turkham border crossing in eastern Nangarhar province last week. Some 100 families also returned over a 10-day period in August. She said the return was partly a seasonal migration due to the drop in temperatures, but was also prompted by concerns over safety in Afghanistan which is recovering from two decades of conflict. "Many families say they are planning to spend the winter in Pakistan and wait until spring to return and work on their homes in Afghanistan. "Others claim that the lack of economic opportunities, concerns for security or education for their children as the reasons for going back to Pakistan," she said. Shinohara said the reverse migration was not a new phenomenon, but numbers were higher this year, possibly because of how many refugees who headed to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime.

Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah also expressed concern over the returning refugees and warned those remaining could face a particularly severe winter. "It would be a bad situation if refugees started to turn back, not only for the security and stability situation but for their survival," he said.

October 7

Forces loyal to Zadran advance on Khost city. (Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency / AIP)

After capturing Nader Shah Kot in the evening, the forces of Padshah Khan Zadran have begun a rapid advance towards Khost. In an unexpected attack this afternoon Padshah Khan Zadran's fighters captured Nader Shah Kot District, 30 km west of Khost. The sources say that after seizing the district, the said forces are rapidly moving towards Khost. In the evening heavy weapons are being fired in an area to the west of Balahesar fort in Khost in order to stop the advance of Zadran forces. People are fleeing the town, believing that the town would come under attack.

Reuters report on the same news: Two Afghan government soldiers were killed in Khost province when a convoy carrying provincial officials was ambushed by rival forces on October 7. Hakim Taniwal, governor of Khost province, said the soldiers were killed when they tried to return small-arms fire on the convoy from fighters loyal to his rival Padshah Khan Zadran in the Nadir Shah Kot area on October 7. He said there were about 12 local government officials in the convoy who survived the ambush unscathed. Taniwal said his forces had captured eleven of Zadran's fighters during the clash, including one Pakistani military officer. Taniwal said officials of Khost had been told to avoid travelling by road to Paktia or Kabul after the attack.

Attacks on civilian targets in Gardez. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

Four people have been killed when a vehicle was attacked by unknown people in Gardez, Paktia Province. According to sources close to General Atiqollah Ludin, commander of Army Corps No 3, unidentified persons attacked with RPG-7 [portable anti-tank weapon] on a vehicle carrying civilians. Four occupants of the vehicle were

killed. An unconfirmed report also says that two schools were burnt by unidentified people. The reason for the attack is unknown.

Pashtuns driven from villages in Samangan. (Reuters)

Forces loyal to Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum forced hundreds of ethnic Pashtuns from villages in northern Afghanistan during factional fighting, a local aid worker said. The Afghan aid worker said 180 families were forced out of four villages in the Pir Naqshi area by forces led by Ahmad Khan. Some of the women said they had been raped by his men and had their homes looted. Pir Naqshi is an hour's drive north of Aibak, the provincial capital of Samangan province. The aid worker said Khan's men had accused the Pashtun families of siding with rival ethnic Tajik forces belonging to the Jamiat-e-Islami faction of Ustad Atta Mohammad during fighting in the area. The villagers have taken refuge in villages in the Khulm district to the north of Pir Naqshi.

October 9

Three troops killed in Kabul clash. (Reuters)

Three Afghan soldiers were killed in a gun battle in Kabul between regular soldiers and troops from the intelligence service, the Interior Minister said. Taj Mohammad Wardak said that the clash on the Khair Khana pass leading north from Kabul to the U.S. military headquarters of Bagram Air Base was the result of a "misunderstanding". "Apparently one of the soldiers from the intelligence service mistakenly opened fire on other soldiers," he said, adding that police intervened to stop the shooting. He said the men killed were all regular soldiers. Wardak said soldiers from both groups were arrested and handed over to their respective officers. He said the incident was under investigation.

October 10

Afghan warring groups agree ceasefire in north. (Reuters)

A security commission made up of representatives of two rival Afghan factions and U.N. officials have brokered a ceasefire after fighting this week in the north of the country. Manoel e Almeida de Silva said all military posts and reinforcements put in place since the eruption of fighting on October 8 in Keshende district to the southwest of Mazar-i-Sharif had been withdrawn under the agreement. Silva said that five fighters loyal to General Abdul Rashid Dostum and to rival Ustad Atta Mohammad were killed and two civilians wounded in the fighting but did not give a breakdown of the casualties. "But it seems that every other day some fighting happens," Silva said. The recent battles have occurred in the Daraye Souf and Pir Naqshi regions of Samangan province. The situation is reported tense in Daraye Souf as well as in the Qalaye Shahr area of neighbouring Sari Pul province. General Abdul Saboor, a key Dostum commander, said a fragile truce was in place in Daraye Souf, but the rival factions were still in possession of their arms and fighting would break out again if the fighters were not disarmed.

Afghan students protested in Kabul. (Reuters)

Several hundred Afghan students who were once refugees in Pakistan protested in Kabul against what they said was discrimination in entry requirements for universities in Afghanistan. A group of about 200 students, who included women, marched from the Ministry of Higher Education, saying they planned to take their protest to

President Hamid Karzai's palace. They were blocked at an intersection near the Ministry of Communications by dozens of police. At least 100 more students gathered outside the Ministry of Higher Education. The students complained they were being asked to sit exams for admission into institutions in Afghanistan, even though they had attended universities for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. They also said they should be allowed to study in the towns of their choice. "Teachers here don't like the people who have come back from outside," complained a medical student. "They don't treat us properly. They want us to take examinations, but we have had no chance to study." Officials at the Ministry of Higher Education said the students were not being asked to sit full-fledged exams, but interviews or basic assessment tests on October 31.

October 12

Afghanistan, UK and UNHCR sign Tripartite Agreement on voluntary repatriation agreement. (Reuters)

The governments of Afghanistan and the United Kingdom and UNHCR signed an agreement in Kabul, setting out a detailed framework for the voluntary repatriation of Afghans residing in the UK and their reintegration back in Afghanistan. The tripartite agreement was signed between Afghanistan's Minister for Refugees and Repatriation, Enayatullah Nazari, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary Mike O'Brian, and UNHCR's chief of Afghanistan operation, Filippo Grandi. The UN refugee agency believes that the Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments and UNHCR contains all the necessary safeguards to ensure that Afghans who still need international refugee protection continue to receive it and that returns under the agreement would be sustainable. "With this agreement, I am confident that the actual organized repatriation takes into account the protection and humanitarian needs of Afghans as well as the absorption constraints in Afghanistan, especially during winter," Grandi said. Under the agreement, UNHCR will provide information and counselling to Afghans in the UK – to ensure that any decision to repatriate is "taken in full knowledge of the facts." UNHCR will also monitor the voluntariness of the return prior to departure, as well as other aspects of the agreement. Similarly, once returnees are back in Afghanistan, the agency has guaranteed access to them from the moment they land at the airport. Although the agreement gives a strong priority to voluntary repatriation, it recognizes that Afghans without protection needs or other humanitarian concerns can legitimately be returned "in a phased, orderly and humane" process that will be "accomplished in manageable numbers and will take account of the availability of accommodation." For the most part, such returns will not be considered "before the end of the winter months, i.e. not before 1 April 2003."

The Transitional "Islamic" Administration of Afghanistan commits itself to re-admit its nationals. It also agrees to recognize any change in circumstances in their legal status, including births, marriages, deaths, adoptions and divorce, since they left their country. Non-Afghan spouses will be permitted to enter and stay in the country. All returnees are guaranteed the freedom to settle in their former place of residence or "any other place of their choice in Afghanistan." All three signatories pledged themselves to take special measures to safeguard family unity and also for vulnerable groups, particularly unaccompanied minors, for whom a number of specific safeguards are outlined.

Fighting resumed in Badakhshan province. (Russian news agency ITAR-TASS)

The frontier posts of the Tajikistan's Qala-i Khum border detachment have been put on high alert as hostilities intensify in the border areas in neighbouring Afghanistan. Afghan government forces were carrying out a military operation against the armed groups, which are uncontrolled by the central authorities. The operation reportedly started after rebel field commanders from Badakhshan Province thwarted the recent agreement on voluntary surrender of arms.

October 13

Afghan forces continue operations against rebels in Khost. (Afghan news agency Bakhtar)

Defence Ministry forces in cooperation with the international coalition forces conducted vast clearance operations following the recent events in Khost Province. General Gol Hayder, the operations commander of the south, said that the situation in the southern provinces is totally peaceful and the government security forces have thorough control of it. Some armed groups are still active in the rural areas of those provinces. He said that the disturbance is now checked with the latest operations. Forces involved in the operations are looking for Malem Jan, a local commander, who previously was one of the commanders of Taleban Minister Jalaluddin Haqqani and later on he joined ousted Paktia governor Padshah Khan Zadran, who rose up against the government. There is no information about the whereabouts of Malem Jan, but his militants have been disarmed.

October 14

Gunmen force Afghan girls' school to close. (Reuters)

A group of gunmen have forced the closure of a school for girls. The gunmen had threatened students at the Bibi Fatima Ul Zahras school in Wardak province. 1,300 students used to study at the school.

October 15

Death sentence for local commander Abdullah Shah. (Reuters)

An Afghan tribunal sentenced one of the local commanders, Abdullah Shah, to death for murdering dozens of people including three of his wives and five of his children. The court judge said Abdullah Shah could appeal against the sentence and President Hamid Karzai's approval for the death sentence was needed. The court also sentenced his alleged accomplice, Mohammad Arif, to prison for 10 years. Both of the accused, who appeared in shackles before an open court, pleaded not guilty and rejected the charges against them. Afghanistan's chief justice and head of the Supreme Court, Fazl Hadi Shinwari, has already demanded Karzai award the death penalty to Shah. If the court's decision is upheld, it would be the first official execution in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban. When Afghanistan was in the grip of civil war in the 1990s, Shah served as a commander with another wanted warlord Zardad from the Hezb-i-Islami faction led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Northern Afghan officer, student and civilian killed by unknown assailants. (AIP)

An officer of the crime-combating department of the Mazar-i Sharif security command, Imamoddin, was killed in his residence on the night of 12 to 13 October. However, nothing has been said officially so far about the incident. A student of Mazar-i Sharif University, Ahmad Fahim, was also killed by unidentified people.

October 16

Afghan police beat musicians for violating ban. (Reuters)

Police beat two Afghan musicians and threatened to bomb their office for violating a local ban on music. The musicians said the incident occurred at a wedding party in Shakardara district near Kabul. It said policemen from the district arrived at the party late in the evening and attacked and beat musicians Masroor and Noor Agha. "They took us to Shakardara's police chief Gulbahar Khan who threatened us, tied our feet, caned us, poured water on us and threw us in the basement," Masroor said. Elders of Shakardara stepped in the next morning to secure the musicians' release and to stop police smashing their traditional musical instruments. Another musician said that one of the policemen had threatened to bomb the group's office in Kabul. The musicians had complained to Interior Minister Taj Mohammad Wardak and asked him take action against the police chief. Interior Ministry officials refused to discuss the incident.

October 17

Rival factions exchange artillery, rocket fire in Khost. (AP)

Rival Afghan factions traded artillery and rocket fire in the province of Khost in a clash that left at least three fighters dead. Fighting erupted on October 16 when militiamen backing Padshah Khan Zadran attacked several checkpoints manned by men loyal to Governor Hakim Taniwal, according to Taniwal's spokesman, Mohammad Khan Gorbuz. The fighting at Nadir Shahkot district was still ongoing on October 17. Taniwal's forces, numbering 800, had surrounded Zadran's positions in Nadir Shahkot.

AIP report of the same news: Heavy weapons were widely used in the fighting. The Mandozai, Esmail Khel and Haidar Khel villages west of Khost were hit by heavy shelling. It was reported that at least eight people were killed, including a woman, and at least 14 others were injured in the fighting.

October 19

Herat governor arrests Pashtun elders. (AIP)

Commander Amanollah, a rival to the Herat governor, made a statement from Shindand area in the province of Farah, saying that the 21st Division forces in Shindand area have arrested a number of Pashtun elders. According to him, Ismail Khan forces brought together 18 old people from the surrounding villages of the division, in particular Zarabad village. He said so far it was not clear why Ismail Khan arrested them, adding that there was the possibility of the eruption of fighting between them at any moment.

October 18

Two dead, dozens hurt by grenades at music band in Kabul wedding. (Reuters)

Two people were killed and dozens wounded when two hand grenades were thrown into a wedding party at a popular picnic spot northwest of Kabul. The incident happened in the village of Murgh Geran, in Paghman district. It was reported that two persons, including a member of the band playing music, were killed and forty persons, including two other members of the band, were wounded.

October 20

Independent east Afghan tribe of Tanai sets up own district. (Afghan newspaper *Hewad*)

The Dargai District of Khost Province was officially inaugurated. The Tanai tribe, especially the residents of Dargai District, has preserved their traditional values and relations more than any other tribe in the Khost Province. They solve their conflicts and other problems through their tribal values and traditions. Dargai is the tribal centre for the Tanai tribe. After the fall of the communist regime, in the era of Borhanoddin Rabbani and the Taleban, Dargai was led by the tribal leaders of that district in the light of their traditional values. They supported former Paktia Governor Padshah Khan Zadran during the interim administration and the Transitional Islamic Government of Afghanistan. The district of Dargai joined the government and was officially inaugurated by the governor of Khost, Hakim Taniwal, and other authorities.

October 23

Two killed in Afghan fighting in Samangan province. (Reuters)

Two people were killed and four injured overnight in armed clashes between rival Afghan factions in Samangan. Abdul Saboor, an aide to Atta Mohammad, said the latest fighting broke out on the night in the Daraye Souf area of Samangan province. "If this is not stopped and the sides are not disarmed the situation then will deteriorate and the fighting will spread," Saboor said.

October 24

Afghan president warns illegal armed groups to stop bothering people. (Radio Afghanistan)

Afghan President Hamed Karzai has warned armed groups of severe punishment if they continue to set up illegal checkpoints on roads and highways around the country. He said the state would "take serious actions and will spare no one" if any form of indifference was seen to the warning. Karzai said such groups were causing trouble for people and whole villages and were engaged in extortion and looting. He went on to say that governors were responsible for the safety of their people and highways. Karzai also touched on the problem of housing for Afghans returning from abroad and those displaced by the civil war. He said: "In most of the highways and communicational routes armed men residing in those areas have established check posts. These check points are causing trouble for passengers and even people living near these check points... such a check point in Helmand Province is making a village

provide bread to the people manning the check post. This [check post] takes 80 to 100 pieces of bread away from the village on a daily basis. According to the reports, the people who belong to the state military regiments are on the whole not making the roads, highways, paths and towns safe. There is no coordination between the state organs in some provinces. Employees of the [state] organs avoid carrying out the orders of their provincial authorities. Bribery is common in some of the provincial state departments and militant and security officials control the state revenues. In some parts gunmen take away the state revenues.”

October 26

Armed groups fire missile on girls' school in Wardak province. (Iranian radio Voice of the Islamic Republic)

A source at the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan said that a girls' school, (Fatima-tu-Zohra Salamollah Alaiha), in one of the districts in Wardak Province and another school in Maydanshar, capital of the province were set on fire by some unknown people. The main parts of the school were destroyed. The girls' parents in the area were warned not to send their daughters to schools.

October 28

Afghan commanders agree on disarmament in the north, fighting continues. (Reuters)

The three main factions in Afghanistan's volatile north have reached an agreement to disarm their fighters. The deal came after several hours of talks between the Shi'ite Hezb-i Wahdat faction, the Jamiat-e-Islami group of Ustad Atta Mohammad and representatives of Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum, Wahdat spokesman Sardar Sayedi said. He said U.N. officials witnessed the agreement - the second of its kind this year. "A decision was made to stop the fighting here," Sayedi said. "Agreements were made that police should be based in the cities and all armed men must either withdraw or join the army." The agreement was reached in Mazar-i-Sharif.

Sayedi said there had been clashes on October 28 between Dostum and Atta's forces in the Sholgara area near Mazar-i-Sharif. Residents of the area said seven people had been killed. On Atta's deputy Abdul Saboor said six people were killed in fighting on October 26 in the Char Kant area near Mazar.

Afghan news agency Hindokosh's report on the same news: On October 29, armed clashes continued in Sholara District, Mazar-e Sharif between the men loyal to Gen Dostum and Ustad Atta Mohammad. B52 planes bombarded the area where there were clashes. There are no figures about the number of casualties. Clashes started when Jonbash-e Meli [Dostum's party] appointed Haji Habibollah as the commander of Division No 18 in Dahdadi [an area in Mazar-e-Sharif]. This led to opposition by the forces loyal to Jamiat-e Islami. Later Dostum appointed Haji Habib as the commander of Division No 95 but he meanwhile suggested that the division commander and his personnel should have the headquarter of Division No 18. This decision finally led to armed fighting.

October 30

Afghan students stage protest in Kabul. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

Hundreds of Kabul University's students have staged a protest against their treatment by the university's administration. The dean of the Kabul University said "Kabul University has plans to provide and put departments' and faculties' names on signboards in an ordered structure, under the stamp of the government, and to be raised everywhere... It is the duty of the university's administration to make the signboards and put them wherever they are needed. The representatives of the students claimed that the signboards should be renewed. A gathering of the members of the university's administration was held. We assured the students that they would be provided with new signboards with all the departments and faculties names on them... In fact, universities should be very quiet, calm and without any kind of political activity and discrimination over language, race and religion. A university must only be a place for learning."

October 31

UN: Afghan Gujar faces persecution in the northeast. (Reuters)

The Gujars, have been suffering persecution at the hands of local commanders in the northeast of the country, a U.N. spokesman said. Manoel e Almeida de Silva said members of the tribe, who live in scattered groups in Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces, had suffered house burning, theft and violence, including restrictions on their movement. "We have received news of allegations that they have suffered persecution by local commanders," he said. "the U.N Assistance Mission for Afghanistan has verified that the harassment indeed occurred." The Gujar currently number about 100,000.

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