



**Afghanistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 4 March 2010**

**Corruption within the government.**

The January 2010 *Human Rights Watch* World Report, under the heading 'Governance and Impunity', states:

"In many areas of the country local strongmen and former warlords continue to exert significant power over communities, using intimidation and violence to maintain their control. The Afghan government has continued to lose public legitimacy because of these abuses, widespread corruption, failure to improve living standards, and lack of progress in establishing the rule of law even in areas under its control. Afghans frequently cite police corruption as a problem, with internationally-funded police reform efforts showing limited impact. New measures for tackling corruption were announced in the post-election period, with the government under unprecedented levels of pressure to reform from international partners." (Human Rights Watch (20 January 2010) *World Report 2010 –Afghanistan*)

A January 2010 *UN News Service* report adds:

"While violence and poverty are widely thought to be the major challenges confronting Afghanistan, nearly 60 per cent of the population said corruption is their biggest concern, according to a new United Nations report, which states that Afghans paid \$2.5 billion in bribes over the past 12 months.

"The Afghans say that it is impossible to obtain a public service without paying a bribe," says Antonio Maria Costa, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which published the report, "Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by Victims."

The report is based on interviews with 7,600 people in 12 provincial capitals and over 1,600 villages on their experiences between autumn 2008 and autumn 2009.

During the survey period, one Afghan out of two had to pay at least one kickback to a public official, UNODC says in a news release. More than half of the time, the request for the bribe was explicitly demanded by the service provider, and in most cases, the bribes were paid in cash." (UN News Service (19 January 2010) *Corruption, not insecurity, biggest concern for Afghans - UN report*)

A November 2009 *International Crisis Group* Policy Briefing under the heading 'Overview', states:

"Preliminary results released on 16 September 2009 indicated Karzai as the winner over Abdullah by 54.6 to 27.7 percent. A protracted investigation into

claims of electoral fraud eventually led the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) on 18 October 2009 to disqualify nearly a quarter of the overall votes cast, necessitating a run-off between the two top candidates. Following intense pressure primarily from the U.S., Karzai agreed to face Abdullah in a second round of polls. However, Abdullah ultimately withdrew from the contest, citing concerns about electoral fraud, given the government's failure to enact any meaningful reform of the electoral institutions.

Karzai's retention of power under these circumstances has bolstered the impression that the international community is disinterested in or incapable of checking the corruption that has metastasised under his watch. To ensure against a further decline in public confidence, the international community must press harder for anticorruption measures and for the appointment of respected individuals to the cabinet and provincial governorships." (International Crisis Group (25 November 2009) *Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance*)

A November 2009 *BBC News* report states:

"Poverty and unemployment are overwhelmingly seen as the main reasons behind conflict in Afghanistan, according to a survey in that country.

British aid agency Oxfam - which questioned 704 Afghans - said seven out of 10 respondents blamed these factors.

Taliban violence was seen as less important than government weakness and corruption, according to the poll.

Oxfam said the survey showed that the country needed more than military solutions." (BBC News (18 November 2009) *Afghans 'blame poverty for war'*)

A November 2009 *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* news report under the heading 'Stop feeding the monster', states:

"Most international donor programs fail to take into account the cultural and political dimensions of public-sector corruption. The politically driven system of patronage in recruitment and promotions stems from the survivalist mentality typical of protracted conflicts such as what Afghanistan has experienced over the last 30 years. In the post-Taliban era, this mentality has been fed by constantly shifting political alliances. Not tackling the root causes of this phenomenon has rendered textbook Western public-sector-reform efforts futile.

Bribery and embezzlement have come to be viewed by many in the Afghan elite as legitimate forms of obtaining supplemental income. But international donors have justified their failure to emphasize a responsible work ethic and serious law enforcement efforts against high-level corruption by saying the issues are "too political" or "too culturally sensitive."

Numerous administrative-reform initiatives and millions of dollars in foreign aid could have produced noticeable results had they built in strategies to alter the cultural and political dimensions of corruption.

Although the state led by Karzai for the past eight years is drowning in corruption, the Afghan president is correct to insist that merely replacing a few corrupt ministers will not rid his country of this problem. He is equally justified in resenting accusations from countries that have thus far turned a blind eye to flagrant "irregularities" on the ground." (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (18 November 2009) *From Words to Deeds in Afghanistan's Corruption Fight*)

Section II of a February 2007 document from the *UN Office on Drugs and Crime*, under the heading 'Corruption in Afghanistan', states:

"In any country corruption by its nature raises difficult data issues. In Afghanistan the challenges in building knowledge about corruption are multiplied – by the paucity of economic and other information in general as well as the country's recent emergence from nearly a quarter-century of conflict, worsening insecurity in parts of the country, logistical difficulties in conducting surveys, conceptual issues, etc. Nevertheless, the standard international indicators of governance and corruption do shed some light on where Afghanistan stands at least roughly in relation to other countries. Caution is called for, however, in interpreting such indexes." (UN Office on Drugs and Crime (16 February 2007) *Fighting Corruption in Afghanistan: A Roadmap for Strategy and Action*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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