

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

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RESPONSE

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There is no information on this organisation, nor of its activities in the Konar Province.

However, there is information on an organisation called **Shura-i-Tafahum wa Wahdat-i-Milli Afghanistan (Council of Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan)**. This Council was formed in Peshawar, Pakistan on 13 March 1993. Its members were Afghan mujahideen commanders, elders and spiritual personalities and intellectuals representing various nationalities, regions and tribes of Afghanistan. On 20 September 1994, the Council elected Maulvi Tarakhel as its Chairman and General Katawazi as General Secretary. On 2 November 1995, General Katawazi was killed by an unknown person.

Following the elections of 15 June 1997, Syed Ishaw Gilani – a former Afghan mujahideen commander and intellectual was elected president of the Council, Professor Moeen Mrastial was elected General Secretary and Dr Mohammad Rahim Pukhtunyar nominated as the spokesman of the Council. (Yunas, S. Fida, Consul General (Retd), 1997, *Afghanistan. Political Parties, Groups, Movements and Mujahideen Alliances and Government (1879 to 1997)*, Volume –II, Peshawar, Pakistan – Attachment 1)

The Documentation, Information and Research Branch, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa notes that the Council represented “liberal” and “neutral” Afghans:

(a) Several sources state that the **Council for Understanding and National Unity for Afghanistan** (CUNUA) is a Peshawar-based group (The Boston Globe 3 Nov. 1996; Deutsche Presse-Agentur 18 Dec. 1994; Reuters 2 Nov. 1995; Xinhua 6 April 1996) representing "liberal" and "neutral" Afghans (Deutsche Presse Agentur 27 Dec. 1994; *ibid.* 18 Dec. 1994). The 3 November 1996 Boston Globe article identifies Syed Ishaq Gailani as the director of CUNUA who stated that Afghanistan's situation of civil strife was because of foreign interference in domestic affairs.

A 2 November 1995 Reuters article states that the head of CUNUA at the time, General Abdul Hakim Kataware, was killed by gunmen in Peshawar. A 6 April 1996 Xinhua report states that 80 people of the Shari tribe, identifying themselves as CUNUA supporters, were arrested following their failed attempt to overthrow the governor of Nangarhar. The same source states that some of those arrested had letters from a known Taliban supporter named Maulvi Tarakhel (*ibid.*). A 27 December 1994 Deutsche Presse- Agentur report identified Maulvi Tarakhel as the chairman of the CUNUA at that time.

The two 1994 Deutsche Presse-Agentur reports state that the CUNUA was involved in political delegations to Kabul (27 Dec. 1994; 18 Dec. 1994).

(Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1997, *AFG27008.E - Afghanistan: Information on the Movement for Freedom and Democracy and the Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan in Pakistan, 1993 to present*, 5 June – Attachment 2; Bradlee, Jr., ‘A nation dissolves into tribal war Taliban, once seen as saviors, now the latest scourge to fall on embattled land’, 1996, *The Boston Globe*, 3 November – Attachment 3)

(b) The 6 April 1996 Deutsche Presse-Agentur report states that 30 armed followers of religious leader Molvi Tarakhel's **Shura-e- Tafahum** were arrested in Jalalabad, the capital city of Nangarhar. The same source states that the followers were on the payroll of a United Nations mediation mission (*ibid.*). A 23 October 1995 Radio Afghanistan report states that Molvi Tarakhel is a famous religious scholar and a Taliban supporter. According to the 6 April 1996 Deutsche Presse-Agentur report, Tarakhel's Shura-e- Tafahum was cooperating with the UN mission to negotiate peace talks between the Taliban and then Afghan president Rabbani.

(Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1997, *AFG27082.E - Afghanistan: Information on the existence of an organization known as Tafahum Shora(Council of Mutual Understanding*, 20 June – Attachment 4)

Syed Ishaq Gailani was subsequently replaced by Haji Dost Mohamad:

2.3 National Council for Understanding and Unity (Shura-e-Tafahum): Originally established in early 90s to mediate between warring factions. Its founder General Katawazee was assassinated in 1997. Mr. Ishaq Gailani took over the leadership of the council subsequent to death of General Katawazi. In year 2000, Haji Dost Mohamad a tribal leader was elected by the council to replace Mr. Ishaq Gailani. This organization has been advocating for a representative broad-based government. (Weera, Seddiqy, M.D., M Sc, 2002, ‘Afghanistan Conflict Analysis (1)’, September - <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/%7Empeia/afghanistan.htm> - Accessed 2 February 2005 – Attachment 5)

Reports of the mistreatment of members and associates of this organisation were made by the Iranian press and Amnesty International:

(a) Our correspondent in Islamabad reports on the assassination of the members of a family of one of the Taleban's opponents in Pakistan:

[Unidentified correspondent] Two of the children of (?Hadi Sarfaraz Khan) who is one of the local leaders of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan, have been killed in his house by unidentified armed men. Members of Hadi Sarfaraz Khan's family said that these two people had no personal enmity against anyone and that their assassination had been motivated by political opposition to them. Hadi Sarfaraz Khan is one of the prominent Pashto leaders in Afghanistan. He is an opponent of the Taleban and is a member of the Afghan Understanding and National Unity Council [untraced, Persian: Shora-ye Tafahom va Ettihad-e Melli Afghanistan]. Dozens of Afghan leaders opposing the Taleban have been killed by unidentified armed groups and all the Afghan sources and independent news groups believe that the available evidence indicates that the Taleban group has been involved in those assassinations. ('Taleban behind killing children of anti-Taleban figure – Iran report, 1999, *BBC Monitoring South Asia – Political* – 16 March – Attachment 6)

(b) 2. Current political background

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At the same time, the more established associations such as *Shura-e Tafahom va Wahdat-e Melli Afghanistan* (Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan), RAWA (Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan) and the Afghan Women Council continue with their activities in support of peace and in defence of human rights in Afghanistan.

3.1 Child prisoners as hostages

Amnesty International has received the names of children who have been detained and their families have been told they will only be released if their fathers are produced to the Taleban authorities. These include:

Noor Agha Rooyeen, member of *Shura-e Tafahom* (Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan). Two of his sons, **Farhad** (under 16) and **Mohammad Sheikh-Fardin** (under 18) together with his brother-in-law, **Mohammad Yaseen**, have been arrested in June 1998 and are still in detention at the *Estekhbarat* interrogation centre in Kabul and now in Ward no 3 in *Estekhbarat*. They have been arrested reportedly because of Mr Rooyeen's activities in support of peace in Afghanistan and have been told that they would be released only if their father hands himself over to the Taleban.

General Golrank, a former military commander of the eastern zone at the time of President Najibullah, accused reportedly of membership of *Shura-e Tafahom* (Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan). His son, **Abdul Zahir** (16) was arrested in June 1998 in Kabul during a visit there from Pakistan for personal purposes. Abdul Zahir is also accused of belonging to *Shura-e Tafahom*.

The four children mentioned above are detained in Kabul. They are allowed family visits. They have been told they would not be released unless their fathers handed themselves over to the authorities.

Other children reportedly detained as hostages in place of their fathers include: **Farhad** s/o Toor Agha, school student, aged 16; **Mohammad Masih** s/o Noor Agha, school student, aged under 18; **Mohammad Yasin**, shopkeeper, aged under 17; and two sons of **Malik Zarine** (names not known) aged 17.

(Amnesty International 2000, *Afghanistan: Detention and killing of political personalities*, November, Parts 2 and 3 – Attachment 7)

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Deutsche Presse-Agentur

http://www.dpa.de/en/produkte/wort/featureservice_english.html

Google search engine

UNHCR *REFWORLD* UNHCR Refugee Information Online

Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Yunas, S. Fida, Consul General (Retd), 1997, *Afghanistan. Political Parties, Groups, Movements and Mujahideen Alliances and Government (1879 to 1997), Volume –II*, Peshawar, Pakistan. (RRT Library)
2. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1997, *AFG27008.E - Afghanistan: Information on the Movement for Freedom and Democracy and the Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan in Pakistan, 1993 to present*, 5 June. (REFINFO)
3. Bradlee, Jr., Ben, 1996 ‘A nation dissolves into tribal war Taliban, once seen as saviors, now the latest scourge to fall on embattled land’, 1996, *The Boston Globe*, 3 November. (FACTIVA)
4. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1997, *AFG27082.E - Afghanistan: Information on the existence of an organization known as Tafahum Shora (Council of Mutual Understanding*, 20 June. (REFINFO)
5. Weera, Seddiqy, M.D., M Sc, 2002, ‘*Afghanistan Conflict Analysis (1)*’, September - <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/%7Empeia/afghanistan.htm> -Accessed 2 February 2005.
6. ‘Taleban behind killing children of anti-Taleban figure – Iran report, 1999, *BBC Monitoring South Asia – Political* – 16 March. (FACTIVA)
7. Amnesty International 2000, *Afghanistan. Detention and killing of political personalities*, November, Parts 2 and 3. (CISNET Afghanistan CX87595)