

Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, December 2002*

December 1

Fighting breaks out in Herat. (Reuters)

Fresh fighting erupted between troops belonging to two rival commanders near an air base in western Afghanistan. The fighting began when commander Amanullah Khan launched an attack on positions held by the powerful governor of the province of Herat, Ismail Khan, in the Zeer Koh area 10 km from Shindand air base, an official for Ismail Khan said. Witnesses in Herat said they had seen Ismail Khan head to the area of fighting with forces that included tanks. Amanullah's spokesman confirmed the fighting but said that Ismail's forces had initiated it by unleashing a volley of artillery fire on land under his control. "There are many dead on our side, but the victims are mostly civilians," he said. Qarim, another spokesman for Amanullah, put the death toll at 13 and added that "dozens" of people had been injured.

December 2

Three killed in factional clash in Kandahar. (Reuters)

Three people were killed and five wounded in a gun battle between police and fighters of a military commander in the city of Kandahar. The clash erupted in the centre of Kandahar in the night when police were checking people for weapons. When forces loyal to commander General Gulalai were stopped and asked to disarm they refused, triggering a gun battle in which three soldiers were killed and five people wounded, two of them shopkeepers, military commander Saleh Muhammad said. General Gulalai is aligned with President Hamid Karzai.

Baghlan Province closes down new newspaper. (Afghan newspaper *Arman-e Melli*)

Telaye, an independent publication by writers from Baghlan Province has been closed by the directorate of information and culture of that province. 'Telaye' was founded in Aqrab 1381 [October-November 2002]. The Directorate of Information and Culture of Baghlan Province banned the distribution of the paper soon after its first issue was printed on the 15 Aqrab [6 November]. Ahmad Jawed Payaa, one of the writers for 'Telaye', said: "Orders were received from the governor of Baghlan. The directorate of information and culture, however, said the reason for the ban was the failure to obtain permission by those running the paper."

* *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*

December 3

Afghan police reportedly taking bribes to let prisoners out of jail. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

A citizen of Kabul, who has been released from prison at 5:00 p.m, said that he had been arrested by the security officers in zone No. 1 of Kabul without any reason or justifications, and after paying 500,000 Afghanis, he was released by the same security officers. He added that besides him, 40 more people were arrested, some of whom have been released by paying 500,000 Afghanis or more than that, however the ones who did not have money are still in custody.

December 4

Ten people killed in fighting in Herat Province. (Arman-e Melli)

Fighting between the forces of Herat governor General Ismail Khan and the men of commander Amanollah Khan has been going on in Zerkoh, Shindand District. Ten people have been killed in the fighting. A high-ranking state delegation has been sent to Herat to investigate the military situation in Herat province.

Armed men take two policemen hostage in Kabul. (Afghan newspaper *The Kabul Times*)

While the residents of Khairkhana district of Kabul city were shopping for Id festival, people were shocked and scattered in Sarwar-e Kayenat Square after a sudden fire exchange between police and bodyguards of a warlord in the morning. The clashes erupted when police asked an Afghan warlord [Amanollah Gozar, commander of Army Corps No 1 of Defence Ministry] about his armed bodyguards and tainted windows of his official vehicle. One person was injured and two policemen were severely beaten and taken hostage by the commander. Afghan government in Kabul issued a decree and banned movement of armed men and vehicles with tainted windows in and around Kabul unless they have officials permit from Interior Ministry. General Sabur confirmed the arrest of his two policemen by commander Amanollah but said they were set free later. An eyewitness said: "After police opened fire, the armed men, most of them in commando uniforms, surrounded the area and took away two policemen." The event took place in Khairkhana where most of the commanders and armed men of Northern Alliance are residing.

December 8

Lecturer murdered in Kabul. (Arman-e Melli)

Unknown people in the 4th police district killed Abdol Hamid, a lecturer from Kabul Polytechnic Institute. An official source from Kabul gendarmerie said "Abdol Hamid, son of Abdol Wahed, who taught at Kabul Polytechnic Institute, was shot dead with a pistol bullet by unknown people. The body was found by the police force in the vicinity of the 4th police district hidden inside a sack. The body was handed over to the relatives of the murdered person.

Afghan disabled stage demonstration in Kabul. (Reuters)

Dozens of disabled Afghans staged a demonstration in Kabul, demanding President Hamid Karzai increase their social benefits. The group of around 300 protesters, including women and children, moved on crutches and wheelchairs through the centre

of the city before stopping outside the heavily guarded presidential palace. With 800,000 disabled out of a population of 23 million, the war-torn country has the highest percentage of disabled people in the world. Many lost limbs in accidents involving mines, millions of which lay hidden after 23 years of war and occupation. The peaceful march coincided with a cabinet meeting at which the government said it would increase benefits it pays through the Ministry for the Disabled and Martyrs to 400,000 registered disabled people. "In the past they used to receive 100,000 Afghanis (\$2) a month and a committee was set up at the cabinet meeting to increase privileges," said Karzai's spokesman Sayed Fazl Akbar. "We are talking about several million dollars a month now only for the Disabled and Martyrs' Ministry." Some disabled people also receive help from international aid agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

December 9

Afghan group renews call for jihad against USA, UK. (Pakistan-based publication *Wahdat*)

Markaz Raya Aswad [Black Flag Centre], the Afghan group involved in armed struggle against the US, called upon the Afghan and the other Muslim youths to rise against foreign forces in Afghanistan. In a colour pamphlet distributed in the Afghan provinces of Paktia, Konar, and Nangarhar, and the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, the group said that "jihad is as obligatory upon the Muslims as prayers and fasts of Ramadan month".

December 10

Over 30 prisoners released in Herat. (Afghan Herat TV)

Based on the order of Hamed Karzai, head of the Transitional Administration of Afghanistan, and an instruction issued by Alhaj Muhammad Ismail, emir of southwestern zone, 33 male and female prisoners were released.

December 11

Residents of Bamyan city protest against government's appointment policy. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Hundreds of the residents of Bamian city, the capital city of Bamian Province, staged a vast demonstration to protest to the government's appointment of certain officials. The peaceful demonstration began from the central part of the city's bazaar in the morning and was later in the day extended to the front of the governor of the city's building. The demonstrators later moved towards the UN office in Bamian, where they once again peacefully voiced their protest. The two officials whom the demonstrators were asking to be removed from their newly appointed positions included the Deputy Governor of Bamian and the new head of the city's judiciary.

Afghan governor condemns imported CDs. (Afghan newspaper *Rah-e Nejat*)

In a gathering of people to perform the Id al-Fitr prayers in Herat congregational mosque, governor Ismail Khan in his speech said: "The enemy wants to kill us secretly; the enemy does not use weapons any more, the enemy wants to make us face dilemma through cultural clashes. The enemy wants to deceive our youths by misleading CDs. He said: "You observe that the newly imported items are misleading

things, which are cheaper than they cost to bring in. They are sold in order to confuse the young people in the city.”

December 13

Death toll from cold mounts in Afghanistan. (Iranian radio Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

Due to the cold weather, 45 people have died in various regions of Afghanistan. It was reported that recently 20 people died in Balkh and Jowzjan Province, 10 in Kandahar, three in Badakshan and 12 more in Bamian, Uruzgan and Ghazni Provinces due to the cold winter in the country. Majority of victims were children and old people.

December 15

Helmand province to reintroduce Islamic punishments. (Reuters)

The administration of Helmand province sought permission from the central government to be allowed to carry out harsh Islamic punishments. Abdur Rehman, police chief of province of Helmand, said a spiralling crime rate had prompted the provincial government to consider amputations of the hands and feet of criminals. Rehman said he hoped his administration's request would be granted, adding that crime, including incidents of petty theft, had been reduced to a minimum during Taliban rule because of this form of punishment.

Afghan leader issues decree to separate military and civilian authorities. (Radio Afghanistan)

The decree of the head of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, Hamed Karzai:

“To improve the work procedure, the allocation of the assignments and the differentiation between the tasks and authorities of the civil and military departments, [the following steps] have to be immediately implemented. After the issuance of this decree all the directorates of organizations, operative groups and the structure of all of the offices of the military zones are terminated. The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior Affairs should send out strict orders to the respective organs and instructions to the large units to prevent disorder in civil affairs. No military or civilian official is allowed to offer dual services in both military and civil affairs. The governors of the provinces, authorities and commanders of the military police units should legally operate within the limits of their authority. They have to strictly abide by the rules and regulation governing their duties.”

December 17

U.N. report: al-Qaida camps are being reactivated in eastern Afghanistan. (Associated Press / AP)

New recruits to the Islamic militant struggle are flocking to al-Qaida training camps that have recently been reactivated in eastern Afghanistan, a U.N. report that monitors sanctions on the group said. While Osama bin Laden's financial network has been mostly dismantled, the group still has access to "substantial funding from its previously established investments," the report said. The U.N. experts also warned that al-Qaida had the potential to obtain nuclear material and build "some kind of dirty

bomb." Many "disillusioned" young men still flock to such camps, either to be trained as "foot soldiers" or to receive more specialized training.

December 18

Afghan officials in Nangarhar Province ban cable television programmes. (AIP)

Supreme Court in a decree has ordered the authorities of Nangarhar Province to immediately stop cable TV network, which shows Indian films in addition to news and entertainment programmes. The Supreme Court decree says: "The programmes and channels containing dances and nudity are prohibited in Kabul. Similarly they should be banned in Nangarhar Province too. Indian and other films containing dances are run in Nangarhar, which is a key province of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan. People of Nangarhar should also abstain from such things since these things are against Islam and jihad. Nangarhar Radio and Television should broadcast such programmes that do not harm people's ethics and conform with the culture and traditions of the people" The authorities in Nangarhar Province have ordered the relevant departments for the immediate implementation of the Supreme Court's decree and have said that TV and radio should only broadcast the programmes that are not against Islam and traditions of people. A cable network named "Afghan Cable Centre" in Jalalabad City was providing foreign channels to the residents of the city. The head of that cable network Engineer Mohammad Hodayun said that they charged 1,000 Pakistani rupees for initial membership and their members had to pay 200 Pakistani rupees for the monthly line rental. The cable network provided 20 entertainment, news and film channels and had over 600 members.

UN convoy attacked near Kabul. (Chinese news agency Xinhua)

A UN convoy was attacked by unknown armed persons on the way from Kabul to Kandahar, UNAMA spokesperson reported. The spokesperson said that the armed men intended to hijack the vehicles of the UN Mine Action Center in Ghelan area on the way from Kabul to Kandahar around 3 p.m. He said the hijackers fired shots at the third car of the convoy, and four people on the car, two drivers and two MAC men, were left on the road by the hijackers who drove the car towards the Pakistani border. The incident is under investigation by the Ghazni police.

December 19

UNHCR: Insecurity biggest threat to Afghan returnees. (Reuters)

UNHCR said that factional fighting and insecurity created by routing out remaining Taliban and al Qaeda members pose the biggest threat to ensuring two million Afghans who have returned home stay put. Filippo Grandi, UNHCR chief of mission in Kabul, also said that he feared a potential humanitarian crisis in Iraq could divert donors' attention and funds away from the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Under a U.N. appeal for \$815 million, presented to donors meeting in Oslo this week, UNHCR is seeking \$195 million to finance Afghan-related operations next year. UNHCR, which helped two million Afghans return this year, estimates a further 1.5 million nationals - in Pakistan, Iran and those internally displaced - could go back to their homes in 2003. "The first challenge will remain security... Inter-factional fighting is particularly acute in the northwest, but there are pockets in the west and also in the southeast," Grandi said. "The other type of insecurity is that caused by the continuing

anti-terrorist war waged by the coalition against former Taliban and al Qaeda remnants," he said. This was most acute in the southeast along the border with Pakistan, but also in the central province of Uruzgan and Kunar in the east. Kunar and the southeast provinces of Khost and Paktia remained "very dangerous places both in terms of terrorist threats, military action going on and general lack of the rule of law", Grandi said.

Editor imprisoned for publishing cartoon of Afghan leader. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

Abdol Ghafur, the editor-in-chief and head of *Farda* weekly, was arrested and imprisoned by prosecution officials for publishing a cartoon of Hamed Karzai in issue 36 of the weekly. The prosecutors say this is an affront to the head of the Islamic State.

Reporters sans Frontieres report on the same news: Abdul Ghafur Aiteqad, publisher of the privately-owned weekly *Farda* (Tomorrow), was freed on 23 December after President Karzai returned to Kabul. He had been held for four days in a small cell with eight common law prisoners.

December 20

Security forces lift curfew in the city of Jalalabad. (AIP)

Night curfew in Jalalabad [capital city of Nangarhar Province] is lifted. The head of Jalalabad police, Haji Ajab Shah, said that they had imposed night curfew in Jalalabad city a few days ago to ensure better security and prevent any incident, but the security department received a letter from authorities saying that there should be no more night curfew in Jalalabad.

Two explosions shook Jalalabad. (AIP)

There were two heavy explosions in the eastern part of Jalalabad City. Reports say that the explosions occurred with the difference of a few minutes and shook the nearby houses. Some government buildings are located in the eastern part of the city [where explosions occurred], including Sehat-e Ama Hospital, Red Crescent [Society] and some other government and non-government offices.

December 21

Clashes among security forces in north reported. (Arman-e Melli)

Two different sections of National Security Department had military skirmish in Kart-e Solh in Mazar-i Sharif. The clashes took place between personnel of security posts of Balkh Security Command and former security department, which regards themselves as pro-government. No-one was killed in the event.

Two foreign NGO officials killed in Gardez. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

A UN official in Kabul said that two NGO officials were killed in Gardez while they were carrying out research into children's health and treatment with a Japanese colleague. On the spot where the Indian official was killed the killer or the killers left a statement in which it is mentioned that all the foreign workers in southeastern Afghanistan and Gardez would be killed. The source added that the second person who was killed is an Afghan and his name is Rasul Amin.

December 22

Explosion in Kandahar car kills Afghan soldier. (Reuters)

An explosion in a car in Kandahar killed one soldier and wounded three. But officials gave conflicting reports of what actually caused the explosion, some suggesting a missile hit the car, others blaming a car bomb and others even suggesting a rocket being transported in the car might have exploded accidentally.

December 23

Southern Afghan zone dissolved. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

In line with an order by Hamed Karzai, the chairman of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, Gul Agha Sherzai, the governor of Kandahar Province and the “emir” of the southern zone, declared the southern Afghan zone dissolved. So far the five provinces of Kandahar, Zabol, Helmand, Urozgan and Nimroz have counted as a zone. According to the order, each one of them will act independently. The chairman of the [Transitional] Islamic State of Afghanistan some time ago issued an order declaring the existence of military zones illegal throughout the country, and asked the governors to avoid zonal activities.

Following the order, leaders of the northern Afghan provinces announced that due to the fight against Al-Qa'idah and the Taleban in the area they will not be included in Karzai's order.

December 24

Women's protests force Afghan leader to abolish ban on hejab. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

The Afghan leader Hamed Karzai has abolished the policy banning Afghan women from wearing the hejab in offices and departments. Afghan Interior Ministry recently ordered female workers to go to their workplace without wearing the hejab, on security grounds. Afghan women criticized the Ministry of the Interior for failing to show concern over this matter and warned that if the ministry did not take action [to lift the ban] women would not go to work. The Afghan leader also said that female workers could wear the Islamic hejab and Islamic dress in accordance with Islamic laws and customs when they went to work.

December 25

Armed men create fear in Parwan province. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

The presence of armed men in areas north of Kabul has caused great dismay and fury among the people. People in the north of Kabul have been concerned about the presence of armed men. They say they have been under intense pressure by these people. It is said that a number of military commanders and state officials in Salang District, Parwan Province, are among those who are despised by the people of the district because of their deeds. The people of Salang said they did not dare to confront these armed men, however, they tried to pass on their complaints to the delegations dispatched by the central government.

It is said that people of Kapisa [another province north of Kabul] have also found the opportunity to make complaints to the government delegations. Sayd Ali Mahdawi,

head of the delegation, says that bribery is common in the government departments and it is not possible to stop people engaging in this practice soon.

Officials arrested in connection with student protests in Kabul. (Afghan newspaper *Anis*)

According to an official from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the head of personnel in the Ministry of Higher Education, his deputy, as well as the principle of Kabul University dormitory and his deputy have been arrested recently on charges of embezzlement. Also, a major-general, two non-commissioned police officers, two police soldiers, and one officer from the Security Department have been arrested on different charges in connection with the recent demonstrations by university students. Mohammad Zia Nur Khail, the deputy prosecutor general, said that the investigation had found that the basic rights of the students were trampled upon and there were obvious instances of violation of students' rights. The report says that the Minister of Higher Education has issued an order for the release of some of the accused people. Zia Nur Khial said: "When the crime is clear, even the head of state cannot release such people from the grip of the law."

December 30

Afghan cabinet approves law on freedom of political gatherings. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

The cabinet of the Afghan government ratified in its meeting the law on freedom of political demonstrations and protests in the framework of the law on political parties.

December 31

Residents of Kabul district protest against warlords. (Afghan news agency *Hindokosh*)

The residents of Sorobi District of Kabul Province staged a huge demonstration in which they demanded the lifting of military pressure by the warlords in the area. They have asked the central government to take immediate measures to lift these pressures and improve their living standards.

*UNHCR Ankara
Country of Origin Information Team
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