

Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, April 2002*

April 1

Islamic movement issues fatwa against Afghan administration. (Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency / AIP)

A new Afghan movement has issued an edict condemning the Afghan interim administration as "apostate" and condemning all its active members to death. The Tahrik-e Afghaniyat-e Islami-e Afghanistan [The Islamic Afghanist Movement of Afghanistan] condemned the leadership for helping "infidels" interfere in Afghanistan and for promoting "non-Islamic values." The movement said that the leaders of the interim administration had the same status as the leaders of the communist regime, naming in particular Hamed Karzai [the interim leader of Afghanistan under the Bonn Agreement]; Dr Abdollah [the Foreign Minister of the interim administration]; [Mohammad Yunos] Qanuni [the Interior Minister]; [Mohammad Qasem] Fahim [the Minister of Defence]; Gol Agha Sherzai [the Governor of Kandahar]; Hazrat Ali [the commander of military corps of Nangarhar Province].

April 2

Afghan security forces arrest alleged Hezb-e Islami members. (Afghan news agency Bakhtar and Agence France-Press / AFP)

Afghan officials said they had uncovered a plot to "sabotage" the interim administration by followers of exiled warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Defence Ministry official Mir Jan said several Hekmatyar loyalists, including a relative of the former finance minister in the Northern Alliance which dominates the interim cabinet, had been arrested in recent days. He said the brother-in-law of former Northern Alliance Finance Minister Sabawon was among the detainees, but he had been released after questioning. Unconfirmed reports said Sabawon, Bashir Khan Baghlani and Juma Khan Hamdard -- all former commanders with Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami [Islamic Party] -- had been arrested, but Mir Jan said this was "not correct". General Din Mohammad Jurat, the head of the common law and order department at the Interior Ministry, said that those arrested "had been trying to conduct a series of explosions in the city of Kabul". Afghanistan's ambassador in London, Wali Masood, said [on April 5] that 260 people attached to Hekmatyar have been arrested in connection with a bomb plot in Afghan capital Kabul. "They are as many as 260 people, including the most dreadful intelligence faces of Hezb-i-Islami," he said.

Afghan Islamic Press news agency report on the same news [April 4 and 6]: The official in charge of Hezb-e-Islami office in Pakistan, Mr Qotboddin Hellal, denied that those arrested in Kabul were involved in a plot against the administration and

* *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.*

Sabawon had no connection with [the leader of Hezb-e Islami and former Prime Minister] Engineer Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. It was reported that former defence minister General Wahidollah Sabawon is Hekmatyar's son-in-law; Sabawon severed his links with Hezb-e Islami and Hekmatyar in the late 1990s and joined the Northern Alliance. Their disagreements were over policy towards the Taleban. He described the reason for the detentions as being that the authorities were afraid of them joining together. He added that there were people among the detainees that had come from Kandahar and there may be people who were connected to the Hezb-e Islami.

On the other hand, Sabawon himself personally denied the allegations that he was detained and was under house arrest. Sabawon added that more than 200 people formerly associated with the Hezb-e Islami who had come for consultation with him had been detained by the government and that he still thought the arrests were the result of a misunderstanding. Sabawon said followers of his former boss would not have been allowed to associate with him.

Hezb-e Islami also reported that their delegation dispatched previously to Kabul to hold talks with the interim administration returned to Pakistan on April 4. Hekmatyar's son-in-law and spokesman in Islamabad, Ghairat Bahir, stated that the delegation had come back and was happy with its trip. In addition to Hamed Karzai, the delegation has also held talks with officials from Shora-e Nizar. He said that the delegation would go back to Kabul soon for further talks. Bahir did not disclose the agenda of the talks. According to witnesses, though talks have been held between the interim administration and the Hezb-e Islami party, the detention of those persons on charges of plotting and carrying out destructive activities against the interim administration would have negative affects on future talks.

April 3

First battalion of Afghan national army enters service. (Afghan news agency Bakhtar)

The first model battalion of the national army entered service in the armed forces after completing training. A ceremony held on the occasion at the battalion command was attended by Hamed Karzai, chairman of the interim administration, General Mohammad Asef Delawar, the Chief of General Staff of the armed forces, a number of state and military officials, and General McColl, the general commander of the United Nations peacekeeping force.

Leading Afghan faction seeks to quash movement to restore monarchy. (AFP)

The powerful Tajik faction in the Afghan interim administration is opposed to any restoration of the monarchy, after supporters of former king Mohammed Zahir Shah began floating the idea. The ex-king, who was deposed in a coup in 1973 by his cousin, reaffirmed he does not intend to return as king, and is willing to take on any role chosen for him by the Loya Jirga. However, some members of the 87-year-old ex-monarch's entourage have indicated they are keen to reinstate the royal family in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Mehrabuddin Mastan, the Afghan *charge d'affaires* in Paris, said the powerful Jamiat faction in the interim administration has expressed its opposition to any restoration of the monarchy. He said Jamiat made the declaration last weekend at a gathering of its overseas supporters in London also attended by top-level officials Abdullah Abdullah and Yunus Qanooni from Kabul. "Such vague noises are not acceptable to Afghan public opinion and can derail the present

process," he said, but added that Jamiat would not be opposed if the Loya Jirga chose Zahir Shah as the country's president. Mastan said all members of Zahir Shah's family could return, dismissing earlier reports that Qasim Fahim had reservations to the homecoming of his grandson Mustapha Zahir.

April 6

Exit visa abolished. (Afghan news agency Bakhtar)

The chairman of the interim administration, Hamed Karzai, chaired an extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers at the Gol Khana Palace. The Council of Ministers also discussed the removal of the requirement of the exit visa. It was decided that henceforth travellers can leave the country without the need for an exit visa.

Pashtuns threaten retaliation against violations of rights. (AIP)

A meeting of southern Afghani Ghaljei tribal leaders and commanders from Kandahar, Helmand, and Zabol Provinces issued a number of ultimatums over what participants described as "violation of the rights of Pashtuns by Tajik and Hazaras" and threatened "reciprocal conduct" against Persian speakers. The meeting had called for the release of all Pashtun prisoners, an end to "conspiracies plotted by the enemies of the Pashtuns", observance of Pashtuns' rights and no U.S. bombing of Pashtun areas without credible information about Taleban and Al-Qa'idah presence. The meeting also attacked the interim government leader, Hamed Karzai, saying he had "turned a blind eye" to violations of Pashtuns' rights. The meeting accused Hazaras for torturing and suppressing Pashtuns in Ghazni Province where the Pashtuns are in the majority. The resolution concluded that "if the situation continues, the leaders of all the provinces which participated in the meeting will embark upon reciprocal conduct with regard to the life and property towards all Persian-speaking people in the related provinces".

April 7

Eight Afghan farmers killed in poppy-ban protest. (Reuters)

At least eight Afghan farmers were killed and 35 wounded during protests against a government campaign to persuade them to stop planting opium poppies. The protest erupted in Kajaki district in Helmand province. Afghan security men were ordered to fire on the protesters and 12 of the wounded were in critical condition in hospital.

April 8

Bomb explodes near Afghan Defence Minister's convoy, killing four. (Associated Press / AP)

A bomb exploded near a convoy carrying Afghanistan's defense minister, killing at least four bystanders and injuring 16 others in what officials said was another attempt to destabilize the interim government. Defense Minister Mohammed Fahim was not hurt when the bomb exploded in front of his convoy in Jalalabad. Fahim was on a trip to meet with local commanders and tribal leaders to discuss, among other issues, a government program launched to eradicate illegal poppy crops, offering farmers money to destroy the narcotic-bearing flowers. The start of the program was linked to

the outbreak of violence in several places, as poor poppy farmers protested that the government's cash offering falls far short of the narcotic's eventual market value.

April 10

Afghan UN worker murdered in Mazar-i Sharif. (AFP)

An Afghan working for the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization has been murdered in the latest of a series of attacks on aid workers, UN officials said. A UN spokesman told a press briefing here that the man was shot dead in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif. He said there was no known motive for the attack but at this stage it did not look like a robbery. "Shah Sayed was assassinated in his house... Three people entered his house as he was in his bedroom, they took him out and shot him dead," spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva said. UN special representative to Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi said the murder was part of a "disturbing pattern of attacks on civilians including humanitarian personnel in the northern region in recent months". Silva said that in January, three people were beaten as they distributed aid, while in February armed men entered the home of an aid worker, raped women occupants and looted the house. Another aid worker was kidnapped in the northern areas in February and has not been seen since. All the attacks have been against Afghans working for the UN or independent relief agencies.

April 12

Factional fighting erupts west of Kabul. (AP)

Factional fighting erupted in the hills just west of Kabul, further complicating efforts to restore stability as the country prepares for a grand council to choose a new government. Mortars flashed from the rocky hillsides and Kalashnikovs crackled in the valley below only 40 kilometers west of the capital. A tank trundled down the dirt road - the main one from Kabul to Kandahar - to provide backup to weary fighters. The battle began when General Zafar Uddin moved into the area to take control of checkpoints manned by a local leader named Nangialai who has designs on the governorship of Wardak province, according to Uddin's fighters and government officials. An interior ministry spokesman named Fridoon said: "Nangialai was a member of the Taliban and he wanted to destabilize the situation in the region". Uddin called Nangialai a former Taliban leader who was using caches of Taliban arms to destabilize the interim government. Alokzai, the police official, called into question the allegiances of Uddin and Nangialai. He said although Uddin receives support from the defense ministry, he also is allied with a former prime minister whom the government accuses of trying to destabilize its regime. He described Nangialai as a supporter of the interim government.

Reuters report on the same news [April 13]: A royalist *mujahideen* commander clashed with the commander of interim government forces in Wardak province shortly before ex-King Zahir Shah is expected back from 30 years in exile in Rome. At least three people were killed in the Wardak fighting, reported to have involved heavy weapons and rockets and which closed the road from Kabul to Maidan Shahr 45 km to the west. The guns went silent on April 13, officials said, amid conflicting accounts of what started the fighting between two commanders who are both from Afghanistan's majority ethnic Pashtun group. The Wardak fighting involved Ghulam Rohani Nangali and interim administration commander Muzaffaruddin, both Pashtuns.

Muzaffaruddin told Nangali's men had been robbing travellers so he dispatched a force to disarm them. Local people said they believed Muzaffaruddin wanted to diminish the influence of Nangali, a Zahir Shah loyalist.

Governors in western Afghanistan try to mediate in fighting over trade routes. (Iranian radio Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

The governor of Nimroz Province, Abdol Karim Brohi, has said that there have been isolated clashes in the Afghan-Iranian border areas between the provinces of Farah and Nimroz. Brohi added that mediatory attempts were being undertaken to end the fighting peacefully. Brohi said that a delegation had been sent from Nimroz to Farah. He added that the governor of Farah Province had welcomed the delegation that had been sent in order that the fighting that had flared up could be stopped in any possible way. An officer, the former head of Farah Province police, Abdol Jalil, who was opposing the governor's fighters, pointed out that there had been fighting between the forces of the Afghan interim government and rebels to recapture the trading routes in Nimroz Province.

April 13

UNHCR: Afghan fighting won't stop repatriation. (Reuters)

Fighting in Afghanistan has hampered the return of tens of thousands of refugees from Iran but the target of repatriating 400,000 people this year will be met, the U.N. refugee agency chief said. Skirmishes between forces of rival warlords near the provincial capital of Zaranj in southwest Afghanistan forced the U.N. agency to use only one of two planned crossing points when it began its repatriation programme on April 9.

April 16

Afghan pamphlets on women threaten reprisals. (Reuters)

Pamphlets, unsigned and hand written, have appeared in Kandahar, warning men not to send their daughters to school or their women to work. "Such pamphlets have spread fears among our families," said one traveller from Kandahar. "Stop sending your women to offices and daughters to schools. It spreads indecency and vulgarity," the pamphlets said. "Stand ready for the consequences if you do not heed the advice," it said. Similar hand-written leaflets were found last week in and around Spinboldak, warning people of reprisals if they helped track down Taliban or al Qaeda militants. "The American forces will leave the country sooner or later, but you will remain here," one of the leaflets read. "People helping Afghan security forces are being marked."

Woman teacher attacked with acid. (Reuters)

An unidentified man threw acid on an Afghan woman teacher in Kandahar soon after threatening pamphlets attributed to Jaish-e-Islami, or Army of Islam, appeared in the former Taliban stronghold. The man sprinkled acid on the teacher as she went home from school, then tried to flee, Commander Dost Mohammad stated. "But the people caught him and handed over to the authorities," he said. Kandahar authorities had arrested 37 people named by the detained man and found more acid. "Five of them were wearing the Afghan military uniform," he said.

April 18

Three killed in bazaar blast. (Reuters)

At least three people were killed in a bomb explosion in a busy market in Khost. The blast took place only 300 metres from Khost military hospital.

April 20

Al-Fatah declares Jihad. (Pakistan Press International)

Al-fatah Organization of Afghanistan distributed a pamphlet in various provinces of Afghanistan. It asked leaders of Ummah, ulema, freedom fighters and Taliban of Afghanistan “to awake as time for supreme jihad has reached.”

Former Afghan king's supporter killed in Kandahar. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

One of the influential figures in Afghanistan's Kandahar Province, Qari Obaydollah, has been killed by unknown men. Qari Obaydollah was one of the influential personalities in Daman District of Kandahar Province and considered to be a serious supporters of Mohammad Zaher Khan.

April 26

Security situation tense in Nangarhar as opium market raided. (Pakistan Press International)

Situation in Nangarhar is reportedly tense as government force of the province ruined the opium market Shinwari, Ghani Khel, 30 km east of Jalalabad, and looted the whole money and other valuable material, vehicles and arrested a number of people of the area. Raiders were headed by the son of Haji Abdul Qadeer, the Governor of Nangarhar province, allegedly still besieging the area. The governor of Nangarhar, refused to be involved in the operation. The security chief of the province Haji Zaman refused any involvement in the operation and condemned the action taken by the forces of Haji Zahir, son of Haji Abdul Qadeer.

Tension grows between rival commanders in Jalalabad. (Afghan Islamic Press / AIP)

The tension has emerged for the last few days in the city of Jalalabad between the commander of Nangarhar Province's military corps, General Hazrat Ali, and the security commander of the province, Commander Haji Mohammad Zaman Ghamsharik. The commander of the military corps, Gen Hazrat Ali, has begun setting up fighting posts near the military corps and the [Nangarhar] airport. And in his turn Commander Haji Mohammad Zaman Ghamsharik is organizing his forces inside the city. With the arrival of the new interim administration in Jalalabad, Hazrat Ali was appointed as security commander and Haji Zaman as the commander of the military corps. However, later on the interim administration appointed Hazrat Ali as the military corps commander and Haji Zaman as the security commander.

April 27

Akbari faction pledges support to interim government. (Iranian news agency IRNA)

Mohammad Akbari, the leader of Afghan Wahdat-e Islami [Islamic Unity] party (Akbari Faction), said that Afghan Shiites and Hazaras consider support for the interim government of Afghanistan as being in the interests of the country and as their national and religious responsibility.

Afghan mujahideen commander rains rockets on Gardez (Reuters)

An Afghan commander rained hundreds of rockets on the main eastern Afghan town of Gardez killing 25 people in the biggest outbreak of fighting between rival Afghan forces for several months. Governor Taj Mohammad Wardak of Paktia Province blamed the attack on former governor Padshah Khan Zadran who was ousted from power last February. Wardak said: "There are at least 25 dead and more than 100 wounded. They are all civilians. He is trying to take over Gardez." In late January, around 50 fighters were killed in fighting between Padshah Khan and rival commander Haji Saifullah Khan who heads Gardez's tribal council. The rivalry between Padshah Khan and Saifullah became so intense that interim Afghan leader Hamid Karzai appointed Wardak as governor in February to try to calm the situation. Amanullah Zadran, Minister for Frontiers and Tribal Affairs, said that his brother had fought off an attack in the morning by Taliban and al Qaeda forces and captured several tanks and armoured personnel carriers. Padshah Khan has already been accused of calling in U.S strikes on his rivals in neighbouring Khost province, by claiming they were al Qaeda or Taliban. More than 50 people were killed in the Khost bombing at the end of 2001.

April 28

Jamiat-e Islami says returnees cannot decide Afghanistan's future. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

The Jamiat-e Islami Afghanistan led by the former Afghan president, Borhanoddin Rabbani, issued a statement on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the end of Soviet regime in Afghanistan. The statement said only those who had stayed in Afghanistan and put up resistance could decide its future. Further in the statement, the party warned that the return of refugees in the process of rebuilding Afghanistan after 23 years of civil war would cause a new crisis that would profit neither the Afghan nation nor the international community.

*UNHCR Ankara
Country of Origin Information Team
Revised September 2004*