

Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, April 2003*

April 1

NGOs suspend activities in southern provinces. (UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network / IRIN)

Following the murder of an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegate in the province of Kandahar, some international aid agencies have suspended work in southern provinces. "The NGOs suspended their movements in all provinces outside Kandahar for 72 hours right after the killing of the ICRC staff member," a programme director for Mercy Corps in southern Afghanistan, said in Kabul, noting that on Sunday the suspension had been extended for another 72 hours as the situation was still fragile. An assistant country director for Care International, said that if the murder of the ICRC delegate was the start of a new campaign, then it would considerably compromise the ability of NGOs and the UN to operate in Afghanistan and affect the delivery of services.

First issue of Afghan Civil Union monthly magazine published. (*Afghanistan Television*)

The first issue of *Jamea-e Madani* [Civil Society] monthly, a publication of the Afghan Civil Union, has recently been published. The first issue of the *Jamea-e Madani* monthly is published in 50 pages and contains articles and reports in Dari, Pashto and English languages about civil and legal society.

April 2

Seven killed in clash between Taleban and Afghan forces in Badghis Province. (Afghan newspaper *Erada*)

An unknown armed group has attacked a government military base in Bala Morghab in Badghis Province. Gol Mohammad Arefi, the Badghis governor, said that 150 Taleban, including commander Mola Baradar, a famous Taleban commander, had attacked a military base in Bala Morghab. Five government soldiers and two Taleban were killed in the exchange of fire.

* *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*

April 3

Afghan police identify killer of Red Cross worker. (Agence France-Presse / AFP)

Afghan police have identified the alleged killer of Red Cross worker Ricardo Munguia. Abdul Satar, a resident of the central province of Oruzgan and allegedly close to the Taliban, was responsible for the murder of the ICRC employee. The only foreigner in a convoy of two vehicles, Munguia was accused by the unknown gunmen of being an "infidel and unbeliever" and shot dead execution-style in front of his Afghan colleagues, who were spared.

Afghan leader approves law on demonstrations, protests. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

Afghan President Hamed Karzai has signed a law on organizing demonstrations and staging protests in Afghanistan. All organizations, associations, political parties and different strata of the Afghan people can stage protests and organize demonstrations only after they obtain permission from the Interior Ministry. According to the 1964 constitution of Afghanistan, the proposed drafts and plans of the government are binding as a law only after they are approved by the Ministry of Justice and signed by the president.

Taleban engage government forces in heavy fighting in southeast Afghanistan. (Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency / AIP)

Serious fighting is under way in two remote areas, mainly the Waliwala area, near Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province. The Taleban militants attacked government forces in Tor Ghar in Kandahar Province, in addition to Waliwala. Although there are no precise reports on casualties among government forces, the bodies of at least five government fighters arrived in Spin Boldak. Currently, the Taleban have been fighting against government forces on the same battlefield for the past two days. Before that the Taleban attacked government forces in guerrilla style operations. According to one report, American forces are also involved in the fighting.

Ally of Hamid Karzai gunned down in Uruzgan province. (Associated Press / AP)

A close ally of Afghan President Hamid Karzai was shot and killed in southern Afghanistan in what appeared to be the latest in a wave of attacks by resurgent Taliban. Haji Gilani and his nephew were gunned down in Deh Rawood as they walked past their home, said Dad Mullah, a spokesman for the Uruzgan provincial government. He said six gunmen shot the two men and fled. No arrests have been made and police said they were investigating. But Mullah said there was no immediate evidence of a personal feud, and he suspected Taliban operatives were behind the killing. Gilani was the first man to give Karzai shelter in Uruzgan province as he launched his anti-Taliban revolt weeks before the religious militia collapsed under heavy U.S. bombing in late 2001.

April 4

Human rights offices open in Mazar-e Sharif and Bamian. (IRIN).

Following the opening of its first sub-office in Herat, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) opened two more sub-offices in the city of Mazar-e Sharif and the province of Bamian, both of which have experienced serious human rights violations such as mass killings, torture and intimidation of civilians over the last decade. "Unfortunately human rights violation is still a serious issue in the north, as it is in most of the provinces of the country," Sima Samar, the head of the AIHRC and former women's affairs minister, stated in Mazar-e Sharif, the capital of Balkh Province. According to its mandate, the AIHRC will raise the level of human rights awareness among the public, work to uphold women's and children's rights, and investigate past violations. "However, [even though] the commission doesn't have any police force or judicial court, it doesn't mean we are weak," Samar said, stressing that it had the right to intervene in any government body and study violation cases. For Samar, past human rights abuses remain a very sensitive political issue, as some of those accused of being serious violators of human rights are either part of the new transitional government or retain power elsewhere. "[While] the gun rules in the country, it will be hard and challenging to pursue serious human rights violations," she said.

But General Ata Mohammad, a powerful commander in Balkh Province, said the outcry over violations of human rights in the north had been prompted by the fact that there had been no reliable and independent monitor in the province. "We have been saying ever since the collapse of the Taliban regime that any advocate or activist of human rights can come and monitor the human rights situation in Mazar," he said, calling on AIHRC to undertake neutral and comprehensive measures for improving human rights in the north. He announced the northern authorities' full support for AIHRC, but stressed that Islamic values had top priority and could not be ignored in any cases.

Meanwhile, however, the UN in Mazar-e Sharif says it is continuing to receive reports of clear violations of human rights being perpetrated in all the northern provinces. "We do see, and continue to see, human rights abuses in the north," Mechele Lipner, an area coordinator of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), said in Mazar-e Sharif, noting that violations were being carried out against all sections of the population, often by local commanders.

Protestors try to bar Afghan commander accused of rights abuses. (AFP)

Protestors attempted to bar the entry to Mazar-i-Sharif of General Abdul Malik, a commander accused of gross human rights abuses including the execution of 2,000 Taliban prisoners. The protestors, among them Malik's brother Gul Mohammad Pahlavan, asked city officials to refuse to let the commander into Mazar-i-Sharif, accusing him of being "a thief and a killer." "General Malik is a killer, he's a thief and also he's a member of al-Qaeda because he brought al-Qaeda into Mazar-i-Sharif in 1996 and then had killed a lot of people when he brought in the Taliban and al-Qaeda," said Sofi Hesmati, a representative of Faryab province. According to Human Rights Watch, Malik is believed to be responsible for the summary executions of 2,000 Taliban prisoners following a failed coup attempt against commander General

Abdul Rashid Dostum in 1997. He had made a pact with the Taliban to allow them to enter the city but reneged on it when they arrived. The Taliban took the city the following year and carried out widespread retaliatory killings. Malik was formerly one of Dostum's commanders. He reportedly turned against the northern strongman after accusing him of responsibility for the death of one of his brothers.

Afghan independent agency in Herat resumes publication after boycott. (Afghan news agency Herat News Centre / HNC)

The bulletin of Herat News Centre (HNC) was suspended for a week and the reason for this was to express support for the correspondents of international radios in Herat. This period has ended HNC has resumed its regular publications.

HNC report on the same news on April 7: The reporters of international news services, who had left Herat in protest against the insults and beating of Ahmad Behzad, the correspondent of Radio Azadi, by the local officials of Herat, have returned to Herat. The reporters of the international media expressed their protest by leaving Herat for Kabul on Monday 4 Hamal [24 March] for one week. In Kabul these reporters held meetings with high-ranking officials of the Afghan government, the officials of the United Nations representative in Kabul, the ambassador of the United States as well as the offices of human rights organizations. After being invited back by Alhaj Mohammad Esmail [Khan], the governor of Herat, these journalists returned to Herat again.

Five die in tribal clash in Paktika. (Afghan Islamic Press news agency / AIP)

In a clash in Paktika five people, including two well-known tribal elders and a district governor, were killed. It was reported that a convoy of the Zadran tribe, which was travelling to Kabul, was attacked. Two well-known tribal elders by the names of Haji Amanollah and Haji Mohammad Karim, also known as Haji Karamai, and one of their bodyguards were killed. The relatives of the dead said that the attack was launched by Kakai, the district governor of Zirok, and his associates. Kakai and one of his fighters were also killed in the firing. They said that the incident took place at the instigation of [former Paktia governor] Pacha Khan Zadran, because Kakai is an associate of Zadran and appointed by him as the local governor in Zirok. The relatives of the dead persons said that Zadran had many times attempted to kill the elders.

April 6

Afghan leader issues decree on police reform. (Afghan news agency Bakhtar)

The head of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, has issued a decree on reform of the police force. The text of the decree is as follows::

“To ensure internal security in the country and effective and lawful implementation of the duties of police, the following reforms are endorsed in the structure and the security duties of the police: 1. The level of professional skill, discipline, legality, observance of the laws of the government of Afghanistan and rules and regulations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs should be enhanced. 2. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is duty bound to illustrate the objectives of the reforms, which are to create unity and balance, safeguard the lives and property of the citizens of the country,

respect legality, enhance the level of professional skills, including the procedure for detention and obtaining documents and evidence, and to organize the planning and objectives of the reform. 3. These reforms should be implemented gradually throughout the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as a single organ responsible for ensuring security of the compatriots. 4. The reform of the national police of Afghanistan should take into account the new structure of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the new structure, ensuring security, investigation of criminals, prevention of the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics, violation of customs rules, prevention of smuggling and sabotage, violation of traffic rules, control of demonstrations, control of frontiers and implementation of all the duties assigned [to the police] in accordance with the laws of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan are the responsibility of the departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. 5. Following the reform and enhancement of their professional qualities, the total number of the national police force of Afghanistan, including administrative personnel, should be gradually reduced to 50,000. This figure, however, does not include the 12,000 frontier police personnel. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, with accurate assessment, should specify the actual number of the police force across the country and work out the reform plan on those basis. 6. The organizational divisions of the police force, based on the requirement of the provinces, falls within the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. 7. The Ministry of Internal Affairs should take immediate measures to promote the level of professional knowledge of its personnel. 8. The ethnic composition and balance and professional competency in all levels of the Ministry of Internal Affairs should be respected through the commissions that are to be formed for this purpose. The Ministry of Internal Affairs should also set up working groups to coordinate planning, disarmament and demilitarization. 9. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is duty bound to join efforts and ensure coordination with the national army on issues concerning disarmament and demilitarization. 10. The Ministry of Internal Affairs should compile bills and rules governing the activities of the national police of Afghanistan. 11. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, taking into account the contents of this decree, should prepare and implement a working plan for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the police force. 12. This decree is effective from date it is issued, and should be published in the official gazette.”

Afghan official says Taliban assault on southern towns repulsed. (Iranian news agency IRNA)

Military operations of the Taliban forces in the cities of Nawbahar and Shenkay failed due to strong resistance of the security forces of the Afghan central government. The spokesman of the Afghan Foreign Ministry, Omar Samad, said that the remaining forces of the Taliban group and the terrorist group of Al-Qa'idah attacked the two cities, in the Zabol Province, in order to occupy them. Quoting the provincial security sources, he said the Taliban and Al-Qa'idah forces were forced to face defeat after few hours. He further denied claims made by the Taliban group that its forces have occupied the two cities.

Afghans, U.N. launch crucial disarmament plan. (Reuters)

The Afghan government and the United Nations signed an agreement to launch a crucial programme to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate factional armies that threaten the country's fragile peace. The three-year plan, budgeted at \$127 million and so far

funded by Japan, Canada and Britain, envisages demobilising 100,000 fighters currently loyal to regional power warlords rather than President Hamid Karzai's central government. The men will be given the opportunity to join the fledgling Afghan National Army, which currently numbers only a few thousand, or given assistance to rejoin civilian life. Minister for Housing and Urban Planning Mohammed Yusuf Pashtun, who chairs a commission responsible for demobilisation and reintegration, said that the aim was to launch the disarmament process around July 10. The signing of the agreement between the government and the U.N. Development Programme will establish Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme. It will have a head office in Kabul and eight provincial offices staffed primarily by Afghans with a small number of international advisers. The New Beginnings Programme is expected in coming months to develop ways of assisting reintegration of faction fighters into their communities. The means are intended to be vocational training, employment opportunities and access to credit. A programme in the north last year ended up with more powerful commanders forcing lesser ones to surrender their arms to them.

Kandahar province orders out Taleban sympathisers and outsiders. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

A joint announcement issued by the governors, religious scholars and the elders of southwestern provinces endorsed by Mr Hamed Karzai. The announcement presented by the governors and elders of the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Urozgan, Zabol and Farah, aired through radio and television in Kandahar Province includes four articles: "1. All of those mullahs [religious preachers], Taleban and others who were previously linked with Al-Qa'idah should evacuate Kandahar city within two days, and in case of violating the order of the head of state and the text of the announcement they will be penalized under law. 2. The citizens of all of the said provinces, adjacent to Kandahar Province, should evacuate Kandahar Province. 3. The people in this above category can only dwell in Kandahar Province if the people of their locality vouch for them. 4. The mullahs and Taleban that perform imamat [religious duties at mosques] in the city and province of Kandahar should have ID cards issued by the religious council of Kandahar Province." It is worth mentioning that the same announcement was issued on 14 Hamal this year [3 April] which gave a deadline of 10 days for people, but this new announcement, which is also endorsed by the head of state, has extended the deadline.

April 7

Government convoy attacked in Paktika. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

An Afghan government vehicle convoy was attacked by unidentified people in Sarkhoza, near the Orgun junction in Paktika. One vehicle in the convoy was completely destroyed and other vehicles were damaged, too. There are no reports of casualties from the attack.

UN lifts suspension of movements in the south. (IRIN)

Following a six-day suspension due to deteriorating security, the United Nations announced a resumption of movement in the southern provinces of Afghanistan. An

earlier suspension of movement followed the murder of an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegate in the southern province of Oruzgan on 27 March. "We will resume movements in the region [all southern provinces] on Monday," Manoel de Almeida e Silva, a UN spokesman in Afghanistan, stated. According to the spokesman, several hundred troops, mostly from the new Afghan national army, along with US-led coalition forces, have been deployed in and around the areas of high risk to curb elements threatening security in those areas. "It has been agreed that 50 policemen from Kandahar [city] police force will be placed in all 17 districts of Kandahar [province]," he said, noting that the local government would also send mobile patrols to high-risk areas, and would set up security checkpoints in those areas.

The Afghan government in Kabul announced that it had successfully carried out an operation in the Tarin Kowt District in Oruzgan Province, close to where the ICRC staff member lost his life. "We launched a joint Afghan/Coalition clear-up operation in Tarin Kowt in order to follow the people who have bases in the mountains," Ali Ahmad Jalali, the Afghan interior minister, said, adding that 15 "terrorists" were captured and nine others killed. "The operation is currently ended," Jalali said noting most of the "acts of terrorism" in those areas had been perpetrated by former Taliban elements were based across the border in Pakistan.

The UN said it had suspended movements only to review the security situation, but had not stopped work or recalled staff. "There has been absolutely no reduction in UN personnel. However, some international organisations have reduced or relocated personnel from the south," the UN spokesman said, noting that the aid operation in the south would continue, "but of course with limitation and caution".

April 8

Afghan officials inspect jails, release children. (Afghan news agency Bakhtar)

According to a report by a source of the Supreme Court, the delegation assigned to inspect the conditions of the jails and the prisoners has released six children from the training and educational centres in Logar, Paktia and Paktika provinces and Gardez City. The children were handed over to their parents. The delegation has advised the authorities in Paktia Province to treat the prisoners fairly. According to the same report, the delegation has given instruction to the authorities in Logar Province to improve the jails and [conditions of] the prisoners, after they examined the jails and prisoners.

Eight killed in factional fighting in Maimana. (Reuters)

[Eight] people have have been killed and five wounded in a fresh outbreak of fighting in Faryab province between two pro-government factions. The fighting in Maimana, the provincial capital of Faryab province, erupted just after the government announced a timetable for a crucial U.N.-backed programme to disarm fighters loyal to regional commanders, and underscored the challenges facing President Hamid Karzai. A female civilian [and another civilian] was among those who died in the exchanges of fire between forces loyal to Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum and those of Ustad Atta Mohammad of the Jamiat-e-Islami faction, officials from both sides said. The other [six] killed were fighters from Atta's faction and included one of

his commanders. Both sides used artillery and tanks in the fighting, Hashim Urtaq, Dostum's senior security officer said. Officials from the two sides gave contradictory explanations for the eruption of the fighting. Urtaq accused Atta's men of trying to capture the headquarters of one of Dostum's divisions. Atta's officials insisted Dostum's men had ambushed Farooq Khan, its key commander in Faryab. They said Khan survived, but another car escorting him was hit in the incident. A delegation of officials from both factions set out for Maimana from Mazar-i-Sharif to try to broker a truce, officials of both sides said.

IRIN report of the same news on April 10: United Nations and international aid agencies were forced to close their offices when severe fighting between two rival groups in Maymana, the capital of the northwestern province of Faryab. Manoel de Almeida e Silva, a spokesman of the UNAMA, said that at least 13 people, including two civilians, had been killed and 17 injured in the skirmishes. The UN has been able to broker an agreement between the two armed factions, and the initiative called for withdrawal of troops from Meymaneh city. "UNAMA have been in contact with the Security Commission of the north, and immediately deployed to facilitate the resolution of the fighting," the UN spokesman said, adding that the fighting had also continued during the night before an initial ceasefire was brokered early on April 9 morning. According to UNAMA, a team from both Gen Fauzi of Jonbesh and Gen Sabour of Jamiat, the two most senior members of the Security Commission, had travelled to the scene to broker an agreement between the two sides.

Soon after the ceasefire came into effect, a demonstration involving 400 people was staged by local residents of the city, demanding disarmament. "It took place in front of the governor's office and the UNAMA office in Meymaneh," De Almeida e Silva said, noting that reports indicated that the situation was now calm and there had been no gunfire since April 9 afternoon.

AFP report on the same news on April 13: Two rival militias have started withdrawing forces from Maimana city under a UN-brokered agreement following clashes which left 17 people dead. "It is estimated that both the Jamiat and Junbesh forces have withdrawn 50 percent of their troops in Maimana" Silva said. "They have withdrawn to the outskirts of the city," he said. "This is the result of an agreement with a 24-hour implementation deadline that was brokered, or helped to be brokered, by UNAMA and signed by the two factions." Local commanders had said trouble started when northern commander Atta Mohammad's Jamiat-i Islami wanted to move weapons into Maimana against the wishes of the Junbish-i Milly-i-Islami of Deputy Defence Minister Abdul Rashid Dostum.

UNAMA then negotiated the agreement on withdrawal of forces from the city. "Based on this agreement, no armed men are to be allowed in the city with the exception of the two highest-ranking local Junbesh and Jamiat commanders, their deputies and their bodyguards, two for each," de Almeida e Silva said. Under the agreement Maimana police rather than the militias are responsible for city security, overseen by the provincial governor.

Girls' school arsoned in Logar Province. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

A girls' school has been set on fire by unidentified people in Malaki village in Logar Province. Afghan security sources said that no-one was injured in the fire. So far,

security officials have not been able to detain the perpetrators. The sources said that several girls' schools had been set on fire in other places in the past as well, including Maydanshar city, Wardag Province, Logar and Ghazni provinces. The people who have been detained in relation to arson attacks on girls schools in the city of Logar and Ghazni Province have connections with remnants of the collapsed regime of the Taliban.

April 11

Several killed, injured in fighting between Hezb-e Wahdat and Harakat-e Eslami in Samangan Province. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

A number of people have been killed and injured in a conflict between armed forces in Dara-e Suf [District] of Samangan Province. A number [of fighters] from the sides, including one of the commanders, was killed and others were injured in the fighting, which took place between forces of Hezb-e Wahdat-e [Eslami party] and Harakat-e Eslami [Islamic movement] of Afghanistan. According to the report, Sayed Wasiqollah, the head of the foreign department of Division Number 7 of Balkh Province, confirmed the fighting but did not comment on the casualties and damage caused by the incident.

April 13

Kandahar governor's kin killed in attack. (Reuters)

A cousin of a provincial governor of Afghanistan was killed in an attack by suspected Taliban members near the Pakistani border town of Chaman. Afghan security official Obaidullah said the nephew of Gul Agha Sherzai, the governor of the province of Kandahar, and two Afghan soldiers, were also wounded when armed men fired on their vehicle on the outskirts of Chaman. Mohammad Sharif, Agha's younger brother who was also travelling in the vehicle but escaped unhurt, blamed loyalists of the former Taliban regime.

Taxi bomb kills four near Afghan air base. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

According to Gen Khialbaz Khan, commander of Khost Military Division, a taxi full of explosives exploded, operated by a remote control device in the Karwan Saray area 200 metres away from the air base which is presently used by coalition forces. The incident claimed the lives of four people who most probably were riding in the taxi.

Repatriation of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan's urban areas begins. (IRIN)

UNHCR has launched the first repatriation of Afghan refugees who had been living in urban areas of Pakistan. Assisted by UNHCR, some 100 families from the country's capital, Islamabad, and the southwestern city of Quetta returned.

April 14

Clashes erupt between rival security chiefs in Konar Province. (AIP)

The situation is tense with regard to relations between the divisional and security commands in the Chaghla Saray area, the centre of Konar Province. An eyewitness from the area said that the situation regarding relations between the divisional and security commands had been tense for the past few days. He added that both sides had detained some of each others' men, which might lead to an outbreak of clashes between them. The division is led by commander Malik Zarin and the security command by a former Jamiat-e Eslami party commander, Najmuddin. The real reason for the tension is unknown.

Afghans in Sheberghan protest over fighting in Maymana. (Afghan Jowzjan Province television)

The people of Sheberghan city, including men, women, elderly, young, boys and girls gathered at the park today in order to express their condolences with the families that lost and sacrificed their sons in the latest fighting in Maymana city, the centre of Fariab Province. The people of Sheberghan gathered to call for faster progress in the process of disarmament of irresponsible gunmen all over Afghanistan, to declare their support and cooperation to the people of Maymana city, to request irresponsible gunmen to leave Maymana city and to express disgust with the fighting.

April 15

Afghan commander, bodyguards, killed in ambush. (Reuters)

A military commander belonging to the Afghan faction of ethnic Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum and two of his bodyguards were killed in an ambush. Commander Shahi was driving to the city of Mazar-i-Sharif when his car was ambushed in the Char Bolak area about 30 km to the west, one of Dostum's deputies, General Majid Roozi, said. The identity of Shahi's assailants was not known. Shahi, who led about 300 fighters, served for more than 15 years as a commander for Dostum.

IDPs continue arriving in the south. (IRIN)

UNHCR maintains that arrivals of internally displaced persons (IDPs) - mostly ethnic Pashtuns - in the south of the country as a result of harassment and insecurity in the north are continuing. "We do have protection cases, human rights cases of Pashtuns coming from the north, still in small numbers, but continuing," Maki Shinohara, a spokeswoman for UNHCR, stated. "What is notable is that there are still people arriving at these settlements, fleeing harassment and insecurity from the northern provinces of Faryab, Jowzjan and Badghis," Shinohara said, noting that in the second half of March, 45 families had arrived at the livestock market in Kandahar, joining some 100 displaced families already there. "In some specific provinces of the north where there is factional fighting going on, there are some local commanders who have been confiscating land illegally, not only from Pashtuns - there have been others affected too - but mainly Pashtuns," Shinohara said, noting that the working group of the Return Commission in the north, composed of local authorities and the Afghan

Human Rights Commission, was trying to make headway in identifying areas for possible return, and would then visit the displaced Pashtuns in the south with concrete proposals.

April 16

Grenade attack on UNICEF office in Jalalabad. (AFP)

A grenade blast rocked the UNICEF office in the city of Jalalabad overnight but there were no casualties. UNICEF spokesman Edward Carwardine said there were no injuries to staff as the office was empty at the time.

April 17

Insecurity threatening Afghan return programs. (UNHCR)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ruud Lubbers expressed serious concern over the deteriorating security situation in parts of Afghanistan, saying it was hampering efforts to support returning refugees and internally displaced people. "UNHCR and its partners have worked hard to help more than 2 million people return home over the past year, but the sustainability of those and future returns is now being jeopardised by insecurity in parts of Afghanistan," Lubbers said. "It is absolutely crucial that Afghan authorities and the international community take measures to strengthen security in the country, particularly in rural areas."

UNHCR urged that concrete action be taken to improve the security situation in southern Afghanistan. It warned that lack of security could trigger a vicious cycle of reduced humanitarian access, less development aid, fewer returns and further instability - all in an area that is already suffering the effects of half a decade of drought.

April 20

Afghan provincial TV and radio shut in protest at threats by gunmen. (Afghan newspaper *Arman-e Melli*)

Television and radio broadcasts in Jalalabad have stopped in protest. The reason for the closure is said to be that gunmen threatened the officials of the radio and television. Mohammad Zubayr Khaksar, commenting on the radio and television officials' protest, said: "Last night and a few days ago those on duty and the journalists of radio and television of Nangarhar Province were threatened by some armed people, and they even stormed my office too, complaining that photos of them and news about them were not aired by television."

Afghan editor detained after paper criticizes ministry. (Afghan news agency *Hindokosh*)

The editor-in-chief of the daily 'Erada' has been detained. Mr Zohur Afghan was detained after his newspaper published a critical article [on April 18] on the performance of the Education Ministry's officials. Confirming this fact, Deputy

Education Minister Mr [Zabihollah] Esmati has commented that the editor-in-chief misused his newspaper to make unfounded allegations about the Education Ministry. Mr Esmati has said that the allegations were found wrong after the issue was scrutinized and therefore a decision was taken to detain the said editor-in-chief.

Death threats aim to prevent girls going to school in Afghan east. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

Unidentified people have threatened female students, their principals and parents in eastern areas of Afghanistan. Unidentified people posted leaflets on Saturday on the walls of girls' schools in the Shinwar District of Nangarhar Province. In these threatening leaflets, the principals and parents were seriously told to dismiss the classes of girl students as soon as possible and to prevent girls from going to school, threatening them with death otherwise.

Afghan commanders agree to rebuild multi-ethnic national army. (AFP)

Afghan militia chiefs agreed to work with the central government in rebuilding a multi-ethnic national army, the Defence Ministry said. "All commanders agreed to work closely with the Ministry of Defence in taking direction from the central government to the common defence of the nation and in building the new national army," the Ministry said in a statement. The statement came at the end of a two-day conference on "Shaping the Future of Afghanistan -- the Military Dimension" attended by the interior, foreign and defence ministers along with some 50 militia leaders, Herat governor Ismail Khan, Kandahar governor and former mujahedin leader Gul Agha and Atta Mohammad. "Soldiers and officers should be recruited from all ethnicities, all provinces and from all walks of life so that each unit is representative of the nation and able to gain the confidence and trust of all people of the nation."

April 22

Two deminers attacked in eastern Afghanistan. (AFP)

Two Afghan deminers from an international organisation were shot and injured by unknown gunmen in eastern Afghanistan. The assailants fired at the deminers' vehicle as they were driving down the main highway between Kabul and Jalalabad. The pair worked for the Mine Clearance Programme for Afghanistan (MCPA).

UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) report on the same news on April 24: The United Nations Mine Action Campaign for Afghanistan has suspended all its activities in the east. "The UN mine clearance activities is suspended on this road until [April 26]," a media officer of the UNAMA said, adding that all UN movements had also been suspended in the area for 48 hours after the incident. UNAMA said the attack happened while the mine-clearance survey staff members were carrying out their duties, driving a white Land Cruiser marked MCPA. "Approximately 10 rounds of gunshot were fired at them from the north side of Tang-e Abrisham mountain range, in Sarowbi District of Kabul Province," Singh said, noting that the incident had lasted for about 10 minutes until someone in another vehicle came to their assistance.

64 killed in factional fighting in Badghis province. (AFP)

Factional fighting last month claimed the lives of 38 civilians, including women and children, as well as 26 soldiers executed in Badghis province. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission said abuses in the village of Akazi in Badghis province bordering Turkmenistan also included the rape of women by factional fighters. It called the violations, which came after fighting broke out on March 24, the gravest since the overthrow of the fundamentalist Taliban regime in late 2001. David Singh, a spokesman for the UNAMA, told a briefing the fighting appeared to have aimed to win control of territory rather than being provoked by tribal, ethnic or religious rivalry. "According to reports, during the recent conflict in Akazi village, 38 civilians died, while 761 homes and 21 shops were looted," he said. "Among the persons who died were 3 women and 12 children who drowned in a river. "Some reports say they threw themselves in the river to escape the gunfire. Others said the women jumped to avoid being abused by soldiers." He said the bodies of 26 fighters of a local commander, Juma Khan, had been found executed, with their hands tied behind their backs. Juma Khan is believed to belong to the Pashtun ethnic group. "We urge the governor of Badghis and the local police to exercise all possible influence to end these violations, to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice, as well as take all other necessary measures to prevent similar events."

Badghis is one of Afghanistan's most remote and poorest regions. Singh said the Bala Murghab district, where Akazi is located, had seen a pattern of rights violations before the recent fighting which may have triggered the latest conflict. Pashtuns are in the minority in the north and have suffered various abuses at the hands of local commanders seeking revenge against the mainly Pashtun Taliban regime. Most of the Pashtuns in Badghis are poor nomadic herders.

Afghan police chief attacked by sacked predecessor. (Reuters)

A provincial police chief appointed by Afghan President Hamid Karzai was unable to take up his post after being badly beaten by his sacked predecessor and bodyguards. Safa Mohmand was attacked by Najmuddin Safi and his men when he arrived to start his new job at Asadabad, capital of Konar province east of Kabul. The witnesses, who did not want to be identified, said Mohmand was assaulted when he presented his credentials from Karzai at the provincial police headquarters. They said he was badly beaten, but his exact condition was unclear. Safi denied beating Mohmand but said Karzai's decision was unfair as he had not been given another government post. "I don't accept Karzai's order, but I did not beat him," he said.

April 23

Afghan editor receives eight death threats in 24 hours. (Radio Afghanistan)

The *Erada* daily has said, in its addition published on [23 April], that the editor-in-chief of that newspaper has received eight death threats from unidentified people in the last 24 hours. Quoting Zohur Afghan [*Erada* editor-in-chief], the newspaper has said that unidentified people have warned him that, if he does not put an end to the controversy in the press and if he does not admit that he was wrong [the deputy

Education Minister had Zohur arrested for writing an article critical of the Education Ministry's performance], he will be killed.

This comes at a time when the editor-in-chief of *Aftab*, Mir Hosayn Ma'dawi, has announced that the police authorities have warned him that they could not guarantee his safety in the event of an unexpected incident.

April 24

Journalists kidnapped and robbed in Mazar-e Sharif. (Afghan newspaper *Erada*)

Sayed Ahmad Khalid Mirzad, a Reuters reporter, and four of his friends, one of whom works for WFP [UN World Food Programme] were enjoying their picnic near Military Corps No 7 when four armed men surrounded them. After seeing their press cards, they called them evil. The robbers tied their hands and feet and stole their money, wrist watches, mobile phones, cameras, radios and their Corona vehicle.

April 25

Prisoners escape from prison in Konar province. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

Dozens of Afghan prisoners have managed to escape from the central jail in Konar Province. Efforts to capture and return prisoners have so far been fruitless. Following these developments, border military officials have taken over control of security in this province.

April 26

Cable TV back on in Kabul despite high court ban. (Afghan newspaper *Erada*)

After a three months break, cable TV has restarted its activities in the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul. At the beginning of the present year, the activities of this organization were banned and stopped under a decree issued by the chief justice, Mowlawi Fazl Hadi Shinwari. The council of ministers of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, by reforming the law regarding cable TV, recently announced permission for cable TV activities in the country. It is also being said that the Supreme Court of Afghanistan is also preparing a law regarding the cable TV activities. At the moment this service is only available in the capital of Afghanistan and releases entertaining programmes, films, Western and Indian songs and sport programmes. It serves more than 7,000 customers in Kabul.

Factional fighting in Sar-e Pol Province claims two lives. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

Two people have been killed when two factions of the Hezb-e Wahdat-e Eslami Afghanistan clashed in northern Afghanistan. One faction is led by Mohammad Karim Khalili and the other by Mohammad Akbari. Confirming this incident, Asadollah Danish, the mayor of Balkhab District in Sar-e Pol Province, said: Fighting erupted between forces loyal to the [Hezb-e] Wahdat-e Eslami-e Afghanistan on [25

April] afternoon in a village in Balkhab District. He said: Apart from the two deaths, a number of residents of this village also fled their homes. He said the reason for this eruption of violence was long-standing personal enmities between factions in this area and the mayor noted that illegally armed people were involved in this clash. He added: Following the incident, local authorities of the district have called on the mayor to disarm these people in this area.

April 27

Taleban capture southern Afghan district in clash with government forces. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

After four days of fierce fighting between forces of the Afghan government and Taleban and Al-Qa'idah fighters, the Taleban has captured Deh Chopan District, in the northern part of Zabol Province in Afghanistan. During this clash more than 20 people, among them 15 Taleban fighters, have been killed and dozens injured. Speaking at a news briefing, Khalid Pashtun, a spokesman for Gol Agha Sherzai, the Kandahar governor, confirmed the incident and said that reinforcements, about 200 government troops, from Kandahar have been sent to Zabol Province.

Uzbek aid workers killed in Balkh Province. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

A driver - an Uzbek citizen - transporting foodstuffs related to the World Food Programme [WFP] to Afghanistan was killed by one or more unidentified people. The body of the driver - who was killed for unknown reasons - was found beside his lorry along the road from Hayratan to Mazar-e Sharif [capital of northern Balkh Province]. Two days ago, another WFP driver - also an Uzbek citizen - transporting foodstuffs was killed and his body was found among sacks of foodstuffs on his lorry in Mazar-e Sharif.

Afghanistan's Turkmens call for representation on constitution commission. (Iranian news agency IRNA)

Turkmens in Afghanistan have criticized the fact that they have not been represented in the assessment commission of the draft constitution of Afghanistan. The Turkmens' representative in the Loya Jerga [Grand Assembly], has criticized the fact that Turkmens have not been represented in the assessment commission of the draft constitution of Afghanistan. Elahiyari warned that if the Turkmens were not given representation, they would stage protest demonstrations.

New movement declares Jihad on foreign forces in Afghanistan. (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty RFE/RL *Afghanistan Report*)

A hitherto unknown group calling itself the "Devoted Movement of Martyrs' Sons" sent a statement on 27 April to newspapers in Peshawar, Pakistan, warning Afghans that a war led by the United States and Great Britain has been launched against them to "take revenge" on Muslims. The statement says the country is experiencing a "civil war," which "ignorant Muslims still call...a war against terrorism," and that the new group has launched a holy war against foreign forces in Afghanistan and invites the Afghan people to join in the struggle. The statement claims that the new movement is

independent, with no links to the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, or Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Another mysterious group calling itself Tanzim al-Fatah Afghanistan (Afghanistan Victory Organization) on 10 February called for a holy war against U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

April 28

Newly appointed governor of Konar province attacked. (RFE/RL *Afghanistan Report*)

Sayyed Fazl Akbar, the newly appointed governor of Konar Province, came under rocket fire on 28 April as he arrived in the provincial capital of Asadabad. The Afghan Transitional Administration has appointed Akbar, who previously headed the presidential press office, as governor of Konar, replacing Mohammad Yusof Shahjan. Akbar returned to Kabul after the attack, which did not result in any casualties. According to the report, the attack was not a terrorist act but was carried out to "frighten" the new governor. The report noted that Shahjan is not happy about being removed as governor.

Some 80 Taleban prisoners released in Herat. (Afghan news agency Herat News Centre)

On the occasion of 8 Sowr, the 11th anniversary of the victory of Islamic revolution of Afghanistan, some 80 Taleban prisoners were released from Herat prison on the instructions of Alhaj Mohammad Esmail Khan, the governor of Herat.

April 30

Afghanistan inaugurated Human Rights Department. (Reuters)

Afghanistan inaugurated a Human Rights Department on Wednesday aimed at curbing abuses by the much criticised police force. As a branch of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, the department will have offices across the country. The rights department's staff include both male and female legal experts whose task will be to promote the rule of law in a war-ravaged country where the power of the gun still dominates, leading to the rise of crimes in some areas.

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