

Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, November 2002*

November 1

Five killed in Herat fighting. (Reuters)

Five soldiers have been killed and nine injured in renewed clashes between fighters of rival factions in western Afghanistan. The clash between forces of Ismail Khan, the governor of Herat province, and rival Pashtun commander Amanullah Khan took place at Zeer Koh, in Farah province. Saifullah Khan, a close associate of Amanullah Khan, accused Ismail Khan of launching an unprovoked attack backed by artillery. He said the fighting spilled over into civilian areas around the military encampment initially targeted by Ismail Khan's men. Saifullah Khan said two of Amanullah Khan's men died in the fighting along with three of Ismail Khan's. The latest reports said the Herat governor's forces were continuing to pound the area with artillery and mortar fire. Ismail Khan is said to have as many as 30,000 disciplined fighters under his command, greatly outnumbering Amanullah's men and even those of the central government.

November 2

Judge dismissed for not wearing headscarf in the U.S. (Reuters)

The Afghan Supreme Court has dismissed Marziya Basil, a female judge and one of 14 female Afghan government officials who attended management and computer-literacy courses in Washington in October at the invitation of the U.S. government. Basil was seen without a headscarf in photographs taken during her meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush at the time.

UN cites reports of Afghan returnee intimidation. (Reuters)

UNHCR said it had received reports of intimidation of returning refugees belonging to several ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, and minority Hazara and Sayeeds had been the targets of the reported intimidation in Guldara area north of Kabul and the Kahmard region north of the central province of Bamiyan. "Reports of intimidation both by the authorities and local population against Pashtuns returning to their villages in Guldara district in Parwan and of persecution against ethnic Hazara and Sayeeds in Kahmard have been received," UNHCR said. Both Guldara and Kahmard are Tajik-dominated areas ruled by the Northern Alliance.

Afghan faction says Herat ruler killed Pashtun chief. (Reuters)

Saifullah Khan, an associate of Pashtun leader Amanullah Khan, said 80-year-old Younis Khan and two of his sons, were shot dead in Ghurian, west of Herat, by troops

* *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*

loyal to the governor. "Ismail Khan's forces entered Ghurian district, which is controlled by Pashtuns, and shot three innocent people dead," Saifullah Khan said. A commander close to Ismail Khan dismissed the allegations as "ludicrous" and accused the Pashtuns of attacking government troops in Ghurian. Haji Mohammed said the Herat governor's men were ambushed by those of Amanullah Khan and only resorted to shooting back when some of their number were wounded. "We know nothing about the murders of Younis Khan and his two sons," said Haji Mohammed. "We have no clue who could have done it and we certainly didn't have anything to do with them." Amanullah Khan appealed to President Hamid Karzai for an investigation into the killings.

November 3

Afghan president sacks provincial officials. (Reuters)

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has sacked up to 20 provincial officials on various charges, including drug trafficking and abuse of duty, in a move to strengthen his rule outside the capital. Government spokesperson Sayed Fazl Akbar said those targeted were senior civil and military officials in the city of Kandahar, the province of Nimroz, the southeastern provinces of Paktia, Paktika and Logar, Nangarhar in the east and the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif. They included the mayor of Nangarhar and officials in charge of customs and public affairs, the head of security in Mazar, General Abdul Hamid and the intelligence chief in Kandahar, Kamaluddin Gulalai. "All these people are dismissed for reasons like corruption, not obeying the law and some of them were also involved in drug trafficking and abuse of authority," Akbar said. The sackings came after Karzai warned government officials and commanders that he would strip them of their powers if they do not fall in line with his government, which has struggled to assert its authority outside of Kabul since replacing the Taliban. Akbar described it as the first major shake up by Karzai since he came to power. "We will try by political means to convince these people to accept these decisions, but if they will not accept it, finally we should find some other ways," he said when asked if the force would be needed.

Agence France-Presse report on the same news: The head of intelligence in Kandahar province, who has been sacked along with 15 other officials in a government shakeup, said he would not relinquish office. Gul Lalai said he would have to consult with the commanders and soldiers in his tribe before assenting to leave office. "I have also my tribal position and was appointed in this capacity, so I have to consult my commanders as well as hundreds of soldiers in Kandahar garrison ... regarding my removal by the Kabul authorities," he said. The intelligence head was originally removed from office eight months ago, but following the intervention of Kandahar's governor Gul Agha, his removal orders were revoked.

Afghan president abolishes security zones of mujahideen commanders. (Reuters)

Government spokesperson Sayed Fazl Akbar said Karzai decided to abolish "security zones" established by regional commanders, and to disband three provincial brigades of holy warriors formed to fight the Soviet occupation from 1979. These included one under the powerful governor of the western city of Herat, Ismail Khan.

Former Afghan King inaugurates Constitutional Commission. (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty RFE/RL Newslines)

Former Afghan King Muhammad Zahir inaugurated the Constitutional Commission in Kabul. The commission will take one year to draft a new constitution for Afghanistan, after which the document will be submitted to a special constitutional Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) for approval. The nine-member commission is headed by Nematullah Shahrani, one of President Hamid Karzai's four deputies, and has two female members. Members include: Abdul Salam Azimi, Sayed Qasim Fazili, Musa Ashhari, Musa Marufi, Mukarama, Asifa Kakar, Sarwar Danish, and Rahim Sherzoy.

November 4

Justice Minister says “warlords” impede rule of law. (RFE/RL Newslines)

According to the Transitional “Islamic” State of Afghanistan Justice Minister Abdul Rahim Karimi, government laws are enforced “in different parts of the country, except in places where warlords are still in power”. Karimi said that “a judge cannot make a fair decision” in areas controlled by the mujahideen commanders. He said “much of Afghanistan, the rule of the gun continues to prevail over the rule of law.” Beyond the lawlessness, the debate on the impact Shariat [Islamic jurisprudence] is having on new laws is creating problems for the Afghan Justice Ministry, Karimi explained. According to Karimi, Islamists want to see a legal system drawn solely from Shariat, but the government intends for no more than 20 percent of the new legal code to be based on Islamic jurisprudence -- emphasizing “moderate Islam” -- and the rest derived from the “international community's experience.”

Curfew lifted in Kabul. (Agence France Presse / AFP)

Kabul marked the end of a 23-year curfew with a peaceful night. “The security is good and there is no longer any need for a curfew,” Interior Ministry spokesman Paktia Wal said. It is not clear whether the restrictions have been scrapped specifically for Ramadan, although an ISAF spokesman said original discussions were focused on withdrawing the curfew on an experimental basis during the holy month.

Iranian police arrest 726 “illegal” Afghans in Esfahan. (Iranian Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Esfahan Police said that 726 illegal Afghans were arrested in Esfahan in the past week. It added the detainees have been handed to officials at the centre set-up for “illegal aliens” and managed by the provincial governorate-general. The Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) had announced earlier this year that aliens lacking proper identification had until 27 August to leave the country voluntarily. Anybody arrested after the above mentioned date would be subject to deportation proceedings for repatriation to their homeland.

The voluntary repatriation of Afghans is governed by a tripartite accord signed in Geneva on 3 April by Iran, Afghanistan and the UNHCR. The programme envisages the repatriation of 400,000 Afghan refugees by the end of the current Iranian year (March 2003). Since the implementation of the plan, all legal and political grounds for the continued stay of Afghan refugees in Iran have been removed and nationals of that country who remain are no longer subject to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Some 330,349 Afghans have left Iran for their homeland since the UNHCR-sponsored voluntary repatriation programme was enforced in April.

November 5

Afghans collect weapons in northern district of Sholgora. (Afghan Balkh radio)

Around 100 weapons have been collected in Sholgora District of Balkh Province and were handed over to the responsible security commission.

November 7

Afghan commander survives attempt on his life, bodyguard killed in Nangarhar. (Afghan Balkh radio)

A well-known commander of Nangarhar Province, Haji Mohammad Zaher, was fired at by armed people in the Daka area [east of Jalalabad] on the main road between Torkham and Jalalabad. Zaher survived the incident while his bodyguard, Suhrab Khan, was killed and another injured. He is the son of Haji Abdol Qadir, the former governor of Nangarhar and the cousin of the current governor, Haji Din Mohammad.

Commanders reportedly clash in north of Kabul. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

Commanders belonging to Division No 8, namely, Haji Safiollah and Qari Mohezbollah, clashed in Qarabagh area. The clash occurred when each of the commanders wanted to capture a building and use it as their headquarters. The clash lasted two-and-half hours. The commanders were disarmed by the order of commander Amanollah Gozar, commander of Division No 8. The clash did not cause any loss of life but it has been said that the civilians were forced to leave the area.

November 8

Eleven hurt in Khost clashes over land distribution. (IRNA)

Eleven persons were wounded in fighting between the Khost Province's security forces and the nomads over distribution of government land.

November 9

One hurt in clashes between police and armed group in Gardez. (Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency / AIP)

Clashes took place between Gardez's [eastern Paktia Province] police and a group of soldiers from Division No 12 in the middle bazaar near the exchange market in the afternoon. In the clashes light weapons as well as rocket launchers were fired. Since the beginning of the clashes Gardez city has been closed and people have tried to leave the city. According to eyewitnesses, one soldier from Division No 12 was injured.

November 10

Twenty Afghan women prisoners pardoned. (AFP)

Twenty women prisoners jailed without trial in Afghanistan for minor violations of Islamic moral codes walked free after a pardon was issued by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Karzai's gesture was timed to coincide with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. One unpardoned inmate who capitalised on confusion surrounding the release of her fellow prisoners managed to slip away. Afghan authorities have been ordered by Karzai to investigate the cases of 11 remaining prisoners, including the

absconder, with a view to securing their liberty within the next few weeks. Deputy Interior Minister Halalludin, who visited the prison to oversee the release, said that some 118 male prisoners would also have their sentences investigated. Many of the women were jailed for having illicit relationships or on minor theft charges, according to Kabul security commander Basir Salangi, who said they were released because the prison did not meet international standards. Salangi said four women had also been freed on November 5, the first day of Ramadan.

UNAMA spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva condemned the imprisonment of the women -- some of whom were jailed with their children -- describing the charges against them as "debatable". "The situation at the prison was quite challenging, women lacked appropriate medical care and hygiene standards were low. Mice and rats were seen in some cells," he said. "It is particularly worrying that some women had their children with them and there were no facilities at the prison for childcare. Unfortunately the situation at the male prison was worse than the situation at the women's prison."

International Institute for War and Peace Reporting comment on the same news:

The majority of the women had been imprisoned for "social" crimes such as adultery or running away with men who had not been chosen by their families. There are dozens of men in jail charged with the same sort of offences, though none of them were granted an amnesty. Interior Ministry officials warn that women and men will continue to be arrested for "social" crimes. Such misdemeanours, particularly amongst the former, have increased since the beginning of the interim administration. Crimes involving sexual contact between unmarried couples are considered such a disgrace that, to redeem their honor, members of the families involved sometimes inflict their own punishment. Meher Negar, one of the women released, said she didn't want to leave jail. "I can't go home because my brothers and father will kill me," she said. "I have no future. I don't know what will happen next."

November 11

New group claims responsibility for attacks in Afghanistan. (Pakistani newspaper *The News*)

A group calling itself the Red Army of Muslim Mojahedin has claimed responsibility for armed attacks in Afghanistan. The Red Army of Muslim Mojahedin vowed to increase the intensity of the attacks against Western targets in Afghanistan and to spread their scope and reach to other parts of the country. It felt the attacks would "eventually force the Western occupation forces to quit Afghanistan". The communique, which began with verses from the Koran, gave details about the military operations of the Red Army of Muslim Mojahedin in Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Konar, Paktia, Paktika and Nangarhar provinces. It listed 21 missile attacks, land mine explosions, ambushes on military convoys and patrols of the US and other western targets in Khost, followed by 13 such operations in Konar, seven in Kabul, five in Paktia, four in Kandahar, three in Nangarhar and two in Paktika. The communique said the Red Army of Muslim Mojahedin was different from the Taleban. In fact, it urged the Taleban and all other Afghan mojahedin to join the Red Army of Muslim Mojahedin "to strengthen the resistance against foreign occupation troops".

Herat governor reportedly bans dancing in wedding ceremonies. (Afghan newspaper *Anis*)

At a Taraweh prayer [a special prayer said every night during the month of Ramadan], the preacher of Herat Congregational Mosque made a judicial decree, according to which the holding of wedding ceremonies is illegal under Islamic law, because during these ceremonies men and women mingle together. Ismail Khan, the governor of Herat, approved the decree and said: "I have seen a video in which both the bride and bridegroom were dancing in harmony with Indian music. This is not part of the Afghan culture, it is an element of Western culture." He went on to say: From now on, nobody has the right to dance even in ceremonies that are to be held in their homes, the people should listen to jihad and Islamic songs instead. In this speech, Ismail Khan ordered the security forces and Herat Municipality to prevent the holding of such ceremonies in restaurants, and deal with violators [of this judicial decree] seriously.

November 13

Student protests in Kabul University, students killed and wounded. (UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network / IRIN)

Kabul University reopened following two days of violence between students and police in the Afghan capital. As many as four people were killed and scores injured after students took to the streets to protest against inadequate facilities at the university on November 11-12. Students said they are "increasingly becoming frustrated at the lack of resources here - particularly in the dormitories, where there is no electricity or water." According to witnesses, the clashes began on November 11 when students attempted to march on the office of President Hamid Karzai to voice their grievances. On their way into the centre of the city, about 1,000 students vandalised cars and shops before security forces wielding batons and firing into the air succeeded in dispersing them. On November 12, students again clashed with security forces over what protestors described as a heavy misuse of force the previous day. Meanwhile, reaction to the shootings has been swift, and though it remains unclear how they occurred, students placed the blame firmly on the police. The Afghan government has pledged to improve student conditions and look into allegations of police brutality and overreaction.

But according to Abdul Basir Salange, Kabul's general security commander, there was more to this protest than met the eye. He said he believed that the slogans of some of the students indicated that there had been Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements within the group, whose sole aim was to destabilise the current government. Asserting that firing by police had been provoked, he said that it had happened after one student had attempted to grab a police officer's gun, but maintained that only two people had died as a result.

Reuters report of the same news on November 12: Afghan police fired into the air and used water cannons to break up a protest march by hundreds of students in Kabul after up to four demonstrators were killed in the evening of November 11. Dozens of police in riot gear and carrying rifles surrounded a Kabul University compound and made several arrests after a crowd of over 500 students had been prevented from marching on government buildings on November 12. A student delegation met senior government officials at the Education Ministry in downtown Kabul to try to resolve

the standoff and President Hamid Karzai held a crisis meeting about the protests before leaving for the United States. The students, most of them ethnic Pashtuns from the south and east of the country, were protesting about poor living conditions and the lack of food in their dormitories, and some demanded the return of the bodies of those who had died.

Zaher Wahab, an adviser to Higher Education Minister Sharif Fayeze, said a group of around 15 students met senior government officials including Fayeze, Interior Minister Taj Mohammad Wardak and Vice President Nematullah Shahrani. "They demanded the punishment of the student's killer, treatment for the wounded, the release of prisoners and an improvement in living conditions," Wahab said. He said the violence was a manifestation of tensions in the university between Pashtuns and others. "Underneath all of this there is an ethnic component," he said. "There is no question that Pashtuns throughout the country feel discriminated against at this point." Hilal said some inside the compound were armed and had shouted slogans in support of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network.

RFE/RL Newswire comment on the same news: Following initial reports that one Kabul University student was killed and four were wounded when Afghan security forces opened fire, differing casualty figures have emerged. According to demonstrators, four students were killed and at least 10 were injured, while the head of the Interior Ministry's Department of National Security said six students and six policemen were injured, without mentioning any fatalities. Citing an unnamed "security official," the Kabul daily "Arman-e Melli" reported on 12 November that two students, Abdul Hakim and Abdul Ghafar from the Faculty of Medicine, were killed and 14 students were injured.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said that several Afghan ministries and the Department of National Security have been "ordered to investigate the issue at once and forward their reports to the government office as soon as possible." Karzai said a "conspiracy" seems to exist behind the incident. Interior Minister Taj Muhammad Wardak has said he believes the 11-12 November protests by Kabul University students in which at least one student was killed were instigated either by people with ties to Al-Qaeda or by the radical leader of the Hizb-e Islami, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Afghanistan's deputy Interior Minister, Lieutenant General Helaluddin Helal, claimed that the students -- not the police -- fired first. Confirming his deputy's accusations, Wardak said that the student killed was "shot in the head, most probably...by other students." The Afghan government has only acknowledged the death of one protester, while other reports claim two to six students were killed.

Agence France-Presse report on the same news on November 13: Afghan students protesting against poor university conditions and police handling of an uprising which left at least two dead gathered for a third day in Kabul. Around 2,000 students assembled outside the gates of Kabul University, refusing to attend lessons until their demands for improved accommodation and justice for those who died were met. Large numbers of police were again present on campus and were reported to be blocking access to the university to some students. After an initial gathering, many students began dispersing, although a hardcore of protesters remained to press home their demands.

Reuters report on the same news on November 14: The United Nations condemned the Afghan police's handling of clashes with students in Kabul this week in which at least two demonstrators were killed. U.N. spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva

urged the authorities to launch an investigation into the violence at Kabul University. "The shooting of the students was in no way justified by considerations of either self defence by the police or public safety," he said. He also called on the government to respond to the students' demands about what he called "very difficult" living conditions.

Associated Press report on the same news: Human Rights Watch said several injured students are being held incommunicado in a local hospital. Doctors and officials at Kabul's Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital, where several injured students are being treated, refused to allow reporters access to them. "We have serious concerns about how the police are treating the students now," said Zaman Zia-Zarifi, director of the Academic Freedom Program at New York-based Human Rights Watch. Higher Education Minister Mohammed Sharif Faiz threatened to shut down the dormitories, where poor students from rural areas live, if there was more violence. Human Rights Watch interviewed witnesses who said police beat students in the university dormitory and threatened injured students at the hospital. In one case police beat and slapped a student in his hospital bed after he had spoken with other students and an investigator from the Afghan Human Rights Commission, set up under last year's peace agreement signed in Bonn. The police warned him not to complain about police behavior or the government to anyone else.

November 14

U.N. probes witness intimidation by General Dostum forces in northern provinces. (Reuters)

The United Nations said it was investigating claims of torture and execution of people in the north of Afghanistan to prevent them testifying against a local commander. U.N. spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva said the reports had been received from a handful of people who said they witnessed war crimes committed by forces of Uzbek commander General Abdul Rashid Dostum. "In recent weeks the U.N. has received credible reports of very serious incidents related to the prospect of an investigation into the mass graves at Dasht-e-Leili," Silva said. Up to 1,000 Taliban fighters are reported to have suffocated in the back of transport containers after the fall of the hardline regime last year and buried at a suspected mass grave at Dasht-e-Leili near Dostum's stronghold of Shiberghan. Dostum has said around 200 Taliban fighters may have died while being transported from the place of surrender to prison, but he said most were already sick or badly wounded in fighting. Silva said the complaints by people who say they witnessed the handling of Taliban fighters by Dostum's troops included detention, torture and execution. "UNAMA (the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) raised its concerns with the authorities and with General Dostum. It stressed the need for an immediate investigation with which Dostum has pledged to cooperate." Silva said the U.N. investigation into the mass graves had yet to begin, despite a preliminary investigation in May recommending it should go ahead. One of the reasons for the delay, he said, was concern about the safety of people who would give evidence against Dostum.

Zadran forces capture Sayd Karam District of Gardez. (AIP)

A spokesman for the Gardez Army Corps No 3, Commander Mohammad Ismail, said that the rebels were once again gathering in Sayd Karam District and were consolidating their hold there. He added that Padshah Khan Zadran's forces had

arrived there and the area was apparently sliding into the grip of the rebels. He added that the government would launch a series of swift operations. On the other hand, eyewitnesses from Sayd Karam said that two to three days ago Zadran along with a number of his forces had rushed to Sayd Karam District without any fighting and issued an ultimatum to local officials, including officials of the district, to leave the area for Gardez. Eyewitnesses said local officials of Sayd Karam had left the district without any fighting and moved towards Gardez. Sayd Karam was now fully under the control of Padshah Khan's forces. Commander Dawli is now in control of the district; his brother and the former head of the district, Raz Mohammad, was killed by government forces almost three months ago.

November 15

Seven Afghan Islamic Party members arrested in Kandahar. (Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

Afghan government officials have arrested seven members of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami in Deh-khwaja village in Kandahar Province. They were allegedly involved in making hand grenades.

November 16

Growing crime on the roads reported. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

It was reported that security in some highways of the country is unsafe, especially at night. The Herat-Farah highway is one of these unsafe highways. In a recent incident, armed men attacked a car carrying returnees from Iran and their property was looted. Reports also add that thefts have also taken place in Shindand, Ghowr, Badghis, Tarin Kot, the Ghazni highway, Herat, the Sheberghan highway, Maymana, the Gardez highway, Khost and Jalalabad-Konar highways and the road between Janda [Ghazni Province] and Shah Joy [Zabol Province]. Drivers are told not to drive from 04:00 to 08:00 in the morning. Drivers are also asked to report any incident to the authorities.

Disarmament in volatile Afghan north fails again. (Reuters)

A second attempt to disarm rival factions in the volatile north of Afghanistan has failed. The commander said that only 110 light weapons, including AK-47 assault rifles, had been collected from fighters loyal to Uzbek mujahideen commander Abdul Rashid Dostum and Tajik leader Ustad Atta Mohammad. The U.N.-monitored disarmament programme began at the end of October in Sholgara. Despite pledging allegiance to Karzai and denying any rift between them, their soldiers have clashed frequently across the north of the country, and seasoned aid workers see this as a continuation of their longstanding rivalry. Dostum is believed to be concerned by the support Atta apparently enjoys from Defence Minister Mohammad Qasim Fahim, also a member of the Jamiat faction. [The official source] estimated that the three factions had about 40,000 soldiers between them, and that these troops eventually should be absorbed into the national army, which currently numbers some 1,000 to 1,500 men.

November 19

Afghan university officials sacked as riot probe begins. (AFP)

Fazel Akbar, a spokesman for Afghan President Hamid Karzai, said that the director of the university dormitory at the centre of the unrest had been dismissed and more

sackings could follow. He confirmed that a delegation of senior Afghan officials, including Vice-President Nematullah Shahrani and Sharif Fayezi, minister of higher education, had been ordered to investigate the demonstrations. "Demonstration is the right of everybody, but it should not end in this way. This delegation is responsible for finding out why it ended so badly," Akbar said.

Afghan president intervenes to halt death sentence. (AFP)

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has intervened to halt the death sentence being applied to an Afghan citizen convicted of murder. Mohammad Ishaq was sentenced to death for the murder of another man under Afghan laws which allow the family of the victim to seek a quid pro quo punishment for the convicted criminal. But, according to Karzai's spokesman Fazel Akbar, the president persuaded the family to show leniency. The death penalty would have been the third such sentence since the fall of the Taliban.

Uzbeks and Tajiks continue fighting in Samangan. (ITAR-TASS news agency)

Fierce fighting between ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks is continuing in the northern part of Afghanistan. At least two men died in action during fighting between units of General Rashid Dostum and units of Tajik field commander Atta Mohammad. The fighting has so far been restricted to the Maksud District in Samanghan Province, which includes 18 villages. The situation worsened after Dostum's assistant Ahmed Khan attacked Tajik checkpoints in the Maksud District.

Mujahideen commanders loot the passengers on Gardez-Khost highway. (Afghan newspaper *Anis*)

Local commanders looted the passengers travelling on the Gardez-Khost highway and took over 400,000 Pakistani rupees off the passengers on gun-point.

November 20

Urozgan residents complain of abuses by local commanders. (Afghan newspaper *Anis*)

Residents of Urozgan Province complained of lawlessness by local commanders. Some delegates from Daikondi District of Urozgan Province came to Kabul on 20 November. According to one of the residents of Daikondi, their lives and self-respect are at stake in that region due to the commanders. Gunmen abduct their young women by force; the houses are burnt after they are looted. He said that the commanders' militants attacked his house. After agonizing physical tortures he had to let them take his 10-year-old daughter with them. Another resident of Daikondi said that the commanders involved in such violations have close links with one of the ministers.

November 21

Afghan woman working for Japan aid agency killed in Mazar-i-Sharif. (Reuters)

An Afghan woman working for a Japanese aid agency has been killed by gunmen near the city of Mazar-i-Sharif. The victim, identified as Shaima, was stabbed and shot in her home in Charbolak. The organisation, called NERU and involved in medical aid, has suspended operations in northern regions in protest against the attack and would not resume until local authorities find the killers, said Ahmad Rishad, in charge of NERU in Charbolak. Afghan authorities said the 35-year-old woman was killed by thieves who looted her house. But some locals did not rule out the

involvement of ultra-conservative Muslim residents who might have been opposed to the employment of a local woman by a foreign agency. Charbolak is controlled by forces loyal to Uzbek commander General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

November 22

Afghan security forces foil attempt to assassinate the Defense Minister. (RFE/RL Newslines)

The Afghan National Security Department prevented an attempt to assassinate Defense Minister Marshal Mohammad Qasim Fahim in the affluent Wazir Mohammad Akbar Khan district of Kabul. The would-be assassin identified himself as an Iraqi citizen named Nur Mohammad but later reports identified him as Bukan Akram Taufiq Herami and as Bukan Akram Taufiq Muramy. The individual reportedly has links to Taliban commanders Jalaluddin Haqqani, Mawlawi Mansur, and Akhtar Mohammad Usmani. The man spent four months in Kashmir before entering Afghanistan.

International aid workers attacked near Kabul. (RFE/RL Newslines)

Two unidentified international aid workers "were brutalized and physically assaulted at gunpoint early afternoon in the Kargha Lake area," according to Manoel de Almeida e Silva, spokesman for the UNAMA. "While it is true that the country is not yet stable, it is also true that national and regional authorities bear the responsibility for the safety and security of Afghan citizens and their guests, in this case, international aid workers," Almeida e Sliva said.

November 23

Afghan government releases students arrested during demonstrations. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

A number of the students, who had part in the demonstrations and were arrested by security forces, have been released on the instructions of Hamed Karzai. However, those students who had Pakistani identification cards are still in prison.

November 24

UNHCR concerned over Tajikistan's deportation of Afghans. (AFP)

UNHCR expressed concern over the expulsion of five Afghans from the Tajikistan capital of Dushanbe in breach of promises from Tajik authorities that deportations would be halted. Maki Shinohara, spokeswoman for the UNHCR, said that all five persons who were deported were known to the UNHCR and could face possible danger in their homeland. "The five were picked up on the streets of Dushanbe or from their homes on November 9 and had been kept in detention together with about 30 Afghans," Shinohara said. "Individuals may face grave danger if forced back in Afghanistan because of their possible association with previous Afghan regimes," she said. "UNHCR appeals to asylum countries not to deport Afghans, particularly if they have protection concerns." The UNHCR says about 2,500 Afghan refugees remain in Tajikistan after the repatriation of more than 9,200 earlier this year.

Zadran tribe leader attacked. (AIP)

A representative of the Zadran tribe, Taleb Jan, said that on the night of [23-24 November 2002] a leader of Zadran tribe, Haji Keftan, and his companions were shot at in Kala-e Patu, near Chelsutun, when they were offering a prayer for Ramadan. He added that in the firing three people were killed and Haji Keftan himself was injured. Taleb Jan said that the Zadran tribe firmly demand that the government find the perpetrators.

November 28

Afghanistan inaugurates commission to rebuild legal system. (AP)

The head of a new commission tasked with reforming Afghanistan's legal system said that it will still be based on traditional Islamic law, which allows authorities to sever the hands of thieves and stone adulterers to death. Commission Chairman Bahauddin Baha said "No commission will replace the rule of Islam. Our country is an Islamic country and we will implement Islamic law". He said those laws were still enforced in Afghanistan. However, no amputations or stonings have been reported since the Taliban government was overthrown last year. Baha said such punishments were unlikely because the burden of proof required is so great that they would be difficult to implement.

The government-appointed commission - nine men and two women - comprises various ethnic groups and both Sunni and Shiite Muslims, whose versions of Islamic law differ slightly. The commission will work with the Justice Ministry and the Supreme Court, and make reform recommendations to the government. The commission also plans to invite foreign legal experts to train Afghan lawyers and judges to bring them up to par with international standards, said Baha, a former Supreme Court judge.

EU adopts plan to repatriate Afghan refugees. (AFP)

The European Union agreed to begin repatriating thousands of Afghan refugees as relative peace returns to their battle-scarred homeland, starting with 1,500 a month from April 2003, officials said. The plan was adopted by EU interior and justice ministers, who agreed to begin the voluntary return of the refugees while not ruling out forced repatriation. The European Commission estimates there are up to 400,000 Afghans living in Europe. The EU plan calls for the creation of an Afghanistan Coordination Return Group, chaired by the commission and involving member states to work out implementation of the repatriation drive. The officials said the commission had agreed to release 17 million euros to help Afghans resettle when the drive begins next spring.

"The return of Afghans shall first and foremost take place at their freely expressed wish, based on their knowledge of the situation in intended places of return and any options for continuing stay in the European Union," the plan says. "Afghans who do not have any protection needs or compelling humanitarian needs justifying prolongation of their stay in member states, but who nevertheless, after the passage of reasonable time, continue to refuse to avail themselves of a voluntary return programme, may be subjected to forced return by those member states wishing to do so." The plan, which calls for cooperation with the Afghan authorities and UNHCR, says returnees will be kept fully informed to ensure their voyage home takes "place in

safety and with dignity". They will be given "adequate counselling regarding risks of mines and unexploded ordnance".

"In all phases of return to Afghanistan, special attention shall be paid to ensure that vulnerable groups receive adequate assistance and care," says the plan, which the ministers agreed to review if there is a "major deterioration" on the ground.

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