

Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, January 2003*

January 1

Local commanders clash in Khost. (Iranian radio *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

As a result of clashes between the forces of commander Khialbaz and commander Mostafa in the town of Khost three civilians were killed, and two women were also seriously wounded. The cause of the conflict is not clear so far. An Afghan source said that commander Mostafa was at present in Kabul and that he had been dismissed by the governor of Khost Province, Professor Mohammad Hakim Taniwal. Commander Mostafa was said to have criticized the US troops some time ago. It was reported that the people have fled the town of Khost and the forces of both sides are bracing themselves for a fight.

Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency (AIP) report of the same news: Two passers-by were killed in a clash between the garrison soldiers and the police of Khost Province. Eyewitnesses in Khost said that a fierce clash broke out between the garrison soldiers and the police of Khost Province in Sargardan intersection in Khost city. Consequently, two passers-by were killed. The eyewitnesses said that two of the garrison soldiers were injured in this clash. The Khost garrison operates under the command of a former communist general Khialbaz, while the Khost police operate under the command of a Jehadi commander Mohammad Mostafa.

Twenty-one men imprisoned for gambling in Mazar-i Sharif. (Afghan Balkh Province television *Balkh TV*)

21 people have been arrested in connection with gambling. An official of the intelligence office said that gambling is unlawful in Islam and it must be eradicated from Afghanistan. All these men have been remanded.

Journalists set up independent association in Herat. (Afghan newspaper *Erada*)

The Association of Journalists in the framework of Herat's Council of Professionals has been established and started work on 11 Jadi 1381 [1 January 2003] with a scientific seminar. The deputy head of the Council of Professionals, Mohammad Naser Rahiab, described the historical role of journalism in alerting the movements, thoughts and desires of Afghans in a welcoming speech. He called journalism a crucial way for gaining freedom, improvement and democracy.

* *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*

January 5

Rebel commanders in Paktia reportedly surrender to Afghan government. (Pakistan-based publication *Wahdat*)

The commander of the Army Corps No 3 in Paktia Province of Afghanistan, General Atiqollah Ludin, said that his forces had successfully completed the operations which they had started in Zadran District two days ago. He said that two commanders of Padshah Khan Zadran's forces, Sher Nawaz Tani and Habib Nur, had surrendered to the government in Waza District. He added that the commanders had also surrendered 200 pieces of arms to government forces. He said that the area up to Said Khel Bridge had been cleaned up and a military base set up there.

Afghan Islamic Party official rejects reports of split in ranks. (AIP)

Qotboddin Helal, a deputy leader of Hezb-e Eslami, a party led by Golboddin Hekmatyar, rejected reports of disputes in the party. In response to another question about Hekmatyar, he said they did not know the whereabouts of Hekmatyar. Speaking about a statement issued by Hekmatyar some days ago against the Afghan government and foreign forces, Helal said he did not have any information as to whether this statement was issued by Hekmatyar. He said: "we do not want war in Afghanistan and for this reason I made a trip to Kabul and had very good discussions with the authorities". Copies of two leaflets were distributed a couple of days ago in Peshawar, one bearing the name of the Hezb-e Eslami Executive Council and the other that of Hekmatyar. In its leaflet, the Executive Council dubbed Hekmatyar as a murderer and traitor, saying he is no longer Hezb-e Eslami leader. And the second leaflet, which bore the name of Hekmatyar, describes Qotboddin Helal and Qazi Mohammad Amin Weqad as plotters and traitors calling for the punishment of their followers.

January 6

Aid agencies stop operating in Zabul province. (Reuters)

The future of aid operations in the destitute Afghan province of Zabul is under threat after a series of armed robberies and a grenade attack on aid agencies in the past week. Armed men have stolen at least seven vehicles belonging to British, American and Afghan aid agencies in broad daylight in the past seven days. Zabul's governor Hamidullah Tokhi blamed members of the former Taliban regime for the robberies and for a grenade attack on the office of the Afghan Development Agency (ADA), which caused some damage but no injuries. The robberies and attack have forced the umbrella body for the nearly 20 aid agencies based in Zabul town to close down its office because of security concerns.

January 7

Press defence foundation established in Kabul. (*Radio Afghanistan*)

The Afghan Free Press Defence Foundation started functioning in Kabul. According to Abdol Qahar Sarwari, head of the Foundation, this is a free and independent foundation, which has been established to defend independent press.

January 8

Afghan Resistance radio broadcasts Fatwas against government. (*Afghan newspaper Anis*)

A radio station in Paktia Province commenced broadcasts against the present Afghan administration. International sources have reported that the exact whereabouts of this broadcast is unknown. Similarly, it does not have a known frequency and fixed timings. The radio station has claimed itself to be the 'Voice of Afghan Resistance'. The radio broadcasts statements [Fatwas] against the state and urges people to offer resistance to it.

A person killed in Tajik-Uzbek clashes near Mazar-i-Sharif. (*Reuters*)

One person was killed and three were wounded in an armed clash between commanders from rival factions in northern Afghanistan. Representatives of local leaders Ustad Atta Mohammad [Tajik, Jamiat-i Islami] and General Abdul Rashid Dostum [Uzbek, Junbesh-i Melli] left Mazar-i-Sharif to quell the clash in Keshende, some 45 km to the southwest of Mazar. Aid officials confirmed that one of Dostum's fighters was killed and three Atta supporters injured in a clash involving light machine gun fire and rockets.

January 10

Herat governor further restricts female education. (*Reuters*)

The governor of Herat, Ismail Khan, has placed further restrictions on women's education by banning women being taught by men in privately run courses. Classes are already segregated in Herat, but the new rules, which officials said were based on traditional Islamic values, will also prevent women attending classes in a building at the same time men are being taught. "The present teaching method is in contradiction with our Islamic and cultural principles," Mohammad Deen Fahim, deputy head of Herat's education department said. "Those who ignore the order will have their courses shut." "We don't have women teachers," one course organiser said. "They should either allow us to continue our courses or bring female lecturers from abroad." Male lecturers will still be allowed to give classes to women at Herat University, officials said.

New Afghan militant group orders Muslims to kill 'infidels'. (*Pakistani newspaper Ausaf*)

A group, Jaish ul-i-Qibla-al Jihadi al-Seri, issued a religious edict and distributed it in the shape of pamphlets in different parts of Afghanistan. The edict says that it was binding upon the Muslims to kill the "infidels" anywhere they find them, "because the

latter have started killing Muslims in different countries". The pamphlet said that it was a unanimous decision of the Islamic ulema [scholars] to kill the "infidels". It said that no discrimination should be made among the "infidels".

Herat governor sends troops to bring district in Badghis Province under control. (Afghan radio from Badghis Province *Radio Qala-e Naw*)

A military group comprising 150 armed men was sent to Bala Morghab district of Badghis Province. This military group was sent to support Herat Province governor Esmail Khan. One of the commanders of this military group said: "We just want to control the situation in the district, because nowadays there is some opposition".

January 11

Pamphlets threaten supporters of the Interim Administration. (Reuters)

People living in the Afghan border town of Spin Boldak found posters threatening death to those who supported Karzai's U.S.-backed government. One pamphlet in Kandahar warned men not to send their daughters to school or their women to work.

January 12

Kuchi leaders protest arrest of tribal chief by US troops. (Agence France-Presse / AFP)

A delegation of 400 representatives of a Pashtun tribe from eastern Afghanistan has been in Kabul for the past week to protest against the arrest of one of their chiefs by US troops. The leaders of the tribe of Kuchis nomads arrived in the Afghan capital on January 4 to ask for "the immediate release" of their head, Haji Mohammad Naeem Kuchi, the president of the Kuchis shura (council) Ahmadzai said. Tribal chief Naeem Kuchi had been stopped on January 1 by US special forces on a road a few kilometers south of Kabul. A minister from 1992 in the moderate government of interim president Sibghatullah Mojaddedi (in power after the fall of the communist authorities and the departure of Soviet troops), Naeem Kuchi is one of the main heads of the Pashtun nomads in the provinces of Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Logar and Nangarhar bordering Pakistan. He did not exercise any responsibility in the Taliban government, which held power from 1996 until it was ousted by US-backed forces in 2001, but maintained good relations with the Islamic militia. Since his arrest, Naeem Kuchi has been held at the Bagram air base north of Kabul "under the vague pretext of plotting, (he is) accused of having prepared the attack on an American military convoy," according to Ahmadzai. Since their arrival in Kabul, the 400 Kuchis heads have been received by President Hamid Karzai and Defence Minister Mohammad Qasim Fahim.

Afghan Uzbek general Dostum releases 50 Taliban suspects. (AIP)

50 Taliban from the four southwestern provinces of Afghanistan have been released from Sheberghan prison, which is under the control of General Dostum. Gen Dostum arrested these 50 people from Konduz, during the month of November 2001. A delegation from the southwestern provinces went to Mazar-e Sharif about two weeks ago. And they talked to the authorities about the Taliban prisoners. The delegation

emphasized the point that all the warriors arrested along with the Taleban were not in fact Taleban. They were ordinary people who had been forced by the Taleban to fight on the battlefield. The delegation demanded that the regional authorities release these ordinary prisoners. Besides the governor of Mazar-e Sharif, the delegation also met General Dostum. General Dostum has handed over 50 prisoners to that delegation.

January 13

New decree on demobilisation and disarmament, supported by rehabilitation programs. (Afghan newspaper *Hewad*)

The chairman of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan issued a decree on demobilization. Based on decree No 172, the process of collecting arms is to formally start to accelerate and expand the rehabilitation programmes and to ensure complete peace in the region. Now under decree No 175, an authorized commission has been given the task of collecting people's arms and demobilizing them. In addition, the commission will consider providing employment for those people who voluntarily submit their weapons to the commission. It is planned that these people will be hired by various bodies, in the private sectors, or in some of the country's rehabilitation programmes.

Agence France-Presse (AFP) report on the same news: The Afghan government will not forcibly disarm militias, a Defense Ministry spokesman said. "There is no way we will disarm by force the mujahedin who have fought for the country's liberation these last 20 years," spokesman Mir Jon said. "The military commanders have until now been very cooperative and no one has opposed disarmament or the demobilizing of combatants. When that is not the case, we will make other arrangements," he added without elaborating. "Our priority is demobilizing combatants," Mir Jon said, stressing the need for UN and international assistance in helping to re-integrate the fighters into an unarmed, civilian environment. "It is hard for them to accept being disarmed and being unemployed. We must find them work." Mir Jon said based on their skills, many mujahedin will be placed within the appropriate federal agencies: Technicians may find jobs in specialized areas of the Defense Ministry while others will be hired by the Interior Ministry.

January 14

Afghan disabled stage demonstration in Kabul. (Afghan news agency *Hindokosh*)

Hundreds of disabled stage a demonstration in front of the Endowment and Islamic Affairs Ministry's secretariat to attain their rights. In spite of excellent security measures taken by security forces, some 70 disabled gathered at Sahat-e Ama junction [near Public Health Ministry] at around 11:00 a.m. local time. They wanted to block the traffic but security forces prevented and dispersed them.

Afghan leader issues order releasing over 50 prisoners from Kandahar. (Afghan television)

Based on a decree issued by Hamed Karzai 55 criminal prisoners were freed from prison in Kandahar Province. Five female prisoners are among the 55 released.

Taliban threatens death for those trading with U.S. troops. (Kyodo News)

Remnants of the Afghan Taliban have threatened to set fire to vehicles ferrying fuel, food and other goods to U.S. troops and kill drivers and workers for helping "the enemies of Muslims" in Afghanistan. "We want to make it abundantly clear that we have made all the arrangements to torch tankers and vehicles," the pamphlet said. It also claimed the group has already set two oil tankers ablaze. The pamphlet said the drivers and assistants of the two oil tankers managed to escape, but in future they will be "punished with death."

Peshawar newspapers also received a fax from an organization calling itself the "Organization of Afghan Youth" declaring that Afghans such as those in the Hamid Karzai government who have aligned themselves with the United States have "forfeited the right to call themselves Afghan."

January 16

Balkh Province residents complain about insecurity. (Radio Afghanistan)

The residents of Balk District in Balkh Province have complained to the office of the UN about insecurity. They have said that armed people commit most of the robberies in the area at night-time. This happens at a time when there are 22 security posts in Balkh District and adjacent villages. People in Balkh District have said these armed men prevent people from giving interviews to national or foreign reporters and, if someone goes against this, they are threatened by armed people.

January 17

A person accused of plotting to assassinate General Dostum arrested, "confessed" to plotting. (Associated Press / AP)

Northern Afghan authorities have arrested a man suspected of planning to assassinate Uzbek commander Abdul Rashid Dostum, and the man has admitted to acting on orders of the Taliban and al-Qaida, a spokesman for Dostum stated. The man, whose name was not given, was arrested on January 12 outside Dostum's headquarters in the city of Sheberghan, said the spokesman, Sayed Noor Ullah. Ullah said the man was carrying a pistol, satellite phone and a hand grenade when arrested. He said the man "confessed" to planning to attack Dostum and his top deputies. "Under questioning, he said he had been working for the Taliban and al-Qaida," said Ullah.

January 18

Commission wants to exclude political parties from Afghan parliament. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

Political parties cannot have membership of the National Council [Melli Jerga]. Abdol Haq Khalid, a member of the National Council and the general secretariat of this commission, stated that: "Based on the order of Hamed Karzai, the National Council commission was set up a month ago. This commission consists of 19 members, out of whom 16 are elected representatives from the Emergency Loya Jerga commission and three other representatives have been appointed by the government. The National Council has 98 members and for each province a quota has been assigned. The members of the National Council have been appointed based on the criteria assigned by the commission. The members of the National Council will be the ones who had elected membership in the Loya Jerga, and the ones who have gained designated membership of the Loya Jerga will not be regarded as a member of the National Council." He said that membership of political parties in the National Council was impossible because the law for the political parties has not been passed yet.

Leaflets attributed to the Islamic Party urges people to rise against the government in Mazar-i Sharif. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

Anti-government leaflets attributed to the Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] were disseminated in Mazar-e-Sharif.

January 20

Pro-government commander assassinated in Kunduz. (Middle East News Agency / MENA)

Unidentified assailants gunned down a pro-government commander in Kunduz region. Commander Abdullah's guards killed two assailants in return fire.

January 22

Afghan citizens to be issued with new identity cards. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic*)

Preliminary work on surveying households for a census has been launched in Afghanistan. It is decided that a survey in the economic and social spheres will also be started soon. The Afghan government will draw up a new project to issue new identity cards for Afghan nationals. Interior Minister Taj Mohammad Wardak said in Kabul that an agreement for the import of identity cards had been signed with a company named Dilawar, and that the company would also issue the cards. He added that the new cards would be printed and distributed immediately after it was approved by the Afghan cabinet. At present half of the male and most of the female population of Afghanistan have no identity cards or any other identity documents.

Protesters in Afghan capital call for and end to police harassment. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

A large number of people demonstrated in front of the government office. The demonstrators, mostly widowed women and residents of Sharak-e Police [police township in Kabul], called on the authorities to resolve their problems which they said were caused by military personnel of the Interior Ministry. They said Interior Ministry military personnel should be stopped harassing them. They said armed police personnel wanted to occupy their houses and that they had been asked to evacuate their homes. The demonstrators alleged that they had repeatedly asked the Interior Ministry to address their problems, but nothing had been done so far. They have also filed complaints to Hamed Karzai, demanding their problems be addressed.

January 23

Gunmen kill anti-Taliban writer. (Pakistan Press International Information Services / PPIIS)

Unidentified attackers have shot dead a writer whose work was viewed as critical of former Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The 40-year-old Afghan writer, Fazal Wahab, was living as a refugee in Swat, Frontier province. He was shot by unknown armed attackers at a local shop in busy Mingora bazar. Ulema had issued Fatwas (religious edicts) against Wahab, declaring his work as un-Islamic. Fatwas had been issued by prominent ulemas of Deobandi, Wahabi sect after the publication of his two books challenging the role of mullahs particularly criticizing previous Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Swat Police said three or four gunmen burst into the shop in the town of Mingora, where Mr Wahab was sitting. The gunmen opened fire indiscriminately, killing Mr Wahab and the shop owner on the spot. A teenage shop assistant died on his way to hospital. The Frontier Police established checkpoints quickly but have so far made no arrests.

Security officials close four video centres in Kabul. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

Security officials of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, have closed four video centres distributing “immoral” films. The video centres were closed at a time when seven cable TV centres were closed in Kabul and in Jalalabad in line with a decision of the chief justice of Afghanistan. The cable TV centres were closed in Kabul and in Jalalabad following people's complaints that the centres were presenting “immoral” and un-Islamic programmes.

Afghan prison affairs transferred from Interior Ministry to Justice Ministry. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

All prisons of Afghanistan have been transferred from the Interior Ministry to the Justice Ministry of Afghanistan. The decision was taken at a meeting in the Justice Ministry attended by Abdorrahim Karemi, the justice minister, Taj Mohammad Wardak, the Interior Minister, the head of the [Afghan] prisons and domestic and foreign experts.

January 24

Afghan regional paper resumes publication. (*Afghanistan Television*)

The daily 'Sanaye' publication in Ghazni Province has recently started publication. The daily 'Sanaye', which is published in four pages and is published in lithographic, is the only publication in Ghazni Province. The daily has resumed its publication after a 13 months break and has been devoted mostly to formal news.

January 26

Two persons killed as U.N. convoy attacked. (Reuters)

Two Afghan security guards were killed when armed men opened fire on a vehicle escorting a convoy of four U.N. refugee agency vehicles in the east of the country. UNHCR's chief of mission in Afghanistan Filippo Grandi said the attack happened at about 10 a.m. as the vehicles were heading to Hesarak district of Nangarhar province. Grandi had no information as to the identity of the attackers.

Local security commander kidnapped in Logar province. (Chinese news agency Xinhua)

A district security chief of Afghanistan's Logar province has been kidnapped by suspected antique smugglers. It was suspected that the security head of Mohammad Agha district of the province was kidnapped by local antique smugglers as a punishment for his cooperation with the central government in fighting against antique smuggling in the province. The security officer had close contacts with the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Ministry of Interior through the exchange of intelligence on illegal excavating and smuggling of historical antiques in Logar province, which is famous for its ancient and historic places.

January 28

Afghanistan appoints new Interior Minister. (AFP)

Afghanistan has replaced its Interior Minister Taj Mohammed Wardak, appointing a former resistance commander in his place. The new Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali was a "general" in the mujahedin (holy warrior) rebellion against Soviet occupation in the 1980s. According to the government spokesperson, Jalali, also a Pashtun, had earned his credentials as military chief of an alliance of powerful mujahedin groups, including the Islamic Movement [Harakat-i Eslami] party, the Mahaz party and the Jabha- i-Nijad (National Islamic Rescue Front).

Two people die in Uzbek-Tajik clashes in Fariab Province. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

Two persons died in clashes between Uzbek General Abdorrashid Dostum and General Atta Mohammad forces in Fariab Province. It was reported that forces from the two sides had been on alert in Qaisar and Almar districts for the last couple of days. The situation in Fariab Province got critical when General Dostum moved 2,000 of his troops into the region to continue the disarmament process in Qaisar and Almar districts in the presence of United Nations observers. The groups linked to Jamiat-e

Eslami and commanded by General Atta Mohammad were not ready to surrender their weapons because the commander was abroad. On the other hand, Faruq, one of the Jamiat-e Eslami party commanders in the region, has said that administrative posts in Fariab Province are not fairly distributed between the two groups and that is why they have refused to surrender their weapons. It was also reported that one of the regional commanders, Rostam Khan, had been calling on people not to surrender their weapons and had launched a propagation campaign against the disarmament process. He provoked the clashes and himself got injured in the clashes. The commander is reported to be not linked to any party.

Hezb-i Wahdat commander, three guards assassinated in Samangan province. (*Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

A commander of the Hezb-i Wahdat party of Afghanistan has been assassinated in Samangan Province's Dara-e Suf District. An official of the Wahdat party in the northern part of Afghanistan, Mohammad Sarwar Saidi, reported that Commander Gholam Nabi and three of his guards were attacked and killed on their way to Mazar-e Sharif.

January 29

Attack on NGO office in Kandahar. (UN Integrated Regional Information Network / IRIN)

In a press statement, an international NGO, Action Against Hunger, said that a device containing TNT explosive was thrown at its office in the city of Kandahar. It damaged the building without causing any injuries.

January 30

UN employees kidnapped. (IRIN)

Two employees of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) were stopped by gunmen as they were driving near Sheykhabad, 50 km south of Kabul. The occupants of the vehicle were blindfolded and driven into the nearby mountains, where they were released unharmed four hours later, WFP spokesman Alejandro Chicheri stated.

January 31

Afghan security seizes anti-government cassettes. (Afghan newspaper *Erada*)

The security authorities seized a number of cassettes which contained propaganda, slogans and chants against the transitional government, the former king and Hamed Karzai. These cassettes are recorded by Sajjad, a Khost resident, and Noor Mohd Waziree, a Pakistani citizen. The cassettes were brought through Miran Shah from Quetta, which is in the border area with Afghanistan, to this city and these cassettes were sold by Hakim and Samiul-Haq, cassette sellers. The security authorities arrested these when they were busy selling these cassettes to people.

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