



**Afghanistan:**

## **MONTHLY REVIEW**

**October 2005**

### **IN THIS ISSUE**

- Provisional election results published but final results delayed pending fraud investigations.
- Conservative elements likely to dominate new parliament
- Six aid workers killed among many other targets of terrorist attacks
- High level NATO delegation plans expansion of ISAF to southern Afghanistan
- Condoleeza Rice visits Afghanistan

## **Elections**

The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) announced, on 23rd October, that it was able to provide provisional results of the parliamentary and provincial council elections held on 18<sup>th</sup> September for all the 34 provinces, subject to the caveat that about 700 of the 6,270 polling stations had been excluded from the count while allegations of fraud were investigated. The JEMB subsequently issued a statement on 30<sup>th</sup> October that it would not be able to announce the final results until early November, pending these investigations.

Based on the provisional results issued, the indications are that conservative elements, including those linked to the Mujahidin parties, will have a very significant presence in the new parliament. Among the more prominent members are former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, the former Interior and Education Minister, Yunus Qanouni, the leader of Hisb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami-ye-Mardum-Afghanistan (a recently formed splinter group of Hisb-e-Wahdat), Haji Muhammed Muhaqeq, and the leader of Ittihad-i-Islami, Abdur-Rasoul Sayyaf. Malalai Joya, who was particularly outspoken amongst the women who attended the Constitutional Loya Jirga of January 2004, won a significant number of votes in the highly conservative province of Farah, in western Afghanistan. However, the former Taliban Foreign Minister, Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, and the former Taliban Minister for Vice and Virtue, Maulavi Qalamuddin, failed to get elected.

The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) set up by the Afghan Government was reported, on 10<sup>th</sup> October, to have received about 5,300 challenges and complaints. In a statement, it noted that “the complaints filed since Election Day and reviewed by the ECC have thus far generally raised the same issues that observer groups have discussed in their public statements: allegations of intimidation; bias among electoral officials; lack of access to polls and counting centers; and concerns about quarantined ballot boxes and the reporting of results.”

## **Security**

Aid workers have again been the targets of terrorist activity. Five staff employed by the NGO, Afghan Health and Development Services, were killed, and three others injured, when they came under attack near Kandahar on 12<sup>th</sup> October. The team were working in a camp for internally displaced people. On 20<sup>th</sup> October, a staff member of the NGO, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), was killed, and another injured, when they were ambushed in the north-western province of Faryab.

Religious figures have also continued to be targeted. A religious leader was killed and fifteen others injured on 14<sup>th</sup> October when a bomb exploded in a mosque in the south-eastern province of Khost. Another was killed on 16<sup>th</sup> October in Lashkargah, the provincial capital of Helmand, as he was leaving his mosque. Yet another was shot dead in his home on the same day in Kunar Province, in eastern Afghanistan.

Those standing for election to the national parliament, or for the provincial councils, have remained vulnerable, even after the elections. A parliamentary election candidate was found unconscious in Nangarhar Province on 16<sup>th</sup> October. He had been abducted three weeks earlier. A candidate for the local provincial council was killed, together with his son and brother, on 28<sup>th</sup> October in Helmand Province.

Several symbols of the international presence have been attacked, even though unconnected with the US-led counter insurgency operation. A British soldier attached to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) died, and five others were wounded, on 29<sup>th</sup> October when they came under fire in the center of Mazar-i-Sharif. Four British customs officials on a visit to Kandahar were injured on 9<sup>th</sup> October when a suicide bomber drove a car full of explosives into their armoured vehicle. On 12<sup>th</sup> October, a rocket exploded outside the residence of the Canadian Ambassador in Kabul, hours before the arrival of the US Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice.

As in previous months, there have been a series of terrorist incidents aimed to undermine the morale of the Afghan police force and so negatively influence recruitment. These have been more frequent in the southern provinces but there have also been examples elsewhere. The incidents include the following:

- On 1<sup>st</sup> October, an Afghan farmer and a policeman were killed in an attack in southern Helmand Province. The Taliban claimed responsibility.
- 18 police officers were killed on 10<sup>th</sup> October when a convoy in which they were traveling was ambushed in Helmand Province.
- On 12<sup>th</sup> October, six policemen were killed in another ambush in Uruzgan Province.
- An intelligence official and a policeman were killed on 16<sup>th</sup> October in Helmand Province.
- On 20<sup>th</sup> October, the deputy director of police for Nimroz Province and a guard were killed when a remotely-controlled bomb hit their vehicle as they were on their way to evening prayers. Four passers-by were injured in the blast.
- On the same day, an intelligence officer was killed in Kunar Province when a bomb was detonated as he drove past on his motor cycle.
- A deputy police chief was killed on 24<sup>th</sup> October in his home in Zurmat District of Paktia Province.
- On the same day, two rockets were fired onto Faizabad, the provincial capital of Badakshan Province. One hit the provincial police headquarters. The other landed

in the office of the International Organisation for Migration, wounding a member of staff.

- Three police officers were injured when their vehicle was attacked on 25<sup>th</sup> October in Sorkrud District of Nangarhar Province.
- On 27<sup>th</sup> October, a policeman was killed, and two civilians injured, by a roadside bomb in Kandahar Province.

Kandahar Province has been the scene of four further incidents:

- Three people were killed, and twenty injured, on 4<sup>th</sup> October when a bomb exploded at a border post with Pakistan, near Spin Boldak, to the south of Kandahar.
- Eight fuel tankers exploded outside the US airbase near Kandahar on 14<sup>th</sup> October. It was not clear whether the explosion was caused by a bomb or mines. Two people were injured.
- On 18<sup>th</sup> October, a headmaster was shot dead in Panjwai District of Kandahar Province.
- On the same day, the governor of Kandahar's Arghandab District was killed in a mosque.

A high level NATO delegation visited Afghanistan in early October to discuss plans for the expansion of ISAF into southern Afghanistan next year. The NATO Secretary-General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who was part of the delegation, subsequently announced that this would require the deployment of several thousand additional troops.

A report on Australian television on 19<sup>th</sup> October that US forces had burned the bodies of two Taliban fighters, in contravention of the normal Islamic burial rites, may combine with earlier transgressions to fuel public antipathy to the US presence. It is certainly clear from the reaction of the US forces to the report that they are taking this risk extremely seriously. Any increase in antipathy may be further fuelled by an incident on 18<sup>th</sup> October in which US-led coalition forces killed four Afghan policemen, believing them to be insurgents.

This links with another report this month which suggests that the coalition forces are concerned that the effectiveness of the Afghan National Army (ANA), on which they rely for much of their routine patrolling and intelligence-gathering for counter-insurgency operations, may be undermined by links between ANA soldiers and local power-holders. If such links do exist, there is some risk that antipathy to US actions may lead some power holders to switch their allegiance to the Taliban or, at least, provide tacit support to their operations. There is also the risk that individual ANA soldiers may have a growing sympathy for those engaged in the insurgency and therefore be less motivated in seeking

to counter it. Loss of morale amongst the national army was a key factor in the growth of the Mujahidin resistance to the Soviet military presence in the 1980s.

An estimated 1,000 people staged a protest in Mazar-i-Sharif on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> October in response to the murder of a candidate for the Afghan parliament on 27<sup>th</sup> September. The candidate, Mohammad Ashraf Ramazan, was a member of the Hisb-e-Wahdat party, which seeks to represent the Hazara population. A further 2,000 Hazaras were reported to have marched in Kabul on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The protestors demanded the resignation of the Governor of Balkh, Atta Mohammad, whom they accused of involvement in the murder.

President Karzai has changed his US bodyguard for a protection force of 600 Afghans trained by the US company, Dyncorps, which previously provided the bodyguard.

### **Humanitarian developments**

The World Food Programme has delivered supplies of wheat to depots in the north and west of the country in anticipation of possible food shortages over the winter in the provinces of Badakshan, Baghlan, Takhar, Herat, Badghis, Ghor, Balkh, Faryab and Samangan Provinces.

The tremors of the earthquake which hit northern Pakistan on 8<sup>th</sup> October, which was 7.6 on the Richter scale, were also felt in Afghanistan, particularly in the north-eastern provinces. It would appear, however, that there were very few casualties and that little damage was caused. An estimated eight people were killed in two subsequent earthquakes, of lower intensity, centred on the provinces of Paktika and Zabul in south-eastern Afghanistan, on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

### **International relations**

President Karzai made an official visit to France from 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> October. France currently contributes to ISAF and has made clear its opposition to any involvement of ISAF in offensive combat operations when the latter expands to southern Afghanistan.

The US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, visited Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan from 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> October. This, combined with a visit by Donald Rumsfeld to the Central Asian Republics in July, indicates that the region has considerable strategic interest for the US government. The US is concerned to both contain China and encircle Iran. The presence of significant oil reserves in Kazakhstan is also a factor. In response, China and Russia are seeking to discourage the Central Asian Republics from any long-term arrangements with the US through a strengthening of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which brings together China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Russia was recently reported to be planning to build an airbase outside the Tajik capital, Dushanbe. It has already set up a base in Kyrgyzstan in response to the establishment, in 2001, of a US airbase in the country. The US recently renegotiated the agreement on this base after the Kyrgyz government threatened to rescind it.

## **Economic developments**

The Afghan Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, attended a meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organisation in Tehran on 1<sup>st</sup> October. Among the issues which he discussed with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, was the role of the Iranian private sector in Afghanistan. Afghan businessmen in Herat are reported to have been calling for the Afghan Government to put up tariff barriers against Iranian goods, stating that they cannot compete in a situation in which the Iranian Government is providing subsidies for Iranian manufacturers.

The Indo-Asian News Service reported on 3<sup>rd</sup> October that the Indian engineers who are working to construct a 280 km road from Zaranj, on the Iranian border with south-west Afghanistan, to the Kandahar-Herat highway at Dilaram have prepared the first 40 km for asphaltting. Progress is being hindered by the severe dust storms which are characteristic of the area. Iran constructed a bridge over the River Helmand last year to speed up the cross-border crossing and is currently upgrading the road from the border to its port of Chabahar. This route, once completed, is intended to facilitate Indian trade with Central Asia.

Pakistan has announced that it plans to complete construction of the highway between Jalalabad and the border post at Torkham during the first quarter of 2006.