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Legislative Newsletter

News

Committee Questions Ministers over Elections Security

On Tuesday, August 4th, Interior Minister Muhammad Hanif Atmar told the Wolesi Jirga Internal Affairs Committee that Afghan security forces will subdue any saboteur acts during and after the coming elections. The committee had convened Atmar along with Defense Minister General Rahim Wardak and intelligence chief Amrullah Saleh after an alleged threat of violence by a spokesperson of one of the presidential candidates. Abdul Sattar Murad, campaign manager for Abdullah Abdullah, had been quoted by UAE-based newspaper, The National, as saying, "there will be a big demonstration, street demonstrations, and it will turn bad" if President Karzai is reelected.

Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak reassured committee members that the MoD, ISAF, MoI, and intelligence directorate have developed a strategy for diverting any untoward act. Wardak said that election centers will be jointly protected by the Afghan National Army (ANA), police, and ISAF.

Amrullah Saleh strongly reiterated that every possible measure will be taken to stop any acts of sabotage. The intelligence chief also informed the committee about the emergence of a new terrorist organization in Afghanistan.

"In addition to Hekmatyar's faction, Hezb-e-Islmai, and the Taliban, a newly emerged terrorist group known as Hezb-u-Tahrir, which has been active in Parwan, Kapisa, Badakhshan, and Kabul for the last year, is a major opponent of the election."

Atmar said that threatening people with force is a crime and those who have committed this crime will be subject to the law. Atmar commended Dr. Abdullah for calling Murad's statement the spokesman's personal view.

Upper House Decides Election Schedule

The Meshrano Jirga on 3 August decided that it will hold plenary sessions if and when a quorum is established. This differs slightly from the lower house, which, as reported last week, has postponed all plenary sessions until after the election.

Committee Questions Elections Official and UN Head

In a closed session on 4 August, the Meshrano Jirga International Relations Committee discussed the elections situation with Kai Eide, UN Special Representative for Afghanistan, and Zekria Barakzai, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer of the Independent Election Commission (IEC). The senators questioned the guests in detail on a range of issues including registration and election security before, during, and after polling day, voter disenfranchisement due to insecurity, elections transparency/legitimacy, the number of international monitors, voter registration and vote count fraud, the complaints processing mechanism, fairness in media coverage, use of official resources during the campaign, voter manipulation due to illiteracy, threats/intimidation by candidates, women's security, access to polling stations, etc. The senators used examples from their home provinces to illustrate their inquiries and arguments.

There was no significant activity on legislation last week.