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News

Wolesi Jirga Receives Second List of Cabinet Nominees

On 9 January Second Vice President Karim Khalili presented the Wolesi Jirga with a list of 16 nominees for cabinet posts to replace those rejected from the president's first submission. A seventeenth was later added. The list contains none of the 17 rejected candidates, but MPs hoping for familiar names were disappointed. "Mr. Khalili, do you know any of the nominees or is this the first time you too have come across their names?" asked Gul Pacha Majidi (Paktia).

Presentation of the list was delayed a few hours as last minute changes were made as a result of meetings between prominent Assembly leaders and the president over specific appointments, according to government sources. The changes resulted in the interception of at least one nominee on his way to Parliament for questioning.

Khalili told the MPs that the president hopes to finalize his cabinet before the London conference on Afghanistan in late January. He also called on lawmakers to consider the country's current situation, the people's wishes, and the national interest in making their decisions.

The list includes three women nominees: Dr. Suraya Daleel for Ministry of Public Health, Palwasha Hasan for Ministry of Women Affairs, Amina Afzali for Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

Only two nominees – Zulmai Rasul, previously security advisor to the president and Zarar Ahmad Muqbel, former interior minister – have held senior posts.

Minister of Commerce and Industries nominee, Hadi Hakimi, who resides in Canada, declined his nomination, citing personal issues.

Several MPs accused the president of failing to screen his choices and of nominating them in response to pressure from powerful actors seeking fulfillment of promises made in exchange for their election support. According to some MPs, "horse trading" between powerful former mujahidin MPs and the president resulted in allocations to key parties/groups. Several groups

have indicated satisfaction with the ethnic balance achieved in the nominations, but others lament the lack of appropriate technical expertise among the candidates.

MP Mohammad Naim Farahi (Farah) voiced a common concern of MPs: political party affiliation. “The nominees should tell us which party they belong to,” he said.

Calling on his colleagues to look beyond particularistic concerns in questioning and evaluating the nominees, MP Mullah Taj Mohammad Mujahid (Kabul) asked MPs to avoid questions related to their own provinces. “Those questions that concern the interest of the entire nation should be asked and the nominees should explain their practical strategies,” he said.

Questioning of nominees is taking place this week. Voting may occur as early as Thursday.

Name and political affiliation (party and/or individual)¹ of nominees:

1. Minister of Foreign Affairs: Zalmay Rasul (former King)
2. Minister of Justice: Habibullah Ghaleb (Jamiat-e-Islami led by Burhanudin Rabbani)
3. Minister of Higher Education: Hashim Esmatullahi (Asif Muhsini)
4. Minister of Hajj: Yousuf Neyazi (Abdul Rasul Sayyaf)
5. Minister of Public Works: Bashir Lale (Mohammad Muhaqiq)
6. Minister of Public Health: Suraya Dalil (President Karzai)
7. Minister of Economy: Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal (Hezb-e-Islami)
8. Minister of Commerce: Zahir Waheed (Mohammad Muhaqiq)
9. Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development: Jarullah Mansoori (Jamiat-e-Islami led by Burhanudin Rabbani)
10. Minister of Labour and Social Affairs: Amina Afzali (Jamiat-e-Islami led by Burhanudin Rabbani)
11. Minister of Transport: Abdul Rahim Oraz (President Karzai)
12. Minister of Women Affairs: Palwasha Hasan (President Karzai)
13. Minister of Refugees and Returnees: Abdul Rahim (Jamiat-e-Islami led by Burhanudin Rabbani)
14. Minister of Tribal Affairs and Border Affairs: Arsala Jamal (President Karzai)
15. Minister of Counter Narcotics: Zarar Ahmad Moqbel (Jamiat-e-Islami led by Burhanudin Rabbani)
16. Minister of Urban Development: Eng Sultan Hussain Hessari (Khalili)
17. Minister of Communication: Abdul Qudoos Hamidi (Junbesh, Dostum)

¹ Affiliations are subject to change.

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