



## Legislative Newsletter

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### NEWS

#### **Lower House Congratulates “Symbol of Competence”**

The Mayor of Kabul, Mohammad Younis Nawandish, was lauded by members of the Wolesi Jirga (WJ) this week for his efforts to transform the Afghan capital. The MPs invited Mayor Nawandish to their plenary session on 13 November as a continuation of the WJ’s efforts to conduct more oversight during this term.

Since taking office earlier this year, Mayor Nawandish has set about transforming the city, with a particular focus on road repair and construction. However, despite a general satisfaction with progress, MPs still raised a variety of issues regarding the city’s planning and management.

The Kabul City master plan of 1974 was designed to accommodate less than one million people. That figure has almost quadrupled<sup>1</sup> with the recent influx of returnees from neighboring countries and people pouring in from rural areas in search of jobs. This increase in population has caused a sudden expansion of the city.

Abdul Kabir Ranjbar (Kabul) expressed his concern over the lack of planning. “The illegal development of Kabul City around its edges will continue unless we have a master plan that actually carries that development according to an organized program,” he said.

Abas Nawyan (Kabul) complained that the age and ever-increasing number of cars on city roads is becoming a health hazard and asked if the municipality was coordinating with the transportation ministry to address the problem.

Fatima Nazari (Kabul) called Mr. Nawandish a “symbol of a competent official” before suggesting that the city invest in larger and cheaper rubbish containers. Mr. Nawandish agreed the municipality was struggling with rubbish collection, but said that the current containers were the standard size used globally.

Mayor Nawandish thanked the MPs for their goodwill toward him and his team and said they were building four terminals around the city to help ease traffic jams. He also said that a plan for the development of Kabul is being designed by Japanese experts and will be ready within one year.

#### **Lower House Speaker Will Run Again**

Even before the 18 September parliamentary election results have been finalized, incumbent Wolesi Jirga Speaker Younis Qanooni announced in the general plenary session on 13 November that he plans to nominate himself for another five years in the leadership post.

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<sup>1</sup> “Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2008/09,” Central Statistics Organisation.

His statement came after local news media reported that Speaker Qanooni had agreed to an annulment of the election in return for re-appointment to his current position. “This report is totally unfounded and I condemn it,” he said, before calling on journalists to refrain from “publicity stunts” that involve the defamation of politicians. Mr. Qanooni said moves were being made against him and declared, “I am a candidate for the post of speaker and no cowardly act can stop me.”

## **MPs Discuss Election Controversies**

Members of the Wolesi Jirga (WJ) continued to express their views on the politics and process of the recent parliamentary election during this week’s plenary sessions.

At the plenary session on 10 November, some MPs questioned the legitimacy of recent demands by Deputy Attorney General Rahmatullah Nazari to investigate the actions of Afghanistan’s election commissioners. Mr. Nazari had earlier told the local media that allegations of “complicity” against some members of Independent Election Commission (IEC) need to be examined. The IEC rejects the claims and says the Attorney General’s office cannot investigate them.

“The interference by the deputy attorney general is not legal—it undermines the system and I would like everyone to respect the institutions,” said Fawzia Kofi (Badakhshan). Ms. Kofi asked for restraint from actions that might push the country into crisis. Her comments seemed to be pointed toward her protesting colleagues who have called for the annulment of September’s election results.

In an interview with the Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project (APAP), Ramazan Bashardust (Kabul) agreed with Ms. Kofi, adding: “The attorney general cannot interfere in the elections because an institution has been established especially to deal with election-related complaints and crimes.”

According to Article 64 of the Electoral Law, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) has the authority to fine, ban and disqualify votes from any individual who has been involved in fraud or other violations of the law. The ECC can also refer cases for prosecution, where evidence is available.

One MP complained that the ECC was not distinguishing between cases in terms of their seriousness. Arefullah Pashtoon (Kandahar) said: “I have been reported [by the ECC] for an error that has occurred involving ten ballot papers in the same way that somebody else is reported for actually committing fraud by the thousands.” Mr. Pashtoon argued that there needs to be a classification system reflecting the severity of alleged fraud.

Some MPs were of the view that the security situation in Afghanistan was not suitable for elections and that the parliamentary vote should have been postponed until it improved. “When we said, ‘let’s postpone the election because having a nationwide election is not possible at this time,’ we were accused of wanting to extend our terms,” said Samia Aziz Sadat (Parwan).

Ahmad Wahid Tahiri (Herat) suggested that the lower house takes a collective stance on the election, which he said had “created more problems between the people than thirty years of war did.”

Younis Qanooni, Speaker of the WJ, expressed his concern over delays in the announcement of the final results and said that the house would formally discuss the election once the decisions of the

relevant agencies become clear. “There are so many variables, and we can’t make a judgment while there are so many unknowns. The only known factor is the law and we support that,” said Mr. Qanooni.

### **Committee News:**

Meshrano Jirga:

**Transport, Communications and Municipalities Committee:** During the committee’s 10 November meeting, Badakhshan Senator Torday Akhond explained specific problems facing the Pamirat region, which forms part of the Pamir mountain range in the northeast of Afghanistan. Mr. Akhond said that the onset of winter had caused avalanches and that people in the Wakhan Valley settlements wanted government assistance after losing lives, homes and livestock. The committee agreed to arrange meetings with relevant government departments to share these problems.

Wolesi Jirga:

**Complaints and Petitions Committee:** The Committee invited Aminulah Karimi, head of the Education Department in the Ministry of Defense, and dissatisfied military school students to its meeting on 13 November. The students had previously raised various concerns to the Committee, including complaints about examination requirements prior to entering the National Military Academy (NMA). In response, Mr. Karimi explained that international donors supporting the NMA want to test every applicant. Committee Chairman Mohammad Ibrahim Qasemi (Kabul) then raised the issue of military school graduates being unable to apply for mainstream universities, but Mr. Karimi said the matter was best discussed with higher education officials. He explained that unsuccessful NMA applicants are given professional courses.

### **Legislation**

There is no legislative activity to report at this time.

### **Upcoming Events:**

The National Assembly will be closed from 15-19 November for the Eid Mubarak holidays.

### **Acronyms:**

APAP	Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project
ECC	Electoral Complaints Commission
IEC	Independent Election Commission
NMA	National Military Academy
WJ	Wolesi Jirga