



Legislative Newsletter

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NEWS

MPs Accuse Minister of Parliamentary Affairs of “Sabotage”

In the plenary of August 20, MPs claimed that the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs had tried to sabotage their Saturday session. In anticipation of an announcement by the Independent Election Commission (IEC), some MPs suggested that the government was indirectly pushing for cancellation of the plenary session in order to stop MPs from creating problems on the eve of the announcement.

During the 20 August plenary, Mr. Sadeqizadah Neli (Daikundi) claimed that the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Homayon Azizi, had been calling MPs the previous night and warning them not to attend the next day’s plenary. “Mr. Azizi has decided for us that MPs should not attend the plenary today. I would like to tell him that we are the people’s representatives, not his,” said Mr. Neli. He further accused him of spending public funds in an attempt to divide the MPs into different groups.

Mr. Neli was hinting to a new coalition group formed under the name of “Reformers” who call for a compromise on the IEC issue. Mr. Ahmad Shah Behzad (Herat), Second Deputy Speaker of WJ, also stated that he too had heard that the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs was trying to dissuade MPs from attending the plenary. “We have also heard that Mr. Homayon has been trying to persuade MPs not to attend today’s plenary,” said Mr. Behzad.

While most of the MPs who spoke criticized Mr. Homayon and called him the “The Minister of the Executive Branch for Parliamentary Affairs,” others argued that the root cause of the issue lay elsewhere. “I don’t blame him, he is doing what he is told to do. We must find the person who has ordered him,” argued Mr. Abdul Zahir Qadeer (Nangarhar), the leader of the Protectors of Law Coalition. Mr. Qadeer did not identify the person whom he thought was responsible, but Mr. Muhammad Naeem Lalai Hameedzai (Kandahar) went further to claim that the person ordering the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs was President Karzai. “The President is personally responsible for plotting against the MPs and is trying to divide us,” claimed Mr. Lalai.

Mr. Homayon, an MP from Khost province argued that some of the MPs were also involved, “There are MPs who are so pro government that under instruction of the Minister of

Parliamentary Affairs, they were standing at the main entrance (of the National Assembly) trying to stop MPs from attending today's plenary. I will name and shame them, they were; Nawab Mangal (Paktia) and Kamal Naser Usooli (Khost)." The accused MPs were not present in the plenary to comment and did not comment on the accusations in the subsequent plenary of 24 August. Mr. Homayon Aziz, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs has not commented either.

MPs Question Leader's Support in IEC Announcement

Some Wolesi Jirga (WJ) members criticized Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim (Kunduz) for not defending the decisions taken by the people's representatives in regard to the Independent Election Commissions (IEC) announcement. On 22 August, the IEC announced nine new members for the WJ, meant to replace an equal number who were removed. This follows a resolution passed by the WJ on 13 August that stated that the results of the parliamentary elections could not be changed by anyone, including the IEC.

Mr. Eng. Sahib Khan, an MP from Logar, expressed his disappointment for what he called the Speaker's apparent reluctance to defend WJ decisions. "We are very, very disappointed in you (Speaker Ibrahim). Why are you reluctant to defend our resolutions?" Mr. Qazi Nazir Ahmad Hanafi (Herat) concurred with Mr. Khan's sentiments and added, "It has been three days since the IEC announced the changes and everyone is waiting for an announcement from the WJ. I hope it is made soon," said Mr. Hanafi.

Speaker Ibrahim rejected the criticism and said: "I have defended the decisions of the house, even if they have been at the cost of my life." Speaker Ibrahim also stated that he had no knowledge of the resolution made by WJ on the IEC as he was away on pilgrimage.

Not all MPs were convinced by the Speaker's explanation. "When the people's house comes under attack, you turn a blind eye to that and fail to defend its decisions. Even when you learned about the resolution, you looked at it with doubt," argued Mr. Mohammad Hussain Fahimi (Sar e Pul).

Mr. Sadeqizadah Neli (Daikundi) echoed Mr. Fahimi's argument and said: "When you mentioned the resolution, the uncertainty in your tone casts doubt over the existence of the resolution, it implies we did not have one. It is very unfortunate." To these charges, Speaker Ibrahim hit back and said that if there was such a resolution, then there was no need for further discussion on the matter and the WJ's secretaries would release statements, emphasizing the WJ's previous decision in this regard.

Mr. Ustad Muhammad Aref Rahmani an MP from Ghazni province however insisted that Speaker Ibrahim personally takes the initiative. "Dear Speaker, we all expect that in accordance to WJ's Internal Rules of Procedures, you defend the integrity of the house. We expected you to be the first to do so after the IEC announced the changes," said Mr. Rahmani.

Mr. Neli, however, believed that it was the duty of any speaker to defend the decisions of the WJ, but for Speaker Ibrahimi, it was also a moral duty to do so. “We voted for you and elected you to the position of speaker with dignity and honor. Now we expect you to defend our honor,” pleaded Mr. Neli.

Mr. Neli made his remarks as a local newspaper published an article in which he, in his capacity as the spokesperson of the Protectors of Law Coalition, was quoted as saying that Speaker Ibrahimi had not fulfilled his duties and that the search for a more effective Speaker had begun in earnest.

The WJ subsequently released a statement that emphasized its previous decision and reiterated that no change by the IEC was legal or acceptable.

Senators Angered by Government Officials’ “No Show”

The Meshrano Jirga (MJ) invited the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the President’s Security Advisor and the Director of National Security Directorate (NDS) to the plenary session of 23 August to brief Senators about the Afghan- US strategic partnership agreement. Citing various reasons, the invited officials failed to attend the plenary. Senators took issue with the officials’ absence, considering it an “insult” to the peoples’ representatives, and called upon the President to either “fix or fire” them.

In the beginning of the plenary, Mr. Mohammad Alam Izedyar (Panjshir), First Deputy Speaker of the MJ, informed the Senators that none of the officials invited could attend the plenary. “Government officials always make excuses for not attending MJ session. Mr. Rahmatullah Nabil, the Director of NDS, cannot attend the session because he is with the President trying to establish a special tribunal for the terrorists. Presidential Security Advisor, Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, is in Germany, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dr. Zalmai Rasoul is on an official visit to the UAE.” Mr. Izedyar further said the “Government officials have insulted MJ by not turning up.”

Senators while angry at the officials' non-attendance had differing conclusions on why the officials did not attend the session. Mr. Abdul Hanan Haqwayoon (Paktia) claimed that it was a plot by the United States to hide the details of the proposed bilateral agreement. “Some ministers are getting instructions from the US and some of them have been imposed on Karzai. The US wants to create disorder in the country to legitimize its presence in Afghanistan. I want to send a message to them: the US will never get permanent bases in Afghanistan.”

Mr. Nisar Ahmad Harris (Appointee) believed that because the MJ was active in oversight, the officials were afraid to attend the plenary sessions of MJ. “I think MJ is very strong and officials are afraid of MJ,” claimed Mr. Harris.

Regardless of the reasons for not attending the MJ, some Senators proposed drastic action against the officials. “President Karzai should form a special tribunal to prosecute ministers

instead of the terrorists. Some ministers are national traitors and the President must prosecute them,” argued Mr. Zalmay Zabuli, a senator from Zabul province.

Ms. Shahnaz Ghawasi, Senator from Herat province, asked the MJ to pass a vote of no confidence in those officials who did not attend the session. “The MJ should impeach these ministers because they insulted the Senators.”

Mr. Izedyar instructed the Secretary General of the MJ to send a letter of protest to the President. The letter would state that the officials must either comply with the Constitution or they will be referred to the Attorney General for violating the law.

Meshrano Jirga Senator calls for expulsion of Iran General Consul

Meshrano Jirga’s Complaints Committee Chairman, Mr. Zalmay Zabuli has called for the immediate expulsion of the Iranian Consul General for allegedly saying the strategic partnership between Afghanistan and the US would be “catastrophic” for the people of Afghanistan. According to Mr. Zalmay, the Consul General made the remark during an interview with a Herat provincial paper. “The Consul General’s statement is irresponsible, he should be expelled from Afghanistan within the next 24 hours,” said Mr. Zabuli in the plenary session of 21 August.

Ms. Najiba Hussaini (Daikundi) concurred adding the statement by the Iranian diplomat is a reflection of the Iranian government’s position on the proposed US-Afghan- strategic agreement. “During our visit to Iran, Iranian ministers and committee chairs repeatedly told us not to sign the strategic partnership agreement with US government. They also called Afghanistan an occupied country. I told them to stop using the term ‘occupation’ and further made it clear that it was up to Afghans to decide whether to sign this agreement with the US or not.”

MJ Speaker Fazel Hadi Muslimyar stated that no foreign country has the right to interfere in Afghanistan’s internal affairs and that the decision to sign the strategic agreement rests on Afghan democratic institutions. “The Traditional Loya Jirga will discuss the strategic partnership between Afghanistan and US before sending it to the National Assembly for due process,” stated Speaker Muslimyar. He further informed the house that the Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs would be invited to the house to respond to senators’ questions about the ‘irresponsible’ comments made by the Iranian diplomat.

Senators Ratify SAARC Social Charter

Meshrano Jirga senators on 21 August voted to adopt the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Social Charter (SAARC). The SAARC was ratified by the Wolesi Jirga on 01 June and sent it to MJ for due process.

The SAARC incorporates a broad range of targets to be achieved across the region in the areas of poverty eradication, population stabilization, empowerment of women, youth mobilization, human resource development, promotion of health and nutrition, and protection of children. Leaders of member countries signed the Social Charter in January 2004 in Islamabad, Pakistan.