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Taliban top leader released from Pakistan prison

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, one of Taliban's top leaders and commanders, has been released from a prison in Pakistan, officials for Pakistan intelligence network have confirmed the release of Mullah Baradar.

Afghanistan High Peace Council (HPC) by welcoming the release of Mullah Baradar from Pakistan prison says his release will help strengthen the Afghan peace process. Mullah Baradar spent eight years in a prison in Pakistan.

HPC's Mullah Baradar said a key figure that can be trusted with the Taliban group and international community.

"We welcome the release of Mullah Baradar. We want the release of any Afghan who has been imprisoned and prosecuted."

According to the media sources, Mullah Baradar was released after the intervention of Zalmay Khalilzad, US Special Representative for Afghanistan's Reconciliation, who visited Kabul Islamabad, Riyadh and Doha this month to discuss peace talks with leaders of the respective countries.

Taliban sources have also confirmed the release of Mullah Baradar saying that he was not released due to release but released to play role in Afghanistan peace talks. Meanwhile, another source from the Taliban group denied to be named said it was determined that three other commanders of the group as Mullah Abdul Samad Sani, Mullah Mohammad Agha and Mullah Mohammad Rasool would be released from Pakistan prison.

According to Afghanistan High Peace Council (HPC), if the Taliban group shows readiness in connection with peace negotiations, there are some names of Taliban key leaders can be brought out from UN or US blacklists.

Previously, Pakistan had been asked for releasing of Taliban prisoners, but the release was not implemented due to not readiness of the Taliban group for peace talks with Afghanistan government.

Afghanistan government has accelerated various efforts towards ending the ongoing war and maintaining peace in the country. Both the Afghan government and international community are trying to resume peace talks with the Taliban group so that lasting peace and stability maintained in the country and region.

It is worth mentioning that Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, also known as Mullah Baradar Ahmad or Mullah Brother, is a co-founder of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. He was the deputy of Mullah Mohammad Omar, the founding leader of the Taliban, whose death was confirmed in October 2011. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar was the Taliban's number two and ran their insurgency until he was named in a joint raid by the CIA and Pakistani intelligence officers in 2010. Lahore News

Editorial

Returnees should be provided with essential facilities

The political and security situation in Afghanistan has forced millions of Afghans to leave their land and move to other countries to get refuge. These Afghans have lived in the neighboring countries because of the civil wars and severe social and economic conditions in the last four decades in their own country.

Pakistan and Iran are the two prominent countries where most of the Afghans have moved and are finding ways to survive there. Though the end of Taliban regime and the developments being made in the country have convinced several to return to their country, but yet millions of others still living in these countries, since they have started to establish their families and businesses there.

Meanwhile conflicts in a number of the provinces of the country has forced many people to be internally displaced and move to major cities.

But recent sanctions on Iran and Pakistan and economic challenges in the two neighboring countries have forced again these refugees to return back to their country. More than 650,000 Afghan refugees have repatriated from Iran and Pakistan this year, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) said on Friday.

From Pakistan 27,375 and from Iran 630,283 refugees have returned to Afghanistan since the beginning of 2018, the IOM said in a statement. It added, last week 16,426 Afghans have returned from Iran out of them 7,130 were deported.

According to the IOM necessary assistance had been provided to two percent repatriated individuals from Iran and 59 percent repatriated individuals from Pakistan. About the Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs), the IOM said 225,250 people had been displaced from the western zone of the country due to the drought situation.

Unfortunately, in the neighboring countries, Afghan refugees have not always been welcomed with warm hugs; every now and then they have been the victims of discrimination and ill-treatment. Most of the Afghan refugees in the neighboring countries, especially in Iran and Pakistan have suffered the consequences of fluctuations in the way they are treated.

Since they are now returning to their homeland, generating more employment opportunities is the key for convincing many of the Afghans to stay and pursue opportunities that would exist in the country. They are needed to be provided with essential facilities so that keep them in their own society and help rebuild their beloved Afghanistan.

Moreover, Afghanistan does not stand on its own as far as the economic stability and security are concerned. Therefore, a lot more assistance would be needed from the regional powers and international community to help them settle in their own country as they have been through many difficulties in their lives as refugees.

Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation in close coordination with IOM and other international organizations is working to help the returnees and provide them the essential upon their returning. But long-term goals and plans needed to help them settle back in their country and start their businesses or provide them the employment opportunities. Since they have suffered the most and somehow used for proxy wars by the neighboring countries, it is the time that they must be provided a safe and sound environment and the life of their children should be guaranteed.

UNSC asks electoral commissions to ensure transparency of electoral process

The members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have welcomed the holding of Afghanistan periodic monetary elections and stressed that the elections, while they have been carried out under difficult security conditions, under full Afghan ownership, constitute an important moment in the democratic development of Afghanistan.

The members also urged the UNSC, including the engagement of Afghan women in the election, both as voters and candidates, and reiterated their continued support for the Afghan government and people of Afghanistan in their efforts to develop sustainable democratic institutions.

They reiterated the important role of the Afghan electoral institutions, including the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Commission, and called on these institutions to redouble their efforts to ensure the integrity, neutrality and transparency of the electoral process, including with regards to the drafting and observation of the ballots and announcement of results.

The members also urged that voting in Kandahar was postponed due to severe security incidents, and emphasized the importance of holding this election in a transparent manner.

They called on all stakeholders to engage with the electoral institutions and processes with patience and respect, to continue to refrain from violence and any acts that might challenge the stability and integrity of the electoral process, and to channel complaints through the established institutional mechanisms in line with Afghanistan's electoral laws and Constitution.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the Afghan National Endowment and Security Forces in their leading role in securing their country.

Meanwhile, Independent Election Commission has said that it has received data indicating that 160,000 voters did not identify their votes from their own names. According to IEC, of these, 100,000 voters in the Balkh where all information from the voters, will be assigned and reviewed and short data and results will be reported.

Head of IEC, Abdul Bari Sayed, expressed concern about the rigging and said: "All allegations and rumors about changing the numbers are baseless, some of these employees are meeting in the municipal 'seances'."

"Valid and invalid votes will be separated, the winner will be those who received the most votes from the people," Sayed added.

On the other hand, Independent Election Complaints Commission has said that over 11,000 complaints have been received from all 32 provinces by IEC. During the parliamentary elections, officials in IEC received that complaints and decisions would be made based on type of the complaints, noting that there was no particular concern in this regard and all complaints would be addressed.

Meanwhile, election watchdogs also said that their observers registered hundreds of fraud and rigging complaints during the election day.

It is worth mentioning that Kandahar residents were finally able to cast their ballots in the parliamentary election yesterday after waiting a week to cast their votes.

Surreya Rakhman



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