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Afghanistan: Threats of expulsion of Loya Jirga delegate unacceptable

Following threats of violence and expulsion of an outspoken delegate, Amnesty International called today on the Chairman of the Constitutional Loya Jirga - Sebghatollah Mojadedi, and his Deputies to ensure that all delegates to the body are able to freely express their views.

During this morning's plenary session, a female delegate spoke out against what she described as the domination of the process by strong political figures whom she called "criminals". The Chairman prevented the woman from continuing to speak and some of the delegates began screaming abuse at her.

Some present were heard to say that they would kill the woman while others intervened to protect her.

"The Constitutional Loya Jirga presents the people of Afghanistan with the opportunity to turn away from the abuses of the past and create a new system in which the rights of all are ensured," the organization declared.

"If delegates are threatened or otherwise prevented from expressing their views, this process of building a new future for Afghanistan will be severely threatened."

Background

After over two decades of war, the country embarked on a process of reconstruction beginning with the signing of the Bonn Agreement in December 2001. As a part of this process, a Constitutional Loya Jirga has been convened to debate and approve a new constitution for the country.

One powerful factional leader and delegate to the Constitutional Loya Jirga, Abdul Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf, was allowed to speak at length and told the gathering that those who speak against the mujahideen were the real perpetrators of abuse. The Chairman called for security guards to intervene and asked the woman to leave, threatening her with expulsion. He later changed his mind and allowed her to remain in the meeting, but warned her that she should not speak this way in the future.

Impunity for past abuses has not yet been addressed in Afghanistan. In many parts of the country insecurity remains. The justice system is not yet able to provide the rule of law, much less address the abuses of the past.

Public Document

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