



CPAU (Co-operation for Peace and Unity)

Working for a sustainable culture of Peace

Great Kandahar Forum Program (GKFP)

United States Embassy

Sixth Conference Report

Cooperation for Peace and Unity

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Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU)

As Afghanistan's first locally led research organization, CPAU also has extensive experience in conducting quantitative and qualitative research on a community, district, and provincial level. This has included original research on conflict trends, livelihood issues, and human rights, as well as conducting monitoring and evaluation of education, governance, and rule of law projects implemented by international donors, other NGOs, and by CPAU itself. CPAU has considerable experience in research and survey design, as well as experience in conducting interviews in Dari, Pashtu, and English. During the last decade, CPAU has organized and implemented research throughout more than a dozen provinces of Afghanistan, including in Kandahar and the surrounding region.

Over the last decades, CPAU has worked extensively with the Afghan government, including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Justice, and the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG), the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the Afghan National Police (ANP). This has included providing peace education and human rights seminars to members of the ANA in 2011-12 through a grant provided by the United States government. This deep experience and extensive connections with the Afghan government, foreign donors, and local groups throughout Afghanistan, including in the Greater Kandahar region, will allow CPAU to more effectively implement the proposed speaker program in the target provinces.

CPAU was founded in Pakistan in October 1996 by a small group of committed Afghan expatriates seeking ways to help foster peace in their home country. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, CPAU relocated its headquarters to Kabul, where it became the first non-profit, Afghan-led, research and peace-building organisation in Afghanistan. Over the last decade, CPAU has worked in more than a dozen provinces across Afghanistan, where it has conducted research on peace and conflict issues and implemented innovative education and peace-building programming.

This has included providing peace education classes to more than 30,000 male and female students across Afghanistan as well as organizing workshops and training seminars for members of the Afghan government, civil society, and foreign organizations on topics such as conflict mediation and cultural sensitivity. CPAU also either created or worked with around 10,000 Shuras/Councils across the country. In addition, CPAU has been a significant pioneer in the informal justice sector, using innovative programming to establish and provide conflict mediation and human rights training to locally based institutions in several hundred villages in dozens of districts across Afghanistan.

Acknowledgement

With the generous support from Islamic scholars, officials of the Helmand Provincial Governmental, Dr. Midhad Khafagy, an Egyptian Islamic scholar and medical doctor, and CPAU's staff, this conference was conducted successfully in Helmand Province from 18th to 19th December 2013.

Various school of thought of Islam had been presented by a number of Islamic scholars and constructive discussion were achieved. The active participation of and support offered by the Provincial Government, together with the diligence of CPAU staff resulted in a successful conference.

Much appreciated support by the Helmand Islamic scholars, government official and civil society who formed the basis for the community elder's participation in the conference. Their active participation facilitated the arrangement of the conference and contributed to the building of peace and solidarity. The Helmand Province conference was also supported by the people of Helmand by their active involvement. All these contributions have been essential towards this successful conference.

Greater Kandahar Forum Program (GKFP) – known as the Ulema Exchange Program. This conference was conducted by the Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) on 18th and 19th December 2013. This was the sixth conference out of 12 similar conferences which will be held continuously from October 2013 and in the each month two to three similar conference will be held within the greater Kandahar region. Participants had shown their support to peace, education. This report outlines the achievement of the two-day Kandahar Conference, under the and democracy by their unexpected number of participation in the two days conference.

The two days conference agenda was on the role of solidarity in reducing conflict and building peace. At the second day of the conference, Dr. Midhad Khafagy an Egyptian Islamic scholar had delivered a speech on the role of solidarity in reducing conflicts and building peace, from the perspective of Islam, which was greatly welcomed by participants. This two-day conference had recorded the attendance and participation of 300 people (with 45 females), including representatives from various governmental departments, Provincial Council and community-based organizations (CBOs), tribal/village elders, university professors and students, and Islamic scholars from the Helmand Province.

Day 1 – 18th December 2013

On 18th December 2013, the Great Kandahar Forum Conference of Helmand was inaugurated in the Information and Culture Directorate Hall in Helmand Province. As a religious practice, the conference started by the recitation of the Holy Quran. Mr M. Younus, the Senior Trainer of CPAU, welcomed the participants and gave a brief overview on CPAU activities in Afghanistan as well as introduced the aims and objectives of the two-day conference.

Mr Younus put forward the importance and significance of building solidarity between Afghan people in achieving a bright future of Afghanistan, from an Islamic perspective. The importance and positive impacts of solidarity were not limited to a bright future, also cooperation between various stakeholders, state building, and peace building.

The conference proceeded to the second presentation given by Mr Mullah Mohammad Javad who is an Islamic scholar and the member of the Helmand Ulema Council. Mr Javad put the focus of his presentation on explaining the linkage between Islam and unity and brotherhood. In his words, 'Islam is the religion of unity and brotherhood'. He further gave further explanation on the



Speaker – Mr Mullah Mohammad Javad

issue of unity in Islamic history and the role of unity in development and

achieving prosperity. In his presentation, Mr Javad stressed on his viewpoint that 'all Afghans are brothers' and 'no ethnic group has higher priority or more privileges than the other'. He asked all Afghan who live in and come from Afghanistan, to respect his/her fellow Afghan, regardless of ethnic group, tribe, culture, language, and tradition. He suggested that all Afghan bear an 'Islamic responsibility', which is unity, and this is a part of the Islamic teaching - Muslims for being united and prefers peace in any possible conditions.

Followed by Mr Javad, Mr Tofan Waziri, Expert on Politics, presented an extended overview on the issue of solidarity and the importance of unity within Afghan society. Mr Waziri named some examples of war within the country in the last three to four decades and suggested that low education and weak or absence of unity were the major reasons of instability, destruction, and war in Afghanistan. He had also expressed his view that the lack of or weak unity in any countries over the world is one of the main reasons for the outbreak or continuation of war and collapse of the system within the government. In his speech, Mr Waziri also touched upon the issue of unity at family level and said, 'if there are no unity between family members, they could not build a problem-free family, there would be always disagreement and conflicts in such family.' Mr Waziri also focused on the current situation and development of Afghanistan, he advised and invited every participants to contribute actively on building unity and peace in Afghanistan. He concluded his presentation, in his words, 'if we do not leave the war aside and build the unity among us hand in hand, we would not be able to see our Afghanistan with peace and prosperity.'

The forth presentation of the first day of the conference was delivered by Mr Mullah Mohammad Adel, representative from Helmand Ulema Council. The thematic focus of his presentation was on the role played by solidarity in conflict reduction and peace building. He had expressed his agreement with other speakers that the absence of the sense of unity and acceptance towards diversity can hardly bring the country peace and development. This was proved by cases of most conflict-affected countries in the world and also the situation in Afghanistan in the recent decades. Mr Adel told participants that 'we [Afghan] are still

suffering from very brutal situation in many provinces of our country [Afghanistan]; instead of supporting each other in peace process and unity, many [social] circles and bonds take negative advantages by trying to stop the unity and peace among the people of Afghanistan'. He urged not only participants of the conference but all Afghan to think of the future that they want, the peaceful life and development they are expecting, and the life that they want the next generation of Afghan to enjoy. Mr Adel has invited everyone to be united and against the spoiler of a conflict-free Afghanistan. In order to reduce and eradicate armed conflicts within the country, promoting education, civil rights and justice are the key. He strongly encouraged participants to send their next generation to school to receive proper education and join the peace process in the country.

Mr Mullah Khalil Ahmad, Representative of the Hajj Department, Helmand talked about education level of Afghan youth and stressed that the ongoing war and unrest in the country which has lasted for more than three decades, are the root cause of destruction and all kind of physical and mental suffering of Afghan. Mr Ahmad had asked all parties engaged in armed conflict to stop violence and killing of innocent Afghan immediately.



Female Participants of the Conference

He told participants of the conference that, in his personal opinion and experience, 'all Afghan are really sick of war and let's stop killing of our youth.' He had also focused on the value of the unity from the perspective of Islam and had expressed that solidarity is one of the basics for sustainable development, progress and prosperity which the lack of unity causes problems and conflict within the society.

Day 2 – 19th December 2013

The second day of the conference was started by reciting the Holy Quran. Mr M. Younus, Senior Trainer of CPAU had provided a brief re-cap on presentations and speeches delivered on the previous day. Then, Mr Hajji Dad Mohammad, Representative of tribe and tribal groups, was introduced and invited to deliver a speech on the role of solidarity in conflict reduction and peace building, from the viewpoint of tribal groups. Mr Mohammad started his speech by asking participants a question that 'who are benefited/advantaged from the decades-long of war in Afghanistan'. Response received were similar, 'Afghan are always the victims of the war.' The consequence of war were all negative towards the life of Afghan, for

examples, the lack of education and development, instability, unsecure living condition, and nation-wide mass destruction.

He reminded participants that human being learn from the past and to avoid the same mistakes by finding an alternative solutions, so as to achieve a better life. In Afghanistan, this thinking should be put forward and emphasised, all forms of killing should be stopped without hesitation because 'every Afghan is brother and sister; let's stop accepting and following the directions imposed by the other and our enemies on us.

Mr Hajji Dad Mohammad also has explained the idea of unity in Islamic history and life stories of Prophet Mohammad. He made reference to Prophet Mohammad's governance in Arab region and added that Prophet Mohammad had worked his very best on bringing unity among Muslim. In his words, 'the ideology behind the unity is powerful- unity is the only



Speaker – Mr Hajji Dad Mohammad

power keeps nations strong, powerful and developed.'

Young teacher from Helmand Province, Mashal was also one of the speakers. He expressed his view that Afghan have went through a number of difficulties in the last three decades and the strong needs of Afghan, at least people of the Helmand Province to stand up and follow their own direction, instead of the one being imposed by enemies. He said 'we [Afghan] will not let our enemies to further influence in our country [Afghanistan] and to reach these goals [building a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan], we [Afghan] need unity and solidarity among all Afghans.'

After the speech of Mashal, Mr Mohammad Esa Fayez, principle of high school in Helmand province, had also expressed his view on the role of unity in conflict reduction and peace building, from the perspective of Islam. He said, 'if we learn from our past and strengthen the unity among all Afghan, Afghanistan can stand up proudly on her own. If we do not care about unity, we [Afghan] will suffer as we have experienced.'



Mr Abdul Ahmad Gulzad, the representative from Gerishk district of Helmand Province, delivered his speech after Mr Fayez. He attempted to summarise speeches had been delivered before, by saying, 'when I [Mr Gulzad]

Presentation during the conference

heard of the topic of the conference, I really wanted to attend and participate in such an important event.' In his presentation, he invited every single Afghan to be united and further expressed his view that the future of Afghanistan is in the hand of unity. He told participants that history had shown that intergovernmental organizations like, United Nations, NATO and other strong sovereign states all embrace and benefited from unity and cooperation is the cornerstone of development, progress and prosperity.

In the later session of the second day of the conference, Mr Abdul Wasi Jabal, a human rights activists and legal advisor, attempted to link his presentation with the theme of the conference. He expressed his view and attempted to mobilise participants that 'the only solution of the ongoing armed conflict in Afghanistan is promotion of peace process and unity among Afghans', in his words.

Day 2 – Speech given by Dr. Midhat Khafagy, a Egyptian Islamic Scholar

On the second day of the conference, Dr. Midhad Khafagy, Lecturer of the Al-Azhar University in Egypt, attended the conference and kindly served as the keynote speaker of the conference. Dr Khafagy gave a comprehensive and detailed presentation on the value of solidarity in reducing conflict and building peace, from Islamic teaching. He said that 'Allah has order all the humans for being live in unity, peace and respect.' He further added that the main streamline for all kind of success in this world is the solidarity among Muslims. Mr. Khafajee had conveyed his message of peace and unity to all Afghan with the current, critical and crucial situation of Afghanistan. In his word, 'it is the time for all Afghan brothers and sisters to leave all the misery behind, leave the past in the past and learn from the experiences they have been practice in the years of war in the country and give hands of unity to each other and support the peace and unity in Afghanistan.'

Dr Khafagy put his speech in the context of Islam teaching and said 'Islam is the religion of peace and this is the responsibility of the Muslim to proof it. There is no any logic for war in Afghanistan.' He named two different ethnic groups involved in war before the arrival of Islam in the Middle



Speaker – Dr Khafagy

East. To sustain his viewpoint, he said 'Prophet Mohammad spread the message and teaching of Islam - peace and unity – across the region. It was, indeed, Islam prevent that two ethnic groups from war and brought unity among them.'

He also mentioned that Islam teaching had never war-prone, but always insist on peace. Dr.Khafagy mentioned about the relationship between nationstate and her effective governance, in relation to unity. He added that Afghanistan shall continue friendship and unity at the first stage with its neighbouring countries and the international community should be committed to assist Afghans in bringing peace and unity in Afghanistan.

Mr. Khafagy also presented some examples and expressed the view that in nationstates which are developed and have her citizen a peaceful life and prosperity, there are strong unity between the people in that country and the government. At the end of his speech, he asked for the support of participants towards the Afghan Government and be united, and show to the world that 'Afghans are brothers and live in peace'.

Feedback Received

Interview had been conducted with individuals along the two days of the conference in Helmand province. Most of the participants were very positive about the conference and its topic. All the participants of the conference has asked for such as events in the future which can really help changed people perceptions about ongoing war in the country.

The conference was covered by National Radio Television of Afghanistan (RTA) in Helmand province.

Appendix 1 - List of key speakers

	Name	Occupation
1	Mr. Mohammad Adil	Helmand Ulema Council Representative
2	Mr. Tofan Waziri	Political Affairs Expert
3	Mr. Khalil Ahmad	Helmand Hajj Department Representative
4	Mr. Haji Dad Mohammad	Helmand Tribal Representative
5	Mr. Mohammad Javad	Helmand Ulema Council Representative
6	Mr. Mashal	School Teacher in Helmand
7	Mr. Mohammad Eisa Fayiz	School Principle in Helmand
8	Mr. Abdul Ahad Golzad	Garshak District (Helmand) Representative
9	Dr. Medhat Khafagy	Professor, Al-Azhar University, Egypt
10	Mr. Mohammad Mozmal Eslami	President of the Law Faculty of Kandahar University
11	Mr. Abdul Wase Jabal	Human Rights Legal Adviser