



CPAU (Co-operation for Peace and Unity)

Working for a sustainable culture of Peace

Kandahar Regional Speaker Program:

“FORUM KANDAHAR”

Funding Opportunity Number: SCAKAB-13-CA-003-SCA-12102012

SECOND CONFERENCE

Helmand Province – Afghanistan

Co-operation for Peace and Unity (CPAU)

Second Street Haji Yaqoob, House # 587, Shar-e-Naw, Kabul, Afghanistan

www.cpau.org.af

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the generous support of the participating Islamic Scholars, Helmand Province government officials, Dr Ebrahim Elgendy from Egypt, and CPAU staff for their the continuous effort in making preparations for the conference. Also a special thanks to the Helmand Authorities including police and other security force which provided security for the conference.

The principle of various Islamic Scholars and official participation in exchange for conference support was established early on and has generated a solid basis for the conference. It is also a continuous motivation for the organizers to strive for a higher quality in all aspects of the conference.

CPAU will also like acknowledge and thank the support of local Helmand Islamic scholars and the high peace council. Also a mention to the cultural ministry for providing information which helped form the basis of community elder's participating in the conference, which subsequently helped increase attendance and facilitation of the councils to bring about peace. Finally a warm welcome and thanks to the people of Helmand for a successful turnout, there contribution has been instrumental in maintaining and implementing a highly successful conference.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	1
Executive Summary.....	3
List of the Key Note Speakers	3
Kandahar Forum Conference in Helmand Province- First Day Activities:.....	4
Kandahar Forum Conference in Helmand Province- Second Day Activities:.....	8
Key-note Speech by Egypt scholar Dr. Ebrahim Elgendy	8
Feedback from the conference:.....	11
Challenges:.....	12
Moving forward:.....	12

Executive Summary

Within the program's scope was to seek and go beyond verbiage as evidenced in tackling the urgent needs of Loya Kandahar through education, responsibility and facilitation. The Cooperation for Peace and Unity's (CPAU) and Twan Media Productions implementation of the Greater Kandahar Forum Program(GKFP) also known as the Ulema Exchange Program have completed successfully the second conference of this project, in Helmand province. This conference was held on the 28th and 29th of October 2013 for two days, with a particular focus on the role of councils bringing about peace

Dr. Ebrahim Elgendy the esteemed Egyptian Islamic scholar presented a notable speech on importance of the councils and how countries can make peace. In this conference prominent Afghan scholars also provided speeches based on this particular topic along with other issues. In spite of the security situation in the Helmand province, a large number of its people participated in the conference, around 410. The conference included governmental organizations, civil society groups, influential elders, community representative, university professors, students, Helmand provincial council representatives and the recruited Islamic scholars.

List of the Key Note Speakers

	Name	Occupation
	Dr. Ebrahim Elgendy	Egyptian scholar in Islamic affairs
	Fazlul Bari Fayaz	Head of Helmand High Peace Council
	Qari Mokhtar Ahmad Haqani	Head of Helmand conflict resolution commission
	Shamsullah Sahray	One of the Helmand influential elders
	Molawi Mokhatar Ahmad	One of the Helmand influential elders
	Younes Mousavei	One of Syria Scholar
	Ali Shah Mazlom Yar	The head of culture and information
	Sahib Dad Mohammad	Afghan Islamic scholar,
	Adil	Influential elder

Following on from the first conference in Kandahar, the second one was conducted in Helmand with around 410 participants of which 290 were men and 120 were women. Also in attendance were government representatives, civil society organizations, influential elders, community representative, university professors, students, Helmand provincial council representatives and the international and national Islamic scholars.

Kandahar Forum Conference in Helmand Province- First Day Activities:

On the 28th and 29th of October 2013, Mr. Qazi Lodin the Kandahar office Manager, was asked to conduct the Helmand conference since he had adequate experience from the previous successful Kandahar conference. As this was major event in Helmand, the conference was covered by two popular media outlets, Channel One and RTA.

The conference was opened formally by Mr. Qazi Lodin by introducing the participants and the topics being covered. This included the main agenda of the role of Councils in providing peace in Afghanistan and the schedule of the conference, as well as the scholars giving talks during the two days. Also Mr. Ebrahim Elgendy the Islamic Scholar from Egypt, who has been invited to give a speech about the concept of council. After covering the topics and itinerary the participants recited the Holy Quran. Following on from introduction Mr. Qazi Lodin gave a speech on the importance and necessity of the Peace Councils in Islam which are mentioned in Holy Quran, and briefly highlighted CPAU current and past peace activities in different provinces and districts in Afghanistan. Especially in establishing local Peace Councils in helping to resolve conflicts and cases which intensify violence between people but to also use these councils try to revive the and build relationships from both sides of conflict.

He went on to also mention how a society with united people can bring change and do anything with proper consultation and dialogue. He provided some traditional Dari proverbs about unity, “one person can break a thin tree branch but it is difficult to break several tree branches in one place” and “all Adams are limbs of one body, so if there is a pain in one limb others can’t be calm”. In addition, he mentioned that Allah created women and men equally to live together in peaceful atmosphere away from conflict. He also mentioned that there is no difference between men or women in human dignity and social justice and how it must be respected regardless of gender because there is no superior gender and also more than one part of Quran is allocated to women. He continued this speech with a poem about unity “the good situations and opportunities come up whenever there is unity not division, and for having had an effective Council we must have the spirit of criticism and accountability to each other since human error is possible.” He added that how a council member must be responsible, pious, and impartial.

A presentation was delivered by trainers on how and what are the role of Councils throughout history and role of Councils in other countries. Over the duration of the Helmand conference, a diverse range of guest scholars and thinkers presented their perspective regarding to the role of Councils in society. On the first day the conference topics were kick started by Mr. Fazlul Bari Fayaz, Head of Helmand High Peace Council. He thanked CPAU for the conference in Helmand city and highlighted more awareness to the people about the value of the Councils for community relations and peace.

He continued on to stress in why having the Councils is an essential for Afghan people since we have had several wars in this country and now the Councils possess qualified elders and young people who can help to solve conflicts in a short time both effectively and entirely. He gave some information about the High Peace Council which is a big council with branches in provinces and districts levels and formed from diverse pool of people who are united to follow a scope of bringing peace in Afghanistan. In his speech he added some parts from the Quran which is mentioned that in order to prevent war and violence society must seek to make peace and be united. He shared some stories in which some Afghan kings have consulted there people even they had wanted to attack another country. Towards the end he provided a famous quote that “if you want to get a thing, you can go and get it” and encouraged people to come together and participate in Councils, he also thanked and requested CPAU to conduct more conferences in the future.



Photos - 1: A view of the participants in the Helmand conference

He was followed by Qari Mokhtar Ahmad Haqani the head of Helmand Conflict Resolution Commission (HCRC) he began his speech with a resonating question,

“How can we solve the conflicts in Afghanistan?” After a short silence he added that Afghanistan has experienced so much conflict that it is now one of the weakest countries in the

world. It is our right to live in peace, so we must provide the condition to bring peace by establishing councils and have a spirit of tolerance towards each other's idea and perspectives. He mentioned in his speech that we must have respect for all people even if they are not Muslim. He also talked about respect towards women and how we must not oppress them since peace start from within and if we have a peaceful family we will have a peaceful society. He also stressed the importance of the existence councils by providing some historical stories which one of them was about Mirwais who was selected by big councils as president of Afghanistan for 8 years. At the end of his speech he stressed that "we must not go to war again and it is our duty to maintain our current peace as well as help to increase it in our area".

Another speaker guests was Shamsullah Sahray, who was one of Helmand elders. He began his speech with a definition of unity that only qualified people seat together to find a solution regarding to a problem or issue neutrally. From his perspective, Afghan people like to have councils because they know how and what councils have enough power between people to make peace and solve problems. In previous history, mentioned like the others, "we had councils used Ahmad Shah Baba, one of Afghanistan kings, Zahir Shah as well addressed Mirwais Khan selection of president done by councils." In his presentation, Afghan people have had more unity before than now and it was because of councils, but now as he mentioned we need to have a strategic plan to bring peace back to our country not keep it with words only, since a huge amount of money is being allocated for the return of peace in Afghanistan. Peace brings happiness and brotherhood and we need to be aware that the war was forced upon us by others, so we must not to listen to our enemies who constantly destroy the peace in our country, so the best choice available to us is a more peace councils.

Molawi Mokhatar Ahmad, one of the Helmand elders, provided his speech about the role of councils in Afghanistan. He started his speech with some famous poems and parts from the Holy Quran relevant to the conference issues, "Plant the friendship tree not an enemy tree since it has lots of sorrows" In his approach, Afghan people like to have councils and participate in it and I am sure that they listen to the decisions which are made by these councils because all of them respect their elder's decisions but it is elder's heavy duty to take the responsibility in these councils and act neutrally. He invited those people who try to destroy peace to sit together with Afghan representatives and its people to find a solution to bring sustainable peace in Afghanistan.



Photos - 2: A view of women participants from the Helmand conference

The head of culture and information, Ali Shah Mazlom Yar, the next speaker thanked CPAU and Qazi Lodin in conducting the conference with the role of councils in Afghanistan as its main topic. As previous speakers he mentioned about council member criteria's as well as the history of councils in Afghanistan and added that we see now as a result President Mr. Karzai wants to collect and bring together big elders of councils into a consultation for peace. With the hope to sign a security contract with USA which stresses the importance of the councils in Afghanistan. He highlighted that councils there can be no room for corruption and bullying in councils, also council's members try to find the root cause of conflict and solve it so the parties involved in the do not resolve to violence, with specific mention on women's rights. He added about one important feature of current councils which prevent to do bad- practice such as Badal of Afghan women since these councils are experienced and knowledgeable. His speech highlighted Councils have enough power sometimes more than the official law to settle some unacceptable traditional practices.

The last speech- maker in the first day was Mr. Younes Mousavei who was one of Shia Scholars. He started his speech with addressing some parts of Holy Quran about the importance of council for people. To remake the role of council he asked one question about the position of councils in Islam and addressed like others some parts which allocated to this issue in Holy Quran as well as

mentioning that the United Nation as an example of a big council which is on an international level with representation from each country working together to make decisions on international issues. In addition, he added that some urgent council which were held in Afghanistan in the past and will be held in the future but he believes that “It is clear that councils are a traditional system but we must consider our values which have been lost during the last 11 years, so the outcome of the settlements of councils must be based on law and Sharia and to be a tool to serve for people.”

He added that to establish a council in Afghanistan we must understand what the responsibilities of the council are and what they should prevent to do? After a short stop, he listed some conditions for councils to work in right way, firstly by identifying and understanding the social unrest and second trying to meet the country national interests. These kind of councils would have suitable results to bring change but it is government and community to select the members of councils, members who have highly respected morals, character and ethics to make decision about the most important issues of the country, so in this perspective the member of councils must be up to date about the world issues, second he/she must be a trustee.

A summary and reflective session of the first conference was led by Qazi Lodin, it was ended with a prayer from an elder and participants were invited to the second day of the conference.

Kandahar Forum Conference in Helmand Province- Second Day Activities:

The second day of the conference began with welcoming and sharing the second day agenda and introduction to the speeches being given today by guests and by distinguished Islamic scholar from Egypt Dr. Ebrahim Elgendy. After reciting the Quran CPAUs Mr. Lodin reviewed the first day of the conference activities and focused on the topic of the role of councils in Afghanistan. The second day events were started by Afghan Islamic scholar, Sahib Dad Mohammad. He began his speech regarding to the above mentioned topic of the conference. In his approach, establishing councils to consult with people is one of Allah orders to help people to make decisions effectively as well as to provide conditions to be united in other issues, so “it is a need that we select professional and scientifically academic people to run the councils” he went on to stress.

Key-note Speech by Egypt scholar Dr. Ebrahim Elgendy

An Afghan interpreter was present with Mr. Elgendy to conduct his speech effectively and smoothly for the people of the conference. At first Mr. Elgendy expressed his warm feelings in being among the Afghan people in Helmand province as well as his appreciation from the

Afghan government and CPAU in providing the groundwork to conduct this conference and platform to share his ideas between Afghan brothers and sisters.

He started his speech formally with a definition of councils and divisions of council in two parts which can be established by government or come out from own people. In his perspective, “it is an undeniable matter that each government must consult with its own people about significant issues of the country.” He drew similarities that councils are named democracies in the west so the practices and participation of a council is the same as in the west but the naming is different. In his approach there is one highlighted difference between democracy and councils which government try to consult with people about massive issues but the local councils people not only are asked to provide consultation but also they are asked to deal with lesser domestic issues as well.

He continued his speech with one famous sentence from Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) that “my people make councils for misleading an issue”, and added that it is important to know who to select to be a qualified member in the councils which must be either a scholar, professional, engineers, doctors, politician, and social workers to offer correct and reliable consultations and the decisions made by the councils can't be excellent if we don't include them in our councils and sometimes won't be accepted as a result.



Photos - 3: Mr. Ebrahim Elgendy is giving his speech about the role of councils to bring peace

He addressed peace which can be made by people who come together to solve problems, so in short they can find the solution for conflict too. He listed some characteristics of what council members do and what they must not do as Muslims. He continued that the council members can't make decisions about obligation issues mentioned in the Quran and that decisions must be given based on the Quran, Sharia and acceptable customs.

He continues to discuss the Quran in which it explicitly mentions the role of councils e.g. Muslims must consult with each other about issues which need a decision i.e. on a family issue or problems by consulting with yours elders to come up a notable result. He summarized by

saying councils are essential in Islamic countries since we are ordered to have them to make good decisions. In addition he gave some historical examples in which how in the past some Islamic elders consulted with their people to make decision about significant issues which threatened to destabilize there societies, such as after the passing of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), all his followers came together and invited some representative from other provinces to select his successor to which they reached an agreement through consultation and reflection. Dr. Ebrahim mentions that stories from Islams past show us that we as a Muslim must follow them and consult to resolve our issues, so it is so important that if we want to create a reliable efficient decision making peace council we must know precisely about the goal of Councils and how elected members come to an agreement.

He focuses again on this issue that Councils member must not make decision about obligation issues mentioned in Quran as well sentencing laws, because it is not the rights of Councils to make law as it can interference with parliamentary work. He also provided a look into the principle maximum and minimum council decisions, of which can be can be accepted and how it can reach an agreement.



Photos - 4: Key-note speakers addressing the event

To sum up his speech he summarized by stressing the importance to select scholars, and professional people as members of councils to get the best results. After Dr. Ebrahim speech the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Dr. Ebrahim asked the participants there views why there is not unity in their country and how their country can be developed. Some responses by participants were poignant and powerful and highlight the need for more of these conferences, such as the one from a Helmand elder “we have passed wars and stayed away from education, so other countries who are not friend with us try to interfere, so councils need to help us to be united and know our enemy better.”

At the end Fazil bari Faiiaz, head of the Helmand High Peace Council requested to Dr. Ebrahim to transfer to his country: first by building a location for Afghan boys and girls to learn Holy Quran and second in providing some scholarships for Afghan youths who want to continue their Islamic education in Egypt. He accepted the request and further discussions of the transfer of Afghan people to his country for further religious education.

The second day of the conference was ended by a prayer by one of the elders and a summary of whole conference was provided by CPAU trainers for all participants.

Feedback from the conference:

The feedback given by the guests and participants about the Helmand conference was completely positive and majority of participants appreciate such events as some have not participated in any workshops like these before.

1. “I am Mohammad Sidiq Zahid, I appreciate Dr. Ebrahim coming to Afghanistan to share his thoughts and idea about Islamic issues as well as CPAU for facilitating this program. It would be great if this conference can be repeated in the future and other provinces too with inviting other scholars from other Islamic countries.”
2. Abdul Aziz, Judge, “I have not participated in anything like this conference ever, listening and learning from other foreign scholars about Islam and it was a good opportunity for me to participate in this conference and appreciate CPAU for this.”



Photos – As part of CPAU’s outreach programme Dr. Elgandy meet people from all walks of life

Challenges:

Helmand is one of the most insecure Afghan provinces which conducting such conferences without collaboration of national police is impossible. Fortunately the security of conference was taken by Helmand Police and the conference was conducted in secure condition but there is a threat for people especially those who come from other provinces.

Moving forward:

The Heart province will be the next city to conduct the third part of Kandahar Forum which will be implemented in the second week of Nov 2013. The right to education would be the main topic

of this conference, and as with previous conferences a distinguished scholar, Dr. Abdul Rahim Ali will be invited to participate and share his ideas about the mentioned topic.

Event's Photos

