



Afghanistan Policy Page

A one-page brief from the [Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub](#) on a major issue concerning U.S. policy and engagement in Afghanistan.

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National Consultative Peace Jirga 29 May 2010

Participation

The total number of participants will be about 1500. Attendees will include:

- All Members of Parliament
- Representatives from different tribes (majorities and minorities), races and regions
- One person from each district of Afghanistan (total 360) invited in consultation with district residents and government authorities
- Representatives from civil society and cultural and scholarly associations
- Afghanistan's Cleric (Ulama) Shura
- A minimum of 30 'influential women', in addition to female MPs and other female participants
- Approximately 150 other people including cabinet members and presidential advisors, UN representatives, foreign diplomats and ambassadors and other high-ranking officials will participate as observers; they will not have the right to vote.

Selection of Participants

- Provincial governors and district governors invite tribal elders to elect one popular and well-educated person among them to participate in the Jirga. The elected person must belong to the tribe which makes up the majority of the population in the area.
- Government officials do not have the right to appoint the district representatives – they must be elected by their own people.

No Taliban Involvement

- Representatives of the Taliban are not invited to the Jirga. Only the people who do not oppose Afghanistan's political system will attend to discuss whether or not to reconcile with those who are against the system.

Logistics and Processes

- Participants will arrive in Kabul three days ahead of the Jirga, with their names made public the day prior to the event. The following day, they will be briefed on the procedure for the three-day jirga.
- On the afternoon of May 29, the participants will be divided into 30 committees, each comprising 50 members.
- On the second day, the participants will decide which militant groups should be contacted for talks, and by whom. Committee members will then present their reports to the whole assembly on the final day with the aim of reaching a broad consensus.
- An Afghan government team of 250 staff headed by Education Minister Ghulam Farooq Wardak is responsible for the logistical arrangements of the Jirga.

Agenda and Objectives

Consultation, Dialogue and Agreement on Peace Talks

- The agenda will center around discussions on whether or not representatives want sustainable peace in Afghanistan; and how to establish a framework to start negotiations with the armed opposition accordingly.
- Once a framework is established the jirga will seek to agree on a mechanism through which to engage and negotiate with the armed opposition.
- A secondary purpose of the jirga will be to strengthen national unity, and form closer relations among the people of Afghanistan.

Grounds for Success or Failure

- Historically, jirgas have had great importance in Afghanistan's history and many issues have been solved through jirgas in the country. Under Najibullah's rule, several jirgas were held in alignment with the Soviets. However, the most recent 'Regional Peace Jirga' held in 2007 did not produce any substantial results.
- The Afghan people and international community are in agreement that current problems in Afghanistan cannot be solved through war. Some experts argue that the armed insurgency is also tired of fighting and is looking for a solution.
- A successful result for the Jirga will entail some kind of an agreement on a reconciliation process with the insurgency.
- Leaders of the insurgency have stated that they will hold no talks as long as foreign troops are in Afghanistan.
- The U.S. government says it does not expect the insurgents to participate in serious talks until Western troops achieve progress on the battlefield.
- Pakistan's actions on its side of the border are also crucial to the success of the Jirga. For example, the arrest earlier this year of the Afghan Taliban's number two leader, Mullah Baradar, in Pakistan could stall efforts.

Other Related Activities

- **Talks in the Maldives:** Forty-five delegates, including representatives from the Taliban, the Afghan government and major political parties, are attending talks in the Maldives this week (May 20). The meeting has been organized by Jarir Hekmatyar, the son-in-law of the insurgent leader Gulbadin Hekmatyar. President Karzai is reportedly unhappy that the talks are taking place, but has sent observers to hear what is discussed. ([Al Jazeera](#))
- **Reintegration Fund:** Donor countries at the London Conference in January 2010 pledged more than \$140 million. Afghanistan says the program could require \$1 billion over the next 3 years.
- **Hizb-e-Islami Proposal:** The insurgent faction led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has submitted a 15-point proposal for reconciliation to President Karzai.
- **Afghanistan's Neighbors:** Roles for regional players in either process are highly politicized, with complex links to the balance of power and influence in the region.
- **United Nations Efforts:** Ex-UN mission head, Kai Eide, reportedly held meetings with Taliban representatives in Dubai in January.

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