

In Focus

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Repatriating Afghan Refugees


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IF THE 21-YEAR-LONG CIVIL WAR does end in Afghanistan, the return and reintegration of over 3.5 million Afghan refugees and internally displaced people will be crucial to building long-term peace in Afghanistan and stability in Central Asia. How can such an enormous task be launched?

Helping people return to their cities and villages will be a great challenge for the new government and international relief agencies. Landmines litter the roads and countryside, where live U.S. cluster bombs are also present. Mountainous villages cannot be reached by trucks when snowdrifts close the roads. Food convoys are occasionally delayed or looted by lawless militia. Despite these difficulties, various nations have pledged \$740 million to date, and mass starvation has been averted in Afghanistan this winter.

If reconstruction is to succeed, the world's wealthiest nations will have to commit tens of billions of dollars for weapons turn-in programs, mine clearance, restarting non-opium poppy agriculture, building water and sanitation systems, and education.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) states that particular attention must be paid to the protection needs of displaced refugee women and children. These include protection against physical, sexual, and domestic violence and abuse; full and unimpeded access to food, shelter, water, health care, and education for children; and the full participation of women in refugee policy-making.

Supporting refugee populations over the last 21 years has been an enormous economic and social burden on neighboring countries. In Pakistan, for example, more than 150 refugee camps engender hopelessness and militancy, destabilizing Pakistani politics. The map on the next page shows where many Afghan refugees are located today. 

A frequently updated, online collection of links to many maps of Afghanistan (showing geography, resources, ethnic groups, military action, etc.) can be found at www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/afghanistan.html.



Timeline

September 11 and Its Aftermath: The War in Afghanistan until December 31, 2001

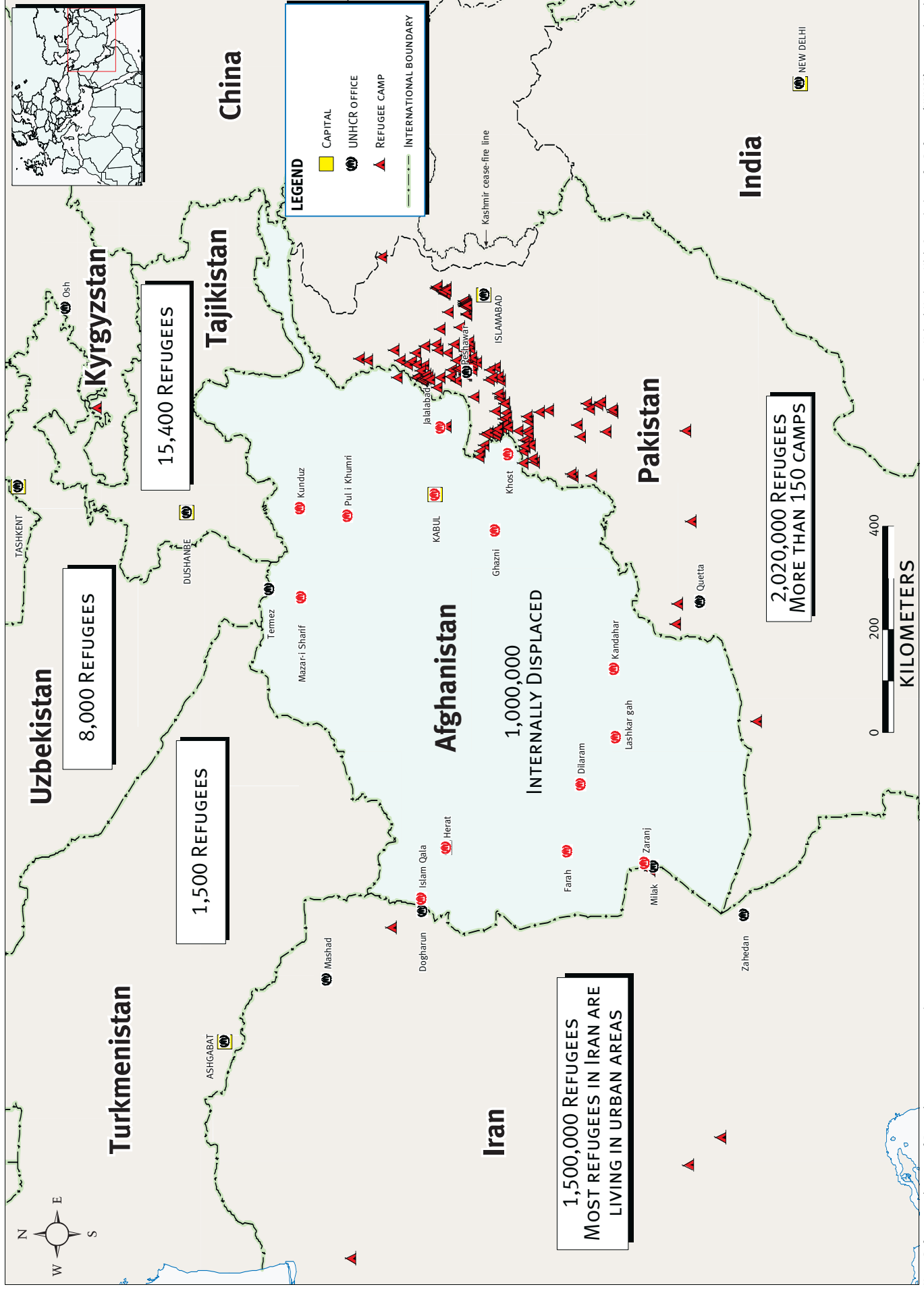
SEPTEMBER

11. Terrorists hijack 4 jetliners. Two crash into the World Trade Center in New York City; one hits the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia; and one crashes in rural Pennsylvania as passengers thwart terrorists. Thousands are killed.
12. U.S. President George W. Bush requests support from NATO and logistical backing from Pakistan in possible future military action against Osama bin Laden and his terrorist organization, al Qaeda, centered in Afghanistan.
14. The U.S. Senate approves use of military force and unanimously sets aside \$40 billion to go to war.
Later, in the House, there is only one dissenting vote.
15. Residents of the Afghan capital of Kabul, and of other cities, begin fleeing in anticipation of U.S. bombing.
16. Bush notifies leaders of Pakistan, India, and Saudi Arabia of war intentions and receives "positive responses."
19. U.S. warplanes begin flying to bases in the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.
20. Bush addresses the U.S. Congress, saying to the world, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" in a "war on terrorism."
21. The Taliban, the Muslim fundamentalist militia that rules over 80 percent of Afghanistan, refuses to surrender Osama bin Laden to the United States.
22. Saudi Arabia balks at allowing U.S. planes to use airbases, but severs relations with the Taliban.
28. UN Security Council calls on all member countries to sever financial, political, and military ties to named terrorist groups.
29. Exiled Afghan monarch Mohammed Zahir Shah meets in Rome with Afghan tribal leaders and members of the U.S. Congress to forge a common front against the Taliban.

OCTOBER

1. Car bomb set by Muslim Kashmiri separatists kills 38 people at the state legislature in Kashmir.
4. Bush commits an additional \$300 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.
6. Bomb explodes on a street in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, killing one American and several other foreigners.
7. U.S. and British air forces begin bombing targets throughout Afghanistan, including points in the cities of Kabul and Kandahar.
Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf removes senior officers in the military and intelligence who helped create the Taliban militia.
9. U.S. threatens to attack Iraq if leader Saddam Hussein attempts to assist the Taliban.
Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak voices support for U.S. war on terrorism.
Northern Alliance militia capture some districts held by Taliban in northern Afghanistan.
10. Anti-U.S. demonstrations occur throughout Indonesia.
Conference of 56 Islamic countries does not condemn U.S. war in Afghanistan, but warns U.S. not to attack other countries.
14. U.S. bombing of Taliban positions in Kabul hits food warehouse in error. Oxfam suspends all food convoys.
16. Strikes by U.S. warplanes and Northern Alliance ground fights against Taliban troops entrenched outside Mazar-i Sharif are ongoing.
17. Taliban soldiers seize UN food warehouses, disrupting distribution.
18. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell pledges support for India in its conflict with Kashmir separatists.
19. Leaders of the European Union declare their support for U.S. military action in Afghanistan.
The UN reports that 10,000 Afghans have fled to Pakistan from Kandahar over the last week.
100 U.S. Army Special Forces troops enter southern Afghanistan, which is under Taliban rule.
20. Special Forces reach Taliban leader Mohammad Omar's vacated compound near Kandahar.
21. Northern Alliance urges U.S. to step up bombing of Taliban lines near Kabul.
23. U.S. bombs Taliban troop positions, but errors hit residential areas of Herat and Kabul.
24. More than 1,000 Afghan tribal and militia leaders meet in Peshawar, Pakistan, to discuss their country's future, but key figures (such as the exiled king) boycott the meeting.
Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan pledge to expedite relief supplies into northern Afghanistan.

Afghan Refugees



Note: Refugee numbers, as of December 2001, are approximate.

Forging a New Afghanistan

STEVEN S. LAPHAM

An Interim Government

On December 22, 2001, an interim government, led by Hamid Karzai, officially became the government of Afghanistan. A 30-member executive council will rule the country for the next six months. Some members of the council will serve as ministers.

In mid-2002, a *loya jirga*, a traditional grand council with hundreds of representatives, will meet to establish a more structured transitional government. Finally, within two years, it is hoped that a new constitution will be drafted and elections held. That's the plan—but if it is to succeed, the allegiances of ethnically diverse, well-armed militia must be secured and billions of dollars in foreign aid must be obtained.

The UN-sponsored conference that created the interim government aimed for a balance of ethnic and political groups. Nineteen of the filled government posts go to representatives of the ethnic groups united under the United Front (also known as the Northern Alliance): Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmenis, and Tajiks, the last being the most heavily represented, with eight posts. Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group, located in southern Afghanistan, hold eleven posts (including the chair). Some of the ethnic and political leaders who will likely play key roles in the challenging process of rehabilitating a nation are briefly described below.

Interim Leaders and their Posts

Hamid Karzai, head of the interim government, is a leader among the Pashtun—the ethnic group to which most of the Taliban belong, and from which most of Afghanistan's national leaders in modern times have come. Karzai is the 43-year-old son of a prominent Afghan politician (his father was assassinated in 1999 while living in exile in Pakistan). Karzai is considered a political moderate and favors democracy and women's rights. He served as deputy foreign minister of Afghanistan after the Soviets left in 1992 and speaks fluent English.

In 1994, Karzai worked with the Taliban when they first restored order in the face of feuding warlords, but he soon severed ties as Taliban rule turned brutal. In 2001, Karzai and his militia, aided by U.S. airstrikes, was on the front lines, battling the Taliban near Kandahar, when representatives from Afghanistan's many factions (meeting in Germany) selected him, on December 5, to lead the interim government.

Karzai has asked the United States not to detach itself from Afghanistan as it did in 1989 after the Soviet occupation ended. Afghanistan could prove to be “a trusted friend and ally” in the future. He has also recently said, with regard to feuding ethnic groups, “The gun has to stop ruling the country.”

Karzai has awarded three key ministerial positions (defense, foreign, and interior) to ethnic Tajiks: to Mohammed Fahim, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and Yonus Qanooni, respectively—which has caused some leaders of his own and other ethnic groups to complain. In another decision that is controversial among Afghans, he chose two women as vice chairs (out of five positions at that level). Suhaila Seddiq, a Tajik, will head the Ministry of Public Health. A doctor and former general in the Afghan army (under both king and communists), her challenge is great because of Afghanistan's dire poverty following years of war and drought. Sima Samar, of the Hazara ethnic group, will oversee women's affairs.

It could be a challenge for Karzai to hold this coalition together. For example, Hussain Anwari, a Hazara leader and the minister for agriculture in the future government, said that foreign troops would be needed in Kabul and in provinces outside the capital to prevent a new round of infighting among the victors. Defense Minister Fahim, himself a militia commander, did not want peacekeeping forces to

26. Taliban capture and execute Abdul Haq, a prominent leader of the Afghan opposition in the south.
27. Iran allows U.S. to unload wheat at its ports and truck it through to refugees in western Afghanistan.
28. Gunmen kill 16 people in a Catholic church, bus bomb kills 3, in eastern Pakistan.
30. U.S. troops deployed in northern Afghanistan to coordinate airstrikes.

NOVEMBER

1. UN World Food Program says up to 6 million Afghans will need emergency food this winter.
2. U.S. warplanes hit Taliban militia that are trying to capture Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun leader organizing resistance to the Taliban (many of whom are ethnic Pashtun). Karzai's uprising, aided by U.S. Special Forces, gains strength.
U.S. air attack on a Taliban stronghold 50 miles north of Kandahar kills 25 residents in the village of Chowkar-Karez.
4. Six meetings, all aiming to establish a post-Taliban government in Afghanistan, are ongoing in different places around the world, including Cyprus, Rome, Geneva, and Peshawar in northern Pakistan.
5. Germany pledges troops to support U.S. action in Afghanistan.
6. Italy pledges troops.
7. Northern Alliance captures the northern city of Mazar-i Sharif. Taliban troops retreat or are scattered.
9. Friendship Bridge to Uzbekistan is opened.
10. Pakistan moves its nuclear weapons to secret locations to prevent sabotage or hijacking.
Osama bin Laden claims that he possesses chemical and nuclear weapons.
11. Pakistan President Musharraf warns that atrocities and anarchy would follow a Northern Alliance takeover of Kabul. Northern Alliance takes the town of Taloqan.
12. In a display of comity, U.S. Secretary of State Powell shakes hands with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi.
13. Taliban suddenly retreat from Kabul, which is overrun by Northern Alliance militia.
Special UN representative Lakhdar Brahimi sets plans for ethnic and militia leaders to meet and arrange a post-war transitional government for Afghanistan.
17. Northern Alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani returns to Kabul.
18. Karzai's militia occupies Tarin Kot, a village 70 miles north of Kandahar.
19. Northern Alliance leaders agree to meet with other Afghan factions on neutral ground, in a foreign city. Unidentified gunmen kill four journalists on a highway between Jalalabad and Kabul.
22. Northern Alliance troops begin advance on Kunduz, supported by U.S. bombing.
25. Northern Alliance captures city of Kunduz, ending Taliban rule in the northern half of the country.
Taliban prisoners overpower their guards near Mazar-i Sharif. U.S. air strikes and ground forces (with British troops) end the gun battle. First American war fatality in Afghanistan happens during the revolt.
27. Armed Russian troops arrive in Kabul to rehabilitate the embassy and deliver humanitarian aid.
In Koenigswinter, Germany, representatives of Afghan's ethnic groups and political parties call for unity in preparation for establishing a post-war government.
28. 100 U.S. troops are reported to have entered northern Afghanistan.
30. Fighting and bombing increase against al Qaeda stronghold at Tora Bora, a mountain fortress (with a complex of caves and tunnels) 45 miles southwest of Jalalabad.
Refugee agencies protest forced return of refugees by Iran and Pakistan, and warn that the absence of international security forces could prevent aid workers from delivering food.

2. U.S. Marines are deployed in southern Afghanistan and are soon joined by British and Australian troops.
4. Hundreds of residents flee Kandahar. Afghan militia begins ground assault on Tora Bora. Foreign ministers from 55 European, North American, and Central Asian countries unanimously adopt plans to fight terrorism by enhancing police cooperation and seizing suspect financial accounts. In pursuit of al Qaeda leaders, U.S. bombing error kills 5 of Karzai's militia, 3 U.S. soldiers, and 36 residents of a village near Jalalabad; Karzai is slightly wounded.
5. New Afghan interim government is announced in Bonn, Germany, with Hamid Karzai as head. Karzai is to chair a 30-member executive council, representative of Afghanistan's ethnic and political groups.
6. Afghan women's conference in Belgium calls for their full participation in any new government.
7. Taliban forces surrender, some flee the southern city of Kandahar, their last urban stronghold. Looting erupts. Local tribal leaders vie for control of the city, airport, and villages nearby. Gul Agha Shirzai, exiled former governor of Kandahar, takes over the governor's palace, forcing Naaqibullah Alokozai (who had been appointed by Karzai) to flee. General Abdurrashid Dostum, a Northern Alliance general in the city of Mazar-i Sharif, threatens to boycott Karzai's interim government over inadequate Uzbek representation. U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says the war is entering a new phase, complicated by resurgent Afghan tribal politics, a humanitarian crisis, and an intensified search for al Qaeda leadership.
9. The United States obtains a videotape of Osama bin Laden describing the World Trade Center damage as greater than he expected.
10. Karzai brokers a compromise, and Gul Agha Shirzai resumes his former position as governor of Kandahar.
11. Afghan forces overrun dozens of caves in which al Qaeda soldiers, leaders, and their families had been living in the area around Tora Bora. Northern Alliance leaders promise to cooperate with a multinational security force, but want limits to its size and duties.
12. In villages across the country, Taliban troops are surrendering and then returning home, but with "their guns and grievances intact."
13. Five assailants and nine others are killed in an attack on India's parliament, blamed on Muslim Kashmiri separatists based in Pakistan.
14. Karzai is paraded in the streets of Kabul as potential allies and foes alike pay homage to the new national leader.
15. India and Pakistan begin to amass thousands of troops and military hardware along their common border in Kashmir.
16. U.S. Embassy opens in Kabul for the first time in 12 years.
21. First British peacekeeping troops arrive in Kabul, under UN auspices, but Defense Minister Fahim declines to withdraw his militia from the city.
22. Interim national government is officially launched in Kabul with Hamid Karzai as head. Karzai appoints Dostum as deputy defense minister.
29. Al Qaeda prisoners rebel in Pakistan while being bussed to a prison.
31. UN states that mass starvation has been averted, but major problems of food supply and distribution remain.

exceed 1,000 troops or to get involved in disarming former foot soldiers. However, on December 20, the UN Security Council unanimously authorized an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to operate only in Kabul and its environs. Troops are expected to come from twelve nations and to reach 4,500 by mid-January. Although the ISAF is under the day-to-day command of the British, U.S. generals have a supreme "overwatch" role.

Political and Military Leaders

In the capital city of Kabul, Burhanuddin Rabbani, the former Afghan president and ethnic Tajik who heads the Northern Alliance, expressed displeasure with the meeting that chose Karzai to lead the interim government on December 5, but has since welcomed Karzai as the nation's leader. Rabbani's cooperation with the new government could be crucial to its winning the allegiance of the disparate Northern Alliance factions.

Militia leaders of the Northern Alliance, who fought one another in the ruinous civil war of the 1990s, coalesced to defeat the Taliban (who were largely ethnic Pashtuns from the south). Although most of the Northern Alliance warlords have expressed basic support for Karzai's post-war government, it is often unclear (as we go to press) how much power they will be willing to turn over to it in the regions under their control. For example, Uzbek warlord and former communist army officer Abdurrashid Dostum, who has resumed his rule of Mazar-i Sharif, threatened not to cooperate with Karzai. But Karzai appointed him deputy defense minister, which may neutralize him.

The militia of Mohammad Daoud Khan controls the northern cities of Kunduz and Taloqan. The middle of the country has returned into the hands of Muhammad Karim Khalili, a leader of the Hazara ethnic group. To the west, the Tajik former-governor of Herat, Ismail Khan, has taken control of that city. His son has been appointed minister of labor and social welfare in the new government.

In the south, a Pashtun leader who had cooperated with Taliban rule, Gul Agha Shirzai, resumed his post as governor of Kandahar against Karzai's wishes, but the two worked out a compromise, which left Shirzai in charge of the city. A Pashtun leader who is head of the Ittihad-i-Islami [Islamic Unity] Party, Abdul-Rasul Sayyaf, wanted, but did not receive, the interior department, which controls domestic security. The Pashtun leader of the National Front of Afghanistan, Sayed Ahmad Gailani, says that the Cabinet does not fairly represent those who fought the Soviet occupation of the 1980s.

The aging but popular exiled king, Mohammed Zahir Shah (currently living in Rome) will open the loya jirga in the summer of 2002 to set up a more established transitional government. Even that symbolic role for Pashtun royalty is opposed by some members of other ethnic groups and those with republican convictions. The ex-king is often represented at meetings by his grandson, Mustapha Zahir, or by his military representative, Rahim Wardak.

The United Nations

As the war winds down, the UN has been active in international efforts to bring about internal political agreement in Afghanistan and to help move the country forward. Lakhdar Brahimi, UN special representative for Afghanistan, brokered the agreement in Bonn to establish the interim government. The UN Security Council authorized the deployment of an international security force in Kabul (as described above). UN agencies have raised funds to launch that government and averted mass famine through record deliveries of wheat. The UN's continued participation in reconstruction of the country—whose challenges range from helping Afghans create a national jurisprudence to promoting a peaceful and opium-free economy—may be crucial for the future of the nation. 🗺

Sources: *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, Center for Defense Information (www.cdi.org/terrorism/afghan-transition-pr.cfm), "After the Taliban" (news.bbc.co.uk).

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