Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Ministry of Justice

National Stability Society

PRESS RELEASE

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National Stability Society's (NSS) Press Release on its Opposition to Decentralization, Increase of Foreign Troops Levels, Weak governance, and Pakistan's Recent Allegations

National Stability Society (NSS) is an Afghan organization that supports Islamic values, peace, national integration, and democratic processes in Afghanistan. Therefore, we express our core stance, once again, through this press release on a number of recently debated political issues.

1. NSS is strongly opposed to the decentralization of Afghanistan, which has been promoted by some political figures in order to safeguard their own family interest. NSS considers the debate on creating a federation in Afghanistan, during this critical time, irresponsible. The central government is facing an intense resistance from an insurgency while being caught in the middle of regional conflicts and interests. Afghanistan's nascent state institutions are weak. Parts of the country are run by warlords and their militias or are under attack by rebel groups. This requires further strengthening of a strong centralized government that can defend itself against external threats and build an internal governmental infrastructure that is not fractured based on local interests.

   Further, NSS believes the current debate on decentralization is a disguised debate to fuel ethnic politics and the disintegration of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, some foreign dignitaries' have also advocated for decentralization, which NSS believes is beyond their diplomatic mandate. We consider this clearly against the Afghan constitution, which represents the highest principal of Afghan sovereignty. We propose that political figures, instead of promoting self-serving financial interests, advocate for lessening the economic divide that exists between the urban and rural population and contribute to a sound governing infrastructure and bureaucracy.

2. The recent suggestion by Gen. John W. Nicholson, commander of the American-led international military force in Afghanistan, to the USA Senate Armed Services Committee about increasing foreign troop's levels will never solve Afghanistan's security challenges.NSS considers Afghanistan's past experience with foreign military presence inside the country and believes it will never prove beneficial to win war against terrorism. NSS considers equipping and assisting the Afghan government and its security forces with modern day warfare tools is the most favorable option for international community. As proven, the recent paradigm shifts in new regional alliances make it challenging for Afghan government due to the Bilateral Security agreement between U.S and Afghan government to alter its foreign policy in a way that doesn't compromise its integrity. However, given the gains that have made, both the international community and the Afghan

government should also stand with firm in their commitment to one another to ensure terrorism is a threat to the entire world.

3. Within the past two and half years, the Afghan government has a number of achievements in foreign policy, customs/tax revenue collection, and decreasing corruption. However, in term of good governance, the challenges and issues the government faces are numerous. The stable future of Afghanistan lies in the pursuit of the fair and transparent nature of good governance. Nepotism, unprofessionalism, political interference, and ethnic favoritism in the appointment of public officials are the main hurdles facing good governance. For example, more than fourty thousand civil service posts remain vacant. Due to previously above stated hurdles; it has caused government inefficiency that now has become cyclical.

   This weak pattern of inefficiency will remain in place and good governance impacted unless changes are made. For example, the Civil Service Commission and Independent Directorate of Local Governance are the most important state institutions for public and local service. Yet, these institutions are still run by temporary heads. The Afghan government should appoint the planned heads to these core state institutions as soon as possible. Also, more than 100 districts are still run by temporary serving Chief District Officers. Apart from those at the district level, numerous provinces are being run through ad hoc appointed governors and deputy governors, which further impact good governance and making governing itself complex. At the higher levels, even after more than two years, the government still has acting ministers in cabinet, which sets the bad example of weak governance at all levels.

   Unfortunately, the list goes on. Parliament completed its legal tenure on June 21, 2015, but still parliamentary election seems in limbo due to security and other governance issues. Yet, regardless of when elections are held, NSS also maintains President Ghani needs to select the appointive members for The House of Elders or Mashrano Jirga (Afghan Senate) along with the distinguished members of Supreme Court. We strongly suggests to the Afghan government and the President to take issue of weak governance seriously in this winter season. Otherwise, again, the upcoming summer season might prove more challenging in security context and will create a different supplementary cycle of challenges to good governance.

4. Pakistan, in the knee jerk response, to the recent terrorist attacks in Lahore and Sehwan alleged Afghanistan supported terrorist safe heavens. Pakistan, almost immediately, closed its border with Afghanistan in a clear violation of the Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. Apart from this, senior Afghan diplomat were summoned to General Headquarters, which NSS considers completely against diplomatic norms. Before taking such overtly aggressive steps, Pakistan should focus on why it has been in non-compliance of the National Action Plan (NAP). Pakistan should honestly support Afghan government and the Afghan reconciliation process for regional peace and cooperation rather than pursuing its well-recognized policy of "Strategic Depth."

NSS has confidence that its recommendations will not only benefit the Afghan people, but also the prestige of the Afghan nation while pursuing the goals of regional peace with enduring partnership with the rest of the world.