

# Peaceful solution to the Afghan issue

## Statement by the Taliban Political Office in Qatar

M. Suhail Shaheen

Suhail Shaheen was educated at Kabul University and is a fluent English speaker and prolific writer. He edited the English-language, state-owned *Kabul Times* during the Islamic Emirate of

Afghanistan, before being appointed Deputy Ambassador at the Afghan Embassy in Pakistan. He now serves as spokesman for the Taliban Political Office in Qatar.

### ABSTRACT

**What pathways does the Taliban's Political Office in Qatar see towards a political solution to violent conflict in Afghanistan?**

M. Suhail Shaheen, Spokesman for the Political Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, puts forward a Taliban perspective on prospects for a negotiated end to the violence and inclusive governance.

For the last 16 years, a relentless war has been going on in Afghanistan instigated by America, under a pretext in which the Afghans were not involved. Even so, no accepted and impartial entity has conducted an investigation regarding the war as yet. But consequently, it is the Afghans who have been the victims in terms of human lives and resources.

This meaningless war should come to an end. However, the plausible question arises, how? In our view, as the war is currently in full swing in Afghanistan and the country is practically occupied, there is a need for measures which will catapult the country out of the prevailing war and pave the way for the establishment of a future system of government reflecting the Islamic and national aspirations of the people of Afghanistan.

However, the main obstacle in this regard is the existence of the occupation. If the occupation ends, then the Islamic Emirate believes in the political resolution of issues. This is to put an end to the fighting once and for all and bring about an inclusive Islamic system representing all Afghans, in which none will feel marginalised or deprived. To achieve this, there is need for a period of restoration of security so that the Afghan nation may take a breath of relief, and Afghans can consider the pattern of an Islamic *Shura* system – a comprehensive framework that is the outcome of the sacrifices of the past four decades and that reflects their aspirations. Furthermore, all factors that have led to the current war situation and sufferings should be stopped.

Occupation is the cause and the war is the effect. When the cause ends, or there is a guarantee to end it, the effect of the military operations will itself come to an end.

We want termination of the occupation as soon as possible. But this depends to a great extent on the USA: how soon it can stop the war and let peace and stability return to Afghanistan. Similarly, it is pity that the current regime has been established at the behest of foreigners and based on racial cliques and factions. It doesn't represent all of the people; merit has not been taken into account as a criterion for inclusion in the government, but rather vested interests have played a crucial role. That is why

the Afghans do not feel a sense of being independent or that the regime is their own. So, the occupation needs to be replaced by independence – an independent Afghan inclusive government should come into being in place of the current regime, or at least guarantees that such a system will be established. Then Afghans will both feel independent and view the regime as their own.

In a nutshell, we believe negotiation is the best way to resolve the Afghan issue because it is through this process that we can resolve the issues without bloodshed. This has periodically been emphasised and elucidated in the official statements and annual Eid messages of our leadership.

It is also a reality that in the circumstances of occupation, the USA is the main party to the conflict. The key to the solution of the issue lies in the hand of the main party. But, this doesn't mean the Kabul Administration is not a party to the conflict. It is a party. However, we want to talk with the American side on some main issues and talk with Kabul about government formation. No question, they are Afghans and a party to the imbroglio. Furthermore, the Kabul Administration has not announced openly that they have the power to decide about or implement withdrawal of foreign troops or can give a guarantee as to their withdrawal. That is why not to discuss with them some main issues like the occupation which is not in the ambit of their authority and could not lead to any result, because we think they are not able to independently take a decision about the foreign forces' withdrawal. Of course, as Afghans, it is their right to be heard and their views taken into account and have participation in the service of the country as well as in the government.

So any ice-thawing initiative in Afghanistan depends on the USA to a great extent. If America changes its current posture of warfare, the war situation on the ground will change simultaneously. Afghans will find an opportunity to sit around a table and resolve their problems and start a peaceful life. The withdrawal of foreign troops is a 'spinal cord' for solving the problem. Conversely, the longer the occupation continues, the longer the war will prolong. That is why we can say both the intensification of the war and its de-escalation are linked with the occupation.

To resolve the Afghan issue through peaceful means, it is also necessary to create a conducive atmosphere of

confidence, ie removal of the blacklist, opening of the office and exchange of prisoners. All these provide scaffolding for negotiation and help both sides to gain trust in the tangibility of negotiation.

**“ Once this preliminary phase is surpassed, it will open a new vista for a peaceful solution and turn the long-cherished dream of peace into a reality.”**

Regional countries too can play a role in this regard, including international organisations like the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Conference. However, it is a fact that currently the American policy is a main obstacle, decoupling us from the peace process. The US raises the slogan of a peaceful solution on the one hand but has in practice embarked on a military approach on the other, bringing new units of troops and tranches of weapons to Afghanistan from Iraq and other countries. Their President still openly says 'we do not want to have peace talks with the Taliban'. Such a contradictory approach intentionally plays havoc with the lofty aim of peace. Still more, the US regularly bombs and carries out night raids and claims that they want to bring Taliban to the negotiation table through pressure. In practice, all these actions provoke reactions, leading to intensification and prolongation of the war. This is a repeated, empty 'panacea' tested over the past one-and-a-half decades, which has utterly failed.

It will be appropriate for America to spend the money on peace and rehabilitation which it is now spending on war. As a pragmatic gesture, it should announce an end to occupation or give a date of withdrawal, then bring all their security concerns and other matters of interests to the table for discussion. The Islamic Emirate is ready to listen to their concerns and demands and discuss with them all. However, the Americans should also admit the legitimate rights of the Afghan Muslim people. Once this preliminary phase is surpassed, it will open a new vista for a peaceful solution and turn the long-cherished dream of peace into a reality. We hope this to happen at the earliest, for a peaceful and prosperous tomorrow for Afghanistan.