

## **Afghan Youth Debates: Afghanistan Like "Sick Patient"**

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A leading civil society activist from the southern Helmand province has compared Afghanistan to a sick patient requiring urgent medical assistance.

Agha Mohammad Quraishi said an enormous amount of work was needed to help put the country on a path towards peace and prosperity. It would take an exceptional "doctor" to cure the nation's ills, he said.

Addressing some 100 students at an IWPR debate, Quraishi urged all voters to carefully scrutinise the policy platforms of the remaining two candidates in the June 14 presidential run-off. Afghans had a duty to "elect a leader who will fulfill our wishes", he said.

The IWPR debate took place on June 9 at Helmand University. Panellists including Sher Khan Omari, director of youth affairs in the Nad Ali district, and Ajmal Dawar, regional chairman of the Youth Labour Council, were asked to discuss the qualities that voters should look for in their new president.

Dawar told the audience to focus on a few key attributes. He said President Hamed Karzai's successor should be well educated, a good Muslim, and have effective, realistic ideas about how to improve the lives of all Afghans. In addition, he suggested that the ideal candidate should not have played any part in the conflicts of the past three decades.

"During their presidential campaigns, the candidates have explained their platforms and policy programmes," he told students. "Now it's up to the nation to decide who it trusts and who it should elect as president."

Munir Ahmad, a literature student at Helmand University, asked the panel about the danger that ethnic tensions could colour voting patterns and divide Afghan society.

Turalay Rahmani, a spokesman for Helmand University students, responding by saying he believed better educational standards were the only real answer to ensuring unity. Once people benefitted from improved schooling, he argued, the ideas of compassion and reconciliation would prevail.

**Mohammad Wali Zirk is a student at Helmand University and an IWPR trainee.**

*This report was produced as part of **Open Minds: Speaking Up, Reaching Out - Promoting University and Youth Participation in Afghan Elections**, an IWPR initiative funded by the US embassy in Kabul.*

**Location:** [Afghanistan](#)

**Topic:** [Elections](#)

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