

Afghan Youth Debates: Public Must Vote For Change

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The owner of an independent high school in the southeastern Afghan province of Khost has urged his students to back the forthcoming presidential run-off and help secure the country's future.

Khalil Zadran told pupils that opting out of the June 14 run-off would mean turning their backs on democracy and assisting "the enemies of development". Speaking at an IWPR debate held at Amanullah Khan High School, he said a successful election was essential to peace, progress and prosperity.

"If Afghans withdraw from the process, we will have no right to complain about the kinds of problems we might suffer from in the future," he argued.

Zadran added, "If the election is held transparently and without any problems then this will lead to peace as well as the defeat of the enemies of development. If, God forbid, the election runs into problems, it will not only be an Afghan failure but also a failure of the international community as they've spent so much money here over the past 13 years in the name of democracy."

The IWPR debate took place on May 28 and focused on the improvements that needed be made to the electoral process to ensure continued voter interest in the second round.

A number of students called on officials from the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to crack down on staff who participated in ballot fraud.

Others warned against voting for a candidate purely on the basis of ethnic background. The country would be stronger if all Afghans worked together, they said.

One debate participant, Abdul Manan, spoke out to emphasize the importance of generating greater public awareness ahead of the June 14 vote. He claimed that villagers in many districts remained unaware a run-off was taking place.

Aziz Ahmad, a student, agreed. He accused the candidates' campaign teams of attempting to split the vote along ethnic lines.

"Candidates must not use ethnicity or Islam to attract voters," he said. "They should only seek support based on their policy platforms. I believe those who use ethnicity as a method of attracting votes are effectively admitting to their own ignorance."

Mohammad Adel is a student at Khost University and an IWPR trainee.

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Location: [Afghanistan](#)

Topic: [Elections](#)

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