

## **Complaints at Afghan "Model Prison"**

**Author:** [Ahmad Shah Jawad](#)

Officials at Uruzgan's purpose-built jail accept there is too little money for food, but say it is the same all over the country.

Inmates at a new model prison in Uruzgan province say conditions are poor, with inadequate nutrition and inhumane conditions.

Local officials accept that there are problems but say they are trying to sort them out.

Inmates were transferred into the purpose-built prison in the main provincial town, Tarin Kowt, two months ago, from the old, cramped facilities where they were held previously. There are currently 130, all male.

They complain that they are still being held six or seven to a cell designed for four, that food and healthcare provision are poor, that no provision is made for recreation and education, and that they not allowed to pray together in the prison mosque.

One inmate, Mohammad Anwar, said he has never had enough to eat.

"If the government is unable to feed us, it should allow our families to bring us food from home, or let us get [cooking equipment] so we can start cooking for ourselves," he said.

Mojahed, waiting in the shade of a wall to visit his father and brother in the prison, said they complained of hunger.

"Whenever I eat food at home on the table, I immediately think of my father and brother and I swear to God that I don't enjoy eating," he said. "If the government won't increase the amount of money allocated for prison food, it should allow us to bring in food."

Mohammad Anwar said the official allocation for the entire prison was the equivalent of 150 US dollars a day, which had to feed the warders as well as all the convicts.

"That isn't enough to buy dry bread for the prisoners," he said.

The acting prison governor, Colonel Ahlullah, acknowledged the sums earmarked for food were too small. Asked why staff could not eat elsewhere, he outside as well while the prisoners were there 24 hours, merely said, "This is a problem all over Afghanistan."

The governor said bringing in food and cooking utensils was banned for fear that concealed drugs and weapons might be smuggled in, and that utensils might be used to escape.

Officials at the provincial justice department agreed the funding levels were problematic, but said they were the same as in other parts of the country. The department's head, Sayed Mahmud Sadat, said had informed his superiors about the issues.

"We had a meeting with the justice minister about the issue recently... He is going to address the problem in future," he said.

Another prisoner, Asadullah, complained about the ban on visiting the mosque inside the facility, saying, "I haven't prayed in the mosque since I came to the prison. Every Muslim is allowed to perform religious obligations... but they don't allow us to."

Governor Ahlullah said the ban on collective prayer was to prevent unrest or a mass escape attempt.

"We don't yet have confidence in the security situation and safety inside the prison."

The head of the provincial justice department, Sayed Mahmud Sadat, echoed the governor's security concerns and added that the mosque was new and had no rugs for people to pray on yet.

After IWPR raised concerns about conditions in the jail with him, provincial governor Mohammad Omar Sherzad promised to set up a special team to visit the prison, look at conditions there and find solutions.

On health issues, Mohammad Anwar said a doctor saw inmates once a week and conducted only cursory checks. If anyone fell ill overnight, they had to wait until morning.

"There's one tablet that the doctor gives everyone for all kind of illnesses. There are no other medicines."

Sadat said the doctors' visits actually took place twice a week, although he accepted that the lack of a clinic was a "major problem".

Another common complaint is the lack of privacy for visits by female relatives

"Islam requires every Muslim woman to conceal her face from strangers, but when our women come here, we do not have an appropriate place to see their faces." Mohammad anwas

Asked about this, Sadat said "We will make a decision on meeting rooms for women shortly."

**Ahmad Shah Jawad is an IWPR-trained reporter in Uruzgan province.**

**Location:** Pakistan  
Afghanistan

---

**Source URL:** <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/complaints-afghan-model-prison>