

## **Northern Candidates Set out Their Stall**

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Security and fair representation a common theme in policy statements from three of the presidential contenders.

In an election currently scheduled for early October, voters will select a president to lead them toward peace and stability after more than two decades of war and nearly three years of interim government.

Whoever is elected will face several tough challenges - a rising Taliban insurgency in the south and east, warring militias, simmering ethnic tensions, and a broken economy.

Hamed Karzai, the American-backed transitional president, appears certain to win the contest. But he faces a number of challengers - three of them from the north of the country alone.

IWPR asked the three to describe their policies and views on the future of the country, focusing on security, the reconstruction process, and relations with other countries.

Emranuddin Mehran Ansari, 50, was born in Balkh province and is a former engineer. He was part of the mujahedin from 1980 to 1994. During the Taliban years, he sought refuge in Iran and Pakistan. He is now technical director of the shrine dedicated to the Imam Ali at Mazar-e-Sharif.

Asked what he would do about security, he said, "I will bring all gunmen in the militias into the national army and national police, so that the army can protect our borders and the police can ensure security inside the cities and people can live normally."

Ansari has strong views on the role played by non-government organisations, NGOs, in the reconstruction process.

"I am completely against NGOs, as they have failed to fulfil what is needed for the country. So I would use our own government departments to work for the reconstruction of the country, with assistance from foreign governments. I will activate factories so that jobs are created and all the needs of people are provided for."

On international relations, he said, "As Afghanistan has had friendly relations with all the countries in the world, I will try to keep these relations. I will ban the cultivation of poppies and [other] drugs in Afghanistan."

Dr Mohammad Akram Toofan Sahibi was born in the Andkhoy district of Jowzjan province. He has a master's degree in medicine and is a lecturer at Balkh medical college. He played an active role in the establishment of a public association called Junbish Jawanan (Youth Movement) in Kabul.

Sahibi believes offering jobs to former soldiers is paramount if disarmament is to work.

"As a first step, I will put the disarmament process into practice all around the country, on an equal basis,"

he said. "But those who are disarmed should be given jobs, so that they know that there are other ways of living, without carrying a gun. In this regard, I will open factories that are needed for our country, and in this way we can find jobs for the disarmed men. I will establish the national army and police to respond to the peoples' needs."

Sahibi wants an efficient administration that spends money where it is needed. He said, "First of all I will reform the ministries and local administration, taking into consideration people's talents and effectiveness - not recommendations from relations."

"I will also try to spend foreign aid and donations, which are for Afghans, and for their needs. It means that in spending the money for the reconstruction of the country, I will honour the decisions of Afghan people."

He is keen to see Afghanistan integrated into the world community, saying, "I will have friendly relations with all countries in the world. But I stress [that other states ought] not to interfere in each other's affairs. As the world is moving towards improvement, I will ask the United Nations not to forget Afghanistan, and to bring it along together with other countries."

Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, 49, is a leading figure in Hizb-e-Wahdat, the main party representing the Shia Hazara community. After studying Islamic sciences, he joined the mujahedin following the Soviet invasion of 1979. Formerly the Hizb-e-Wahdat leader in northern Afghanistan, he served as planning minister in the interim government before being dismissed in March 2004.

Mohaqiq called for strengthened security and a fairer system of representation. "My priorities are strengthening the national army and police, speeding up the disarmament process equally, and resolving tribal and partisan conflicts in a just manner. We also need to strengthen democracy in the government system," he said.

"Provincial governors, district governors, and mayors should be elected by the people, not appointed by the government. I will speed up the reconstruction process equally all around the country."

Mohaqiq said he has programmes to create employment, and supports a policy of equal pay for the same work. His other priorities include improving health services and transport and rebuilding roads. He also promised to build up the economy and industrialise the country. He said he would move to end illiteracy and drug cultivation.

On foreign relations, Mohaqiq said he supports impartial relations with other countries, and rejects interference by other nations in Afghan affairs.

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