

# CLAWS Newsletter



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## **DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS**

### **1. Torkham Border Closure Disrupts Trade Between Afghanistan and Pakistan ([Khaama Press](#), [TOLO News](#), 1 March 2025)**

The Taliban's Ministry of Industry and Commerce has criticized Pakistan's closure of the Torkham border, calling it a violation of international trade laws that harms both Afghan and Pakistani traders and citizens. The closure has caused significant disruptions, with thousands of people and goods stranded on both sides. Spokesperson Abdul Salam Jawad Akhundzada warned that continued economic barriers could worsen relations between the two nations. Akhundzada also urged Pakistan to reconsider its position and work towards a comprehensive solution to reopen this critical trade and travel route. The Taliban is actively engaging in diplomatic talks to address the issue and ensure that the Torkham crossing remains open to benefit both countries' economies.

### **2. Afghan TV Station Resume Broadcast After Taliban Shutdown ([Arab News](#), 2 March 2025)**

An Afghan television station, Arezo TV, has resumed operations after being forcibly shut down by the Taliban's Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV) in December 2024. The station's seals were removed in the presence of ministry officials, station head Bassir Abid confirmed, allowing the outlet to return to air. However, the Taliban has not provided any explanation for the reopening. The channel was initially accused of receiving support from exiled media and violating Islamic values. Seven of its employees were arrested but later released, though the station remained shuttered for months. The Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) welcomed the resumption of broadcasts but condemned the closure as a "flagrant violation of free media rights that should not have happened."

### **3. Mujahid: Arrest of Kabul Airport Attack Mastermind in Pakistan Reveals ISIS Safe Havens ([Khaama Press](#), 5 March 2025)**

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban's spokesperson, responded to comments made by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and U.S. President Donald Trump regarding the arrest of the mastermind behind the 2021 Kabul airport attack. Mujahid stated that the arrest in Pakistan exposed ISIS safe havens within the country. In an audio message on March 05, he emphasised

that the attack was carried out by ISIS and that their operatives have found refuge and training camps in certain countries. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif confirmed the mastermind was an ISIS-Khorasan member and Afghan citizen, while Trump acknowledged the cooperation between Pakistan and the U.S. in capturing him.

**4. Green Legacy: Nationwide Tree-Planting Initiative Kicks Off in Kabul ([TOLO News](#), 5 March 2025)**

The Kabul Municipality and the National Environmental Protection Agency have launched a tree-planting initiative titled 'Green Legacy' in Kabul. The Deputy Minister of Agriculture announced that 16 million saplings will be planted nationwide this year during the course of the program. He emphasised, "The Ministry of Agriculture has initiated a tree-planting campaign across all provinces, with plans to plant 16 million saplings throughout the country." Officials from both the National Environmental Protection Agency and the Kabul Municipality shared their plans for planting a variety of trees, including both fruit-bearing and non-fruit-bearing types, and encouraged citizens to actively join this important effort.

**5. Water Diversion Dams Completed in 142 Districts ([TOLO News](#), 5 March 2025)**

The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development has announced the completion of small water diversion dams in 142 districts across various provinces of the country. Noorulhadi Adel, the ministry's spokesperson, revealed that the total cost of constructing these dams was 126 million Afghani, funded through the ministry's budget. "We initiated the construction of small dams and alternative water projects in 142 districts, all of which are now finished and will directly benefit our citizens. These projects were completed at a cost of about 126 million afghani," he said. Experts have highlighted the importance of these small dams in advancing rural agriculture and enhancing groundwater levels. Additionally, Adel shared that the ministry has provided 350 drinking water networks across 34 provinces, with 150 more networks currently under development.

**6. Afghanistan Experiences Decline in Terrorism, Ranks 9<sup>th</sup> on 2025 Index ([TOLO News](#), 6 March 2025)**

The Institute for Economics & Peace has reported a decrease in terrorism levels in Afghanistan in its 2025 Global Terrorism Index, following the rise of the Islamic Emirate to power.

According to the report, Afghanistan has not been among the top five countries most affected by terrorism for the second consecutive year, now ranking ninth. The Institute for Economics & Peace noted, “For the second year in a row, Afghanistan is not among the five countries most impacted by terrorism, marking its best ranking since the Index’s creation.” The report also emphasises that under nearly four years of Islamic Emirate rule, the country has maintained relative internal stability. Furthermore, the Islamic Emirate has assured that security is upheld across the nation and that Afghan soil does not pose a threat to any other country.

#### **7. Islamic Emirate: Women’s Rights in Islamic and Western Cultures Are ‘Different’ ([TOLO News](#), 8 March 2025)**

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, the Islamic Emirate emphasised the protection of women’s rights within the framework of Islamic principles. Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, stated that the rights of Afghan women in an Islamic society are distinct from those in Western countries. Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, conveyed in an audio message on women’s rights: “In accordance with Islamic law and the customs of Afghan society, all fundamental rights of Afghan women are safeguarded. However, it is important to recognize that we discuss women’s rights within the context of an Islamic and Afghan society, which differs significantly from Western society and its culture.” International Women’s Day, celebrated globally on March 08, highlighted the themes of rights, equality, and empowerment for all women and girls.

#### **8. UNODC Reports Tenfold Increase in Afghanistan’s Opium Prices ([TOLO News](#), 13 March 2025)**

A recent UNODC report reveals that Afghanistan’s opioid reserves at the end of 2022 were estimated at around 13,200 tons, a quantity that could meet the demand for Afghan opium until 2027. According to the report, by 2024, the price of one kilogram of opium in Afghanistan had reached \$750. Despite a decline in production, high opium prices continue to benefit major traffickers. The UNODC further noted that the reduction in drug production following the Islamic Emirate’s ban has led to a decrease in heroin and opium trafficking, with seizures of these substances dropping by approximately 50% since 2021.

“Dry opium prices in Afghanistan have sharply increased on several occasions over the last three years. The long-running average was around US\$75 per kilogram before the DfA took

over. In the latter half of 2021 until the announcement of the drugs ban in April 2022, trade prices for a kilogram of opium increased to around US\$110. Prices jumped to around US\$300 a kilogram at the beginning of the following season's sowing period in 2023. By the start of the sowing period for 2024, prices had jumped to ten times higher than the long-running pre-ban average and about four times higher than when the ban was announced," the report reads.

**9. Herat Commemorates 46th Anniversary of Uprising Against Communist Regime  
([TOLO News](#), 14 March 2025)**

March 14 marked the 24<sup>th</sup> of the solar month of Hoot, where the people of Herat gathered to commemorate the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their bloody uprising against the communist regime. Hundreds of Herat residents, along with local officials and former Mujahideen, gathered to honour this significant day. During the ceremony, Herat officials addressed political pressures from various countries, including the United States, on the Islamic Emirate. They emphasised that such pressures are ineffective and urged these nations to learn from Afghanistan's history. Noor Ahmad Islamjar, the Governor of Herat, stated, "At times, some uninformed individuals speak nonsense. One moment they talk about wanting Bagram, the next they demand tanks and guns. But such talk will lead nowhere. We urge those few wise people in the White House to bring their misguided individuals to their senses and learn from Afghanistan's history."

## **IN THE WORLD**

### **1. China and Russia Hold Talks on Afghanistan and Regional Security ([Khaama Press, Afghanistan International](#), 1 March 2025)**

China and Russia recently held talks in Beijing, focusing on Afghanistan and regional security, intending to strengthen strategic cooperation. Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met on February 28 to discuss security cooperation, regional concerns, and Middle Eastern issues. They agreed to initiate a new round of strategic security talks in the future, although specific details on Afghanistan were not disclosed. Despite not formally recognizing the Taliban government, both countries maintain strong diplomatic and economic ties with the group. The meeting underscores the growing partnership between Russia and China in regional security matters.

### **2. EU Reaffirms Commitment to Ongoing Assistance for Afghanistan ([Khaama Press](#), 2 March 2025)**

The European Union has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Afghanistan, emphasising aid in critical sectors despite the ongoing political and humanitarian challenges. Senior EU officials visited Kabul on 1 March to underscore the EU's dedication to key areas such as education, healthcare, and economic development. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, the EU has allocated over €903 million in aid, ensuring assistance reaches those in need via UN agencies and NGOs. Despite significant foreign withdrawals, the EU remains one of the few international missions actively operating in Afghanistan.

### **3. Denmark donates over \$6 million to Afghanistan ([Khaama Press](#), 4 March 2025)**

Denmark has contributed \$6.9 million to the Afghanistan Special Trust Fund, a significant step in supporting the country amidst its ongoing humanitarian crisis. Announced on March 04 via [a post on the trust fund's X account](#), the donation is seen as vital for aiding the most vulnerable Afghans, particularly women and girls. This contribution will help empower Afghan citizens, especially in education and employment opportunities. Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that 22.9 million people in Afghanistan will need humanitarian aid in 2025.

**4. Germany to Continue Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan ([German Federal Foreign Office](#), 4 March 2025; [Khaama Press](#), 5 March 2025)**

Germany's Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, announced that Germany will continue providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, including food and healthcare, through international organizations, ensuring no involvement of the Taliban. On March 04, Baerbock reaffirmed Germany's commitment to supporting the Afghan people and addressing their humanitarian needs. Reports from UNICEF and OCHA highlight the severe crisis in Afghanistan, with 22.9 million people expected to need aid by 2025 due to conflict, economic instability, and climate disasters. UNICEF stresses the urgent need for international support to help Afghanistan's vulnerable population.

Making a speech at the Civil Society Consultation on Afghanistan's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Baerbock also said that the Taliban are building a "social dungeon" for Afghan women which "must not be seen by the outside world." She went on to give a message to all of the women and girls in Afghanistan: "We are not forgetting you. This conference is about you. Our work is about you. We hear you. And we stand by your side."

**5. Afghan Military Protest Return of US Weapons ([Ariana News](#), 09 March 2025)**

A group of former Afghan government officials and soldiers gathered in Kabul to protest against Donald Trump's demand for the return of military equipment left behind during the US withdrawal. The protesters argued that the weapons and equipment belong to Afghanistan, and the US should compensate for damages caused during its exit. Afzal Aman, a former deputy defence minister, emphasised that these assets are the property of the Afghan people. Some also condemned Trump's call to regain control of Bagram Airfield, labelling it a violation of international law. Others urged Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to return Afghan military aircraft that had been relocated post-2021. Several veterans accused the US of exploiting Afghanistan, with Kamran Aman, a former soldier, stating that America's presence was never about nation-building, but rather about pursuing its own interests. While Trump continues to push for the return of US weapons, the Taliban government insists that the arms are spoils of war and will not be surrendered.

**6. India's Engagement with the Taliban at UNSC ([Hindustan Times](#), 11 March 2025)**

India has reiterated its commitment to the people of Afghanistan while navigating diplomatic complexities with the Taliban regime. Addressing the UN Security Council on March 10, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, emphasised the "special" people-to-people ties as the foundation of India's engagement with Afghanistan. Despite not officially recognising the Taliban regime, India continues to provide humanitarian aid and explore development projects. Earlier this year, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met Taliban Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai, marking the highest-level engagement since 2021.

#### **7. Italy Pledges €3.5 Million to Support Afghan Returnees ([Khaama Press](#), [Kabul Now](#), 12 March)**

Italy has donated €3.5 million to assist Afghan returnees, particularly those being deported from Iran and Pakistan amid an increase in forced expulsions. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Afghanistan announced the funding, which aims to support 25,000 returnees over the next year. The aid will focus on reintegration efforts, including access to housing, education, and employment to help returning Afghans rebuild their lives. With deportations from Iran and Pakistan intensifying, thousands of Afghan families are being forced back under difficult conditions. The IOM registered over 1.3 million returnees in 2024, with 67% being forcibly deported, highlighting the ongoing crisis facing displaced Afghans. The organisation has stressed the need for continued international support, warning that without sustained efforts, returnees will struggle to reintegrate into Afghan society.

#### **8. Afghanistan-Uzbekistan Major Agreements ([TOLO News](#), 13 March 2025)**

Uzbekistan was among the first countries to officially recognize the Islamic Emirate's new government, expanding economic cooperation with Afghanistan. High-level visits between officials have solidified this relationship, culminating in major agreements:

- Mining Investment: Uzbekistan is eyeing Afghanistan's mineral wealth, particularly iron extraction, with full cooperation from the Islamic Emirate.
- Energy Partnership: As Afghanistan remains a key buyer of Uzbek electricity, both nations have agreed to accelerate the implementation of a 500 kV power transmission project, set to begin within ten days of the agreement's finalisation.

- Trade Expansion: Uzbekistan plans to increase imports of Afghan agricultural and industrial products, with plans to sign a preferential trade agreement soon.
- Establishing a Joint Market: A joint market within Afghanistan, similar to Uzbekistan's Termez trade hub, is under discussion. This initiative would facilitate business transactions and create new opportunities for traders from both countries.
- Railway Network: Uzbekistan is supporting the Hairatan-Herat railway to boost regional trade and reduce Afghanistan's reliance on Iran and Pakistan.
- Diversified Trade Routes: A new railway project connecting Afghanistan to China and Russia via Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is expected to cut transportation time to China from 40 days to just 12-15 days, reducing costs by 15-20%.
- Agricultural Investment: Uzbekistan has expressed interest in agricultural investments in Afghanistan's northern regions, leveraging the Qosh Tepa Canal's irrigation potential. Crops like cotton and alfalfa, essential for Uzbekistan's textile industry, may replace poppy cultivation.

#### **9. Tensions with Pakistan over BLA Train Hijack Allegations ([Voice of America](#), 13 March 2025)**

Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have escalated following Islamabad's allegations that the recent deadly train attack in Balochistan was planned from Afghan soil. The Afghan Taliban have strongly denied the accusations, calling them "baseless" and urging Pakistan to focus on its internal security challenges. On March 12, militants affiliated with the banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) launched a brazen assault on a passenger train near Sibi, Balochistan, taking hundreds hostage. The attack resulted in the deaths of at least 21 passengers and four paramilitary troops, while the Pakistani military claimed to have neutralized 33 terrorists in response. Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, spokesperson for the Pakistani military, stated that the attackers had been in direct contact with their masterminds in Afghanistan via satellite phones throughout the siege. In response, Afghan Foreign Ministry spokesperson Abdul Qahar Balkhi categorically denied any Afghan involvement and rejected the allegations as an attempt to deflect from Pakistan's internal security challenges. "We urge the Pakistani side to focus on resolving their own security and internal problems instead of making such irresponsible remarks," [Balkhi posted on X](#).

#### **10. Afghanistan Among 10 Countries Facing Complete US Travel Ban ([Reuters](#), [TOLO News](#), 15 March 2025)**

The Trump administration is reportedly considering imposing extensive travel restrictions on citizens from 41 countries, including Afghanistan, as part of its latest immigration policy. The proposed restrictions are divided into three levels:

- Complete Visa Suspension: 10 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and North Korea, would face a total visa ban.
- Partial Visa Suspension: 5 countries, including Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar, and South Sudan, would see restrictions on tourist, student, and some immigration visas.
- Conditional Visa Suspension: 26 countries, such as Belarus, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan, would have visa issuance restricted unless security deficiencies are addressed within 60 days.

The proposal has not yet been finalised and is subject to approval by the administration, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Officials have indicated that changes to the list of affected countries remain possible. This move aligns with Trump's stringent immigration policies in his second term. In an October 2023 speech, he had already signalled plans to impose travel restrictions on citizens from Gaza, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and other nations deemed a security risk. If implemented, these measures could significantly impact travellers, students, and immigrants from dozens of countries, potentially sparking both domestic and international backlash.

#### **11. UAE Expands Healthcare in Afghanistan ([Tribune India](#), 15 March 2025)**

The UAE has launched a major healthcare initiative in Afghanistan, establishing ten state-of-the-art maternity and paediatric centres across key provinces, including Nangarhar, Balkh, Herat, and Kandahar. These clinics aim to improve maternal and child health, provide essential vaccinations, and offer life-saving medical care to thousands of Afghan families. With an estimated 115,000 women expected to benefit, the initiative features modern facilities, solar-powered clinics, and mobile medical units. Beyond healthcare, the project is also creating economic opportunities, generating 92 jobs and supporting local businesses.

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