

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Akashika Mate & Anusua Ganguly

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. Afghanistan Unveils \$10M Climate Resilience Initiative in Badakhshan and Kunar ([TOLO News, 16 March 2025](#))

The National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) has revealed the approval of a \$10 million budget for a project designed to tackle climate change in Afghanistan. The initiative aims to strengthen the resilience of local communities by improving their livelihood over a five-year period, in Badakhshan and Kunar provinces. Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the project will be carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

2. 10 Kilometres of TAPI Gas Pipeline Built in Afghanistan ([Khaama Press, 16 March 2025](#))

The TAPI gas pipeline project in Afghanistan has reached 10 kilometres of construction progress. Hamayon Afghan, spokesperson for the Taliban's Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, announced that significant progress has been made, with 10 kilometres of work completed on the TAPI pipeline. On 15 March, Afghan shared a video showcasing the accelerated progress of the TAPI project as the weather improved. Afghan stated that the TAPI project is a key priority for the government in terms of energy infrastructure, with hopes for its rapid completion. The TAPI pipeline is a major regional initiative designed to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India.

3. Emergency Hospital Reports 17 Injured in Explosion in Helmand Province ([Khaama Press, 21 March 2025](#))

In a statement, Emergency Hospital reported that an explosion occurred on 21 March, the first day of the new solar 1404 year, in the Gereshk district, located north of Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand province. The organisation added that two ambulances were immediately sent to the site of the explosion, transporting 17 injured individuals to the hospital. The statement noted that five of the injured were in critical condition. Dejan Panic, the head of Emergency Hospital in Lashkargah, said, "Our ambulances have been continuously providing first aid to the injured in Gereshk and Lashkargah. The situation is very critical, and the five individuals brought to

Emergency Hospital are suffering from various traumatic injuries, with their conditions being severe.”

4. Torkham Border Reopens for All Forms of Travel and Trade Between Afghanistan and Pakistan ([Khaama Press, 22 March 2025](#))

The Torkham border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan is set to reopen today, 22 March, for all forms of travel and trade after an extended closure, facilitating easier movement and commerce between the two countries. Taliban security officials have announced that the Torkham crossing will once again be accessible for all types of travel. This move comes after a prolonged closure, and it is expected to improve movement between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Sayed Tayeb Hammad, spokesperson for the Taliban’s Nangarhar security command, confirmed that the crossing will reopen on Saturday, March 22. This development is seen as a positive step and many are hopeful it will boost bilateral trade and travel.

5. FBI Lifts Bounty on Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani ([TOLO News](#), [Hurriyat](#), 25 March 2025)

The FBI has lifted the \$10 million bounty on Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani, the acting Interior Minister of the Islamic Emirate. A spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate described the removal of the bounty on several officials from the caretaker government as a positive development in the Islamic Emirate’s foreign relations with the international community. Despite the bounty being lifted, Sirajuddin Haqqani's name remains on the FBI’s wanted list. Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, stated: “We witnessed some progress a few days ago when some elders and allies were removed from the reward list. This is progress that will continue in the future. These developments have regional and global impacts and present the Islamic Emirate as a responsible entity.” The removal of the bounty coincides with the arrival of the first official US delegation to Afghanistan in over three years. During their visit, the Islamic Emirate released an American citizen, George Glezman.

6. Taliban Calls for Transfer of Afghanistan Embassy in Washington During US Delegation Talks ([Khaama Press, 26 March 2025](#))

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesperson, revealed that during a meeting with a U.S. delegation, the group requested the transfer of Afghanistan’s embassy in Washington, D.C. In

an interview with Al Arabiya on 25 March, Mujahid also mentioned that the Taliban had asked the U.S. delegation to reopen its embassy in Kabul. This request comes amidst ongoing diplomatic tensions following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan. According to Al Arabiya's report, the Taliban is awaiting a response from the U.S. delegation regarding their demands. This exchange indicates that negotiations between the two sides are continuing, despite the challenges in formalising relations.

7. WFP Warns of Funding Shortfall, Child Malnutrition Programs in Afghanistan at Risk ([Khaama Press, 27 March 2025](#))

The World Food Program (WFP) has issued a stark warning that without immediate funding, its child malnutrition prevention programs in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Syria could be suspended within months. This would have devastating consequences for millions of vulnerable children already facing severe food insecurity. The UN-affiliated agency revealed that it requires \$1.4 billion to continue its global operations in 2025, covering nutrition support for 30 million mothers and children across 56 countries. However, a critical funding gap, worsened by the suspension of U.S. assistance, has placed many of its programs at risk. Cindy McCain, WFP's executive director, underscored the urgency of the crisis, stating ahead of an international meeting in Paris: "If we do not act, we will condemn millions of children to a lifetime of suffering." In Afghanistan, where malnutrition levels are alarmingly high due to conflict, economic instability, and climate change, WFP's intervention remains critical. However, unless new funding is secured soon, operations in the country could be halted by May 2025.

8. Taliban Claims Sharp Decline in Crime in Kabul ([TOLO News, 31 March 2025](#))

Kabul's security command has reported a dramatic drop in criminal offences over the past three months, claiming an 85% decrease in crime and a complete halt to abductions. According to Khalid Zadrán, spokesperson for Kabul's security forces, major criminal gangs have been dismantled, leading to an unprecedented improvement in security. "In the past three months, the crime rate has decreased significantly. Up to 85% of crimes have been brought under control, and kidnappings have reached zero," Zadrán stated. He acknowledged that crimes may still occur in a large city like Kabul but insisted that the situation is not alarming.

IN THE WORLD

1. UN Extends UNAMA Mandate, Islamic Emirate Urges Increased International Engagement ([TOLO News, 18 March 2025](#))

The Islamic Emirate has welcomed the UN Security Council's decision to extend UNAMA's mission in Afghanistan for another year and called for greater international cooperation. Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesperson, has called on the UN representation in Afghanistan to work towards facilitating the country's global interactions. He rejected accusations of Afghanistan posing threats to neighbouring countries, urging UNAMA to avoid contributing to harmful propaganda. The extended mission will prioritise humanitarian aid, economic development, human rights, and fostering international engagement, with the resolution being approved unanimously after a month of discussions by the UN Security Council.

2. US State Department: No travel ban for former Afghan allies ([Khaama Press, 18 March 2025](#))

The spokesperson for the U.S. State Department has announced that Afghans who have worked with U.S. forces and agencies are not included in the travel ban list. This decision is intended to support Afghans who have collaborated with American forces. The decision allows eligible individuals to apply for visas and travel to the United States. She stressed that those who assisted U.S. forces would not be barred from seeking entry. Bruce also emphasised the U.S. government's continued commitment to supporting Afghan allies. Afghans who qualify can apply for special visa programs, including the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), to help with their resettlement. However, challenges remain in the visa application process, with many applicants still waiting for months for approval, leaving them in a state of uncertainty.

3. Denmark Urges Full Rights and Participation for Afghan Women at UN Security Council ([Khaama Press, 18 March 2025](#))

On March 17, Christina Markus Lassen, Denmark's representative to the United Nations, highlighted the need for full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of Afghan women in all aspects of public life and decision-making during a UN Security Council meeting. She pointed out the systemic exclusion of women by the Taliban regime. Lassen stressed that the international community must acknowledge the ongoing violations of women's rights in

Afghanistan, with these abuses continuing to worsen. She also emphasised that the Taliban has systematically marginalised Afghan women, subjecting them to violence and discrimination, and called for global action to ensure women's inclusion in societal decisions and protection from further harm.

4. Developments with Russia

a. Islamic Emirate Responds to Putin's Comments on Potential Threats from Afghanistan ([TOLO News](#), [Khaama Press](#), 18 March 2025)

Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, responded to recent comments by Russian President Vladimir Putin about potential threats and challenges from Afghanistan. He clarified that the entire territory of Afghanistan is under the control of the Islamic Emirate and does not pose any danger to other nations. Fitrat stated: "The entire geography of Afghanistan is under the control of the Islamic Emirate, and no threat or danger originates from Afghanistan towards any country. Therefore, such concerns are unfounded." He emphasised the Islamic Emirate's ongoing efforts to foster positive relations with neighbouring countries, particularly those in the north, demonstrating this through actions.

During a joint press conference in Moscow on March 18, Putin indirectly highlighted Afghanistan as a central source of security threats in the region. He stressed that Russia cannot ignore the security concerns of Central Asian nations, particularly in light of the challenges and risks posed by Afghanistan, including the presence of extremist groups that could jeopardise regional stability. Some political analysts suggest that armed groups may still be operating in Afghanistan independently of the Islamic Emirate, which has raised concerns for some countries, including Russia.

b. Russia Offers to Mediate Amid Rising Tensions Between Pakistan and Afghanistan ([TOLO News](#), 29 March 2025)

Russia has signalled its willingness to mediate between Pakistan and Afghanistan, though it maintains that resolving bilateral tensions remains primarily the responsibility of Islamabad and Kabul. Albert P. Khorev, Russia's ambassador to Pakistan, emphasized that both nations are key partners for Moscow and that Russia is ready to facilitate dialogue if required. "It is up to Islamabad and Kabul to resolve the entire complex of Pak-Afghan relations. Russia, for its

part, is always ready to help establish a dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan,” Khorev stated in an interview with a Russian media outlet. His remarks come at a time of heightened security concerns between the two neighbours.

c. Russia Moves to Lift Ban on Taliban ([Arab News](#), [New York Post](#), 31 March 2025)

Russia’s Supreme Court has announced that it will consider a petition from the prosecutor general’s office to lift the two-decade-old ban on Afghanistan’s Taliban, currently designated as a terrorist group. A hearing on the matter, submitted by Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov, is set for April 17. The Taliban were added to Russia’s official list of terrorist organisations in 2003, making any contact with them punishable under Russian law. However, in recent years, Moscow has hosted multiple forums involving Taliban representatives, citing the need for diplomatic engagement to stabilise Afghanistan. Moscow’s evolving stance on the Taliban reflects a broader geopolitical shift. While the group remains largely unrecognised internationally, major regional powers—including Russia—have engaged in bilateral discussions with Afghanistan’s rulers.

5. 24 Afghan Refugees Arrested in Two Separate Operations in Turkey ([Khaama Press](#), 19 March 2025)

On 18 March, police in Balikesir reported the detention of 14 Afghan refugees who had entered Turkey illegally. The refugees were taken to the Foreigners' Deportation Center. In a separate operation, police in Bitlis arrested 10 Afghan refugees. Both operations led to a total of 24 Afghan refugees being detained and sent to deportation centres. Turkish authorities confirmed that, after completing administrative procedures, the detained refugees will be deported to Afghanistan. The process of identifying, arresting, and deporting Afghan refugees across various Turkish cities has been increasingly expedited in recent weeks.

6. More than 120 Afghan Women Studying in Qatar and Oman Face Deportation Risk Due to USAID Funding Cuts ([Khaama Press](#), 20 March 2025)

With the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) cutting its funding, over 120 Afghan women studying in Qatar and Oman now face the threat of deportation to Afghanistan.

These women, who received scholarships to pursue education abroad, are now uncertain about their safety and future. The funding cuts are part of broader reductions in U.S. foreign aid, leaving many students in limbo. A report by CBC on 20 March 2025, underscores the looming crisis for Afghan women who may soon be forced to return to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. For women like Hela Sedeqi, these scholarships provided a vital opportunity after years of education disruption caused by conflict and instability.

7. Developments with the United States of America

a. U.S. Delegation, Headed by Zalmay Khalilzad, Visits Kabul ([Khaama Press](#), [20 March 2025](#))

The Taliban's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced that the U.S. Special Envoy for Prisoner Affairs and former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, visited Kabul and held discussions with Amir Khan Muttaqi regarding the release of prisoners. The talks also included the topic of providing consular services to Afghan nationals in the United States.

Zia Ahmad Takal, Deputy Spokesperson for the Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, quoted Adam Boehler, the U.S. Special Envoy for Prisoner Affairs, as saying that progress on prisoner issues between the Taliban and the U.S. marks a positive step toward building 'trust.' Meanwhile, Muttaqi described the visit of the U.S. delegation as a positive development in the relationship between the Taliban and Washington, stressing that the group seeks to foster relations with all countries through a "balanced policy."

b. American Citizen Released from Taliban Custody ([BBC](#), [Associated Press](#), [30 March 2025](#))

Faye Hall, an American citizen detained by the Taliban in February, has been released and is now in the care of Qatari officials, according to former U.S. envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad. The Taliban has not publicly disclosed the reasons for their arrest, but reports suggest Hall was accused of using a drone without authorisation. Her release is the latest in a series of diplomatic efforts brokered by Qatar, which has facilitated the return of four U.S. citizens since January. Earlier this month, airline mechanic George Glezmann was freed after two years in Taliban custody, coinciding with the U.S. lifting bounties on senior Taliban officials.

8. Islamic Emirate Diplomat Accepted in Oslo; Consular Services to Start Soon
([TOLO News](#), [Al Emarah](#), 22 March 2025)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate has confirmed the appointment and acceptance of a new diplomat in Oslo. Zia Ahmad Takal, the head of public relations at the Ministry, confirmed that Najibullah Shir Khan has been officially recognised as the First Secretary of the Afghan Embassy in Norway. Mr Takal also announced that consular services in the country will commence on the 4th of Hamal (March 24).

9. Developments with Pakistan

a. Pakistan Again Urges Islamic Emirate to Act Against Extremist Groups
([TOLO News](#), 22 March 2025)

The Pakistani government has once again asserted that terrorist groups are operating within Afghanistan and has urged the Islamic Emirate to take strong and effective measures against these groups. Shafqat Ali Khan, spokesperson for Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Afghanistan's interim government must act to dismantle the infrastructure and activities of these groups, in line with its international commitments. He emphasised, "The threat posed by terrorist groups such as the TTP, BLA, and ISKP to Pakistan is a major concern. We continue to urge the interim authorities to take clear and verifiable actions against these groups, in accordance with their commitments to the international community to eliminate terrorist infrastructure from Afghan soil."

b. Pakistan Kills 16 Fighters Near Afghan Border Amid Rising Tensions ([Al Jazeera](#), 23 March 2025)

Pakistan's military has reported killing 16 armed fighters in a nighttime clash between 22 and 23 March in North Waziristan, near the Afghan border. The Pakistani army claimed its forces repelled an attempted infiltration, further escalating tensions between the two neighbours. Islamabad has repeatedly called on the Taliban-led Afghan government to strengthen border security and prevent militant movements, yet relations have continued to deteriorate. Despite diplomatic engagements, including a recent visit by Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Sadiq Khan, to Kabul, mutual distrust remains high. Afghan officials have long

criticised Pakistan's handling of border security, arguing that instability in the region is a shared challenge requiring cooperation rather than unilateral military actions.

c. Afghan Nationals Face Expulsions from Pakistan, Growing Human Rights Concerns ([Amnesty International, 26 March 2025](#); [ANI, TOLO News, 31 March 2025](#))

As Pakistan's deadline for Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders expired on 31 March, thousands of Afghans in Islamabad and Rawalpindi now face the risk of arrest and deportation. Authorities have been instructed to detain undocumented Afghan residents, particularly those in rented accommodations, with 923 already arrested since January. While 715 have been released after verification, 213 have been forcibly repatriated via Torkham. Afghan refugees with Proof of Registration (PoR) cards have been granted until 30 June 2025 to leave, yet the increasing crackdown has left many in fear. However, reports also suggest that the process of arresting and deporting Afghan migrants from Pakistan has been postponed for ten more days due to the Eid al-Fitr holidays. Despite Pakistan's claims that these measures target illegal immigration and security threats, the deportations have sparked widespread condemnation. The UNHCR acknowledged Pakistan's decades-long role in hosting Afghan refugees but urged a more humane and voluntary repatriation process.

Amnesty International denounced the mass expulsions as unjust, labelling Pakistan's 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan' as a violation of human rights and international law. The organisation warned that Afghans are being unfairly scapegoated as criminals and terrorists, while human rights lawyers argue that the deportation orders—issued through executive action rather than legal statute—violate fundamental rights. In addition to deportations, Afghan refugees now face growing restrictions, including racial profiling, no-objection certificate (NOC) requirements for staying in Islamabad, and accusations linking them to crime and political unrest. With Pakistan hosting 1.52 million registered Afghan refugees and an estimated 800,000 undocumented Afghans, rights groups fear an escalating humanitarian crisis, particularly as many are forced to return to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, where safety and stability remain uncertain.

10. Rising Terror Threat in Afghanistan: A Growing Global Concern ([Arab News, 29 March 2025](#))

The latest U.S. intelligence report and a recent [UN Security Council report](#) have raised serious alarms about the growing terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan. According to the [U.S. Intelligence Community's Annual Threat Assessment](#), Daesh remains the most significant terrorism challenge for America and its allies. Its Afghan branch, ISIS-K, is described as the “most capable” of executing external terrorist attacks, with ambitions extending beyond South Asia into a global threat. The UN’s findings align with this, detailing ISIS-K’s infrastructure in Afghanistan, including training camps in Badakhshan province. More than two dozen terrorist organisations are currently operating in the country, contributing to a growing security crisis that extends well beyond its borders. Meanwhile, Al-Qaeda has also regained a foothold in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. The UN report highlights safe houses and training camps scattered across the country, with lower- and mid-ranking members operating freely and senior leaders protected in the provinces. The presence of these groups underscores the Taliban’s continued ties to international terrorism, despite their claims of governance.

11. Taliban Leader Declares Democracy ‘Dead’ in Afghanistan, Reinforces Sharia Rule ([Arab News, 30 March 2025](#); [The Hindu, 31 March 2025](#))

In a rare public address on Eid Al-Fitr, Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada reaffirmed his hardline stance, declaring that Afghanistan no longer needs Western laws and that democracy has no place under the group’s strict interpretation of sharia. Speaking from Kandahar’s Eidgah Mosque, his 50-minute sermon underscored the regime’s commitment to self-governance based on Islamic law, further isolating Afghanistan from the international community. Since the Taliban’s takeover in 2021, Akhundzada has consolidated power, sidelining even voices within the group advocating for moderation and global engagement. His policies have led to the widespread exclusion of Afghan women and girls from education, employment, and public spaces, sparking ongoing condemnation from human rights groups. In his speech, Akhundzada also accused Western nations of uniting against Islam, citing conflicts like the Israel-Hamas war as evidence. While some Taliban factions push for greater diplomatic outreach, hardliners continue to dictate the country’s trajectory.

About the Authors

Akashika Mate is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) with a focus on strategic and security issues concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan. She recently earned her master's in international relations from King's College London, where her research explored themes of conflict, diplomacy, and resistance. Her areas of interests include South Asian geopolitics, foreign policy analysis, and gender in conflict. She can be reached at akashika.claws@gmail.com

Anusua Ganguly is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, where her study focuses on Russia and Central Asia. With a Master's degree in Conflict Analysis and Peace Building, Anusua also has a keen interest in non-traditional security threats, the role of media in conflict and the role of gender in conflict and peacebuilding efforts. Their research explores the complexities of global security dynamics and emphasises the importance of inclusive approaches in fostering lasting peace.



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