

Beat: Politics

Taliban pledges to disrupt Afghan election, warns people not to vote

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USPA News - The Taliban on Monday said it has instructed its fighters to use "all force at its disposal" to disrupt Afghanistan's upcoming presidential election, warning citizens not to vote and describing the vote as a sham election with the winner chosen by the United States. In an e-mailed statement released by the Taliban on Monday, Afghan citizens were strongly encouraged to stay away from the polls during the presidential election on April 5. "The Islamic Emirate (Taliban) shall never allow the enemy to be successful in achieving its goals through this fake theatrical charade," said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

"In this regard we have given orders to all our Mujahideen (Muslim fighters) to use all force at its disposal to disrupt these upcoming sham elections." Mujahid warned that its fighters would target election workers, security forces and locations where voting takes place. "We once again call on all of our countrymen to keep away from electoral offices, voting booths, rallies and campaigns so that, may Allah forbid, their lives are not put into danger," Mujahid added. "If anyone still persists on participating then they are solely responsible of any loss in the future." The Taliban, which described the ongoing withdrawal of foreign troops as a sign that the NATO-led "occupation" had failed, claimed that their actions would be an attempt to prevent the United States from influencing the election and to prevent the spread of American ideals. "It (the United States) will install a head of state who appears to be an Afghan but will have American mentality, vision, deeds, creed and ideals while openly being in conflict with the clear teachings of the sacred religion of Islam," the spokesman said. "By giving prestige and power to its stooges, America wants to enslave the valiant Afghan nation to its desires which it could not through intimidation, bombings, torture, raids, barbarity and countless other tactics." He continued: "Everyone should also realize that casting votes will not yield an outcome as the actual election has already taken place in the offices of CIA and Pentagon and their favorite candidate has already won." Last month, in an interview with Afghanistan's Tolo TV, Jan Kubis, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, called on the Taliban to "stop killing civilians." "My message [to the Taliban] directly or indirectly: allow the people to vote. This is their right. These are your people. This is your country as well," he said. "My second appeal, allow also those, not only those that will vote, but the candidates that campaign [and] election workers to be able to work." Monday's statement was the Taliban's first threat of violence over the upcoming presidential election. Polls show former World Bank economist Ashraf Ghani and former foreign ministers Abdullah Abdullah and Zalmay Rassoul as front-runners to succeed outgoing president Hamid Karzai. While the Taliban did not offer details of the intended violence, a rise in violent incidents also took place in the weeks ahead of the presidential election in 2009, with three major attacks occurring, including a car bombing on NATO's headquarters in Kabul and attacks near the presidential palace. Dozens of people were killed, hundreds more were injured. On election day in 2009, Taliban militants were also accused of slicing off the index fingers of at least two people in southern Afghanistan. Their index fingers were stained with ink after having voted, officials said at the time.

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