Afghan Government Rejects Meeting With Taliban in Russia

KABUL - The Afghan government has refused to participate in the meetings convened by Russia to seek a solution to the conflict in Afghanistan, negotiations to which the Taliban movement has confirmed its attendance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said today.

Any regional consensus on Afghanistan must be structured at the core of the collective of the Asian nation, said the deputy spokesman of the local foreign ministry, Shabab Ahmad.

The peace process must definitely be carried out under the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ahmad said.

Earlier this week, Russia called again for the so-called Geneva format, a meeting of 12 nations and the Taliban to push forward the process.

Ministers including those of the US, China, Russia, France, and Pakistan are due to attend the meeting in Moscow.


Pompeo Expected to Tap Diplomatic Vet Zalmy Khalilzad as Afghanistan Special Envoy

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expected to name Zalmy Khalilzad as a special envoy on Afghanistan, according to a senior US official and another source familiar with the matter.

Washington - Khalilzad is a diplomatic veteran, having served as a US ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq and the United Nations. A senior official said CNN Khalilzad is in close to all of the players, knows the region well and is known by the Afghans.

"He’s a chamr," one source said. "And knowing him, he wouldn’t do it if he didn’t have a chance. With the right mandate he could be quite effective." The 65-year-old Khalilzad, who is Afghan, served as a foreign policy adviser to multiple administrations and held several diplomatic posts under President George W. Bush’s administration.

Pompeo’s expected choice of Khalilzad comes as the United States looks to make headway in its longstanding campaign against the Taliban.

Alice Wells, a senior State Department official, met for discussions with Taliban officials last month in Delhi. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani offered a month-long ceasefire with the Taliban last week, a move that was supported by Pompeo.

"The last ceasefire in Afghanistan revealed the deep divisions of the Afghan people to end the conflict, and we hope another ceasefire will move the country closer to sustainable security," Pompeo said in a statement. "We remain ready to support, facilitate, and participate in direct negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban. There are no obstacles to talks. It is time for peace." (CNN)


Eight of the Taliban's 18 districts have been retaken by Afghan security forces in recent days.

The Taliban backlash came two days after the Trump administration announced its decision to deploy thousands of additional US forces to Afghanistan.

Washington - President Donald Trump has been widely criticized for his handling of the war against the Taliban, which has been ongoing since 2001.

The Taliban have been fighting for the collapse of the Afghan government and the return of Islamic rule to the country.

Trump announced in April that he would begin withdrawing US troops from Afghanistan, but he has since reversed that decision.

The US military has said it will reduce its troop levels in Afghanistan to 2,500 by the end of the year.

The Taliban have called the US military presence in Afghanistan a "crime" and have threatened to increase their attacks on US forces as a result.

The US military has said it will continue to conduct air strikes against Taliban positions.

The Taliban have also been criticized for their treatment of women and minorities.

They have been accused of enforcing strict religious laws and denying girls access to education.

The US military has said it will work to protect civilians from the Taliban and to support their efforts to bring peace to the region.

The Taliban have also been accused of being funded by Pakistan and other nations.

The US military has said it will work to dismantle these funding networks.

The Taliban have also been accused of using roadside bombs and other tactics to draw US forces into close combat.

The US military has said it will continue to work to neutralize these threats.