Preliminary results of Ashraf Ghani’s 100 days in office

According to a survey by private Afghan television station "Tolo", after 100 days as president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani’s rating is significantly declining. Residents of the capital and central areas of the country have expressed the most dissatisfaction with the President’s policies.

Those who are dissatisfied with the head of state blame him for delaying the process of appointing ministers of the central government, governors and key officials in the provinces, establishing the dialogue with Pakistan, attempts to negotiate with the moderate Taliban and outbreak of terrorist activity in the country. Afghan print and online publications assert that virtually from the very beginning of the presidential campaign of 2014 the majority of the ministries have not worked. Persons appointed to temporarily perform the duties refuse to make decisions. It is alleged that it got to the point that at one of the government departments, office workers bored of nothing to do organized a dance, recorded it on video and then made it public.

The president’s opponents believe that in a country with a weak political system now more than ever there is a need for strong and competent managers, capable of making independent decisions and ensuring the daily management of subordinates. The most concerning for the public is the fact that, given the escalating Taliban activity, a number of decision making positions in key ministries like the Ministry of Defense, Internal Affairs and the Security forces remain vacant.

Ashraf Ghani has also been accused that working 18 hours a day he tries to do everything himself. He is seen at a military hospital in Kabul, then he visits the Pul-i-Charkhi prison, then he makes a surprise visit to Herat which results in the resignation of officials who, in the president’s opinion, either deceive him or do not fulfill their functional assignments. However, in most cases the dismissed civil servants are not replaced and as a result problems only increase. According to his opponents, the president has no long-term strategy. They believe that instead of reforming the existing system, the president acts ad hoc.

At the same time, some Afghans see Ashraf Ghani’s 100-day presidency as a kind of "breath of fresh air" after the reign of Hamid Karzai. They believe that the situation should change after the announcement of the list of candidates for the posts of ministers on January 12, 2015. Now it is up to the Lower House of Parliament, which must approve the proposed candidates.

The president’s supporters believe that after the approval of new Cabinet of Ministers, the president and his team will have to convince ordinary Afghans of their determination and ability to restore order in the country. According to them, it will be necessary to start a dialogue with moderate Taliban. The Pakistani armed forces should provide assistance with this. Western political scientists note that unlike Karzai, Ashraf Ghani has established normal relations with Pakistani armed forces who in fact rule their country.

The new Afghan president has visited Islamabad but has not visited India yet. The Pakistanis appreciated this. They also appreciated the fact that after the terrorist attack in Peshawar, which killed more than 140 people, mostly school students, the Afghan army at the request of the Pakistan armed forces launched an operation to eliminate the
Taliban bases in the Kunar province. Both sides have started to monitor the situation on the common border. The military and special security officials have started to meet more frequently to coordinate their activities. There has been a significant reduction in shelling of the respective territories.

As noted by some experts in Kabul, Ashraf Ghani would like to establish contacts with the leaders of the Afghan Taliban entrenched in Peshawar and Quetta, and organize a dialogue with them. The expectation is that after the terrorist attacks in Peshawar and Paris, Islamabad’s policy on Afghanistan will change dramatically, and the Pakistani armed forces and interagency-governmental intelligence will be interested in maintaining as the Afghan leader such a capable negotiator as Ashraf Ghani, ceasing to secretly support his opponents.

Another important task is to stop the further decline of the Afghan economy. So far, ordinary Afghans argue that currently there are no conditions for safely conducting business. Criminal gangs can confiscate the business at any time and kill the owner. The state itself does not clarify what it expects from entrepreneurs and so consequently does not finance the development of its own production. At the same time, it introduces new business taxes. As a result, those who voted in the presidential election for Ashraf Ghani say they regret it now.

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