

Face to Face Discussion of Alberoni University Students with MPs



FEFA held a meeting with students of Alberoni University where Mr. Qalatwal, representative of Zabul in Wolesi Jirga and Mrs. Zakia Sangen, representative of Parwan in Wolesi Jirga attended to present information on parliament and its activities to students. At the beginning of the meeting, the parliamentary monitoring team of FEFA thanked Alberoni University for organizing this meeting and presented information on political system, three branches of power, the duties and responsibilities of parliament and the parliamentary monitoring program of FEFA.

Parliament and its duties

Mr. Abdul Qadir Qalatwal, representative of Zabul province in Wolesi Jirga began the meeting. Mr. Qalatwal said, “Making and approving laws, monitoring the performance of government and representing people are three main duties of Wolesi Jirga.” Subsequently, Mrs. Zakia Sangen, representative of Parwan in Wolesi Jirga presented information on performance of parliament and said, “When we talk to students, they ask that what MPs are doing? Maybe they think MPs just come to the house, speak and some cases create problems in the house. Therefore, we

brought the students of Parwan University to Wolesi Jirga to see the activities of MPs and committees of Wolesi Jirga.”

The Duties of MPs and Legislative Process

The students urged Mrs. Sangen to present information on how a MP is elected, what are the duties of a MP and how a law is approved by parliament. Then, Mrs. Sangen said, “A specific quota is allocated to women in each province and at least each province must have two female MPs in Wolesi Jirga. The president and temp administrative board of Wolesi Jirga officially inaugurate Wolesi Jirga.” she also said that according to the law the oldest member of parliament is elected as temp speaker of the house where two young members are elected as temp secretary and deputy secretary of the house. These people cannot nominate themselves for administrative board. After election of the administrative board, Wolesi Jirga officially commence its work. Likewise, the committees of Wolesi Jirga elect the members of their administrative board at their first session. Wolesi Jirga has 18 permanent committees. Each MP can get the membership of a committee based on his/her educational career or his/her interest. Similarly, members of Wolesi Jirga can establish different parliamentary group.

Internal Rules of Procedure and Privileged Time

Mrs. Sangen said, “Wolesi Jirga has an Internal Rules of Procedure and all MPs have to act upon it. Internal Rules of Procedure of Wolesi Jirga has allocated one hour privileged time to MPs talk on general problems or explain the problems of their constituents before going to the main topic of agenda. At the end of the privileged time, speaker of the house conclude the speech of MPs. If the issues raised by MPs during privileged time is important, speaker of the house refer the issue to the related committee of Wolesi Jirga. After the privileged time the MPs go to the main agenda of the session. The topics of agenda can be interpellation of ministers, introduction of draft-laws or approval of laws. For example if the agenda of session is discussion on the draft-law on higher education, first the draft-law is introduced to the session by Ministry of Justice and then the speaker of the house refer the draft-law to the standing committee of Wolesi Jirga for revision and passing legal processes. Subsequently, the standing committee review the draft-law and send to other committees of Wolesi Jirga to get their comments regarding the draft-law. After the comments of all committees is gotten, the related committee hold joint session where a member of all committees attend to discuss the draft-law. After the joint committee agree with the draft-law; the law is added to the agenda of plenary session for approval. Whenever, there is controversial opinion on the law then the related committee has to hold another joint session otherwise, the law is added to agenda for approval. Subsequently, the law is put in a vote in plenary session and Wolesi Jirga approve or reject it.”

Working Period of Wolesi Jirga

It is worth mentioning that the national assembly of Afghanistan holds an extraordinary session and two regular session. The working duration of Wolesi Jirga is 9 month in a year which is divided into two period of 4 and half month. The National Assemble of Afghanistan has two recess (summer recess and winter recess). During the recess time the MPs have to go to their provinces and review their provinces problems and present them to the house after recess time. Likewise, Mr. Qalatwal said that 25% members of parliament are females. Among 249 members of Wolesi Jirga 68 of them are female. He also presented information on legislative process of a law in national assembly and said, “When Wolesi Jirga approves a law, send it to Meshrani Jirga and if Meshrano Jirga approve it, send it to president for signature. Then, according to the presidential decree the law is published in the national gazette.

Questions and Answers:

The most important questions which were asked by students in this meeting were as follow:

1. What are the responsibilities of an MP before his constituents?
2. What educational decree must a person hold to become MP?
3. According to the Afghan constitution those who nominate for seats of parliament must not have dual citizenship and must not be accused of war crimes. However, today the circumstance in contradiction to this article of the law. What is your opinion in this regard?
4. The parliament rejected the presidential decree on deducting 10% tax from the top up card of the telecommunication companies but still the decree is enforced?

In response to the above questions, Mr. Qadir Qalatwal said:

First answer: as I mentioned before, oversight the performance of government, making and approving laws and representing people are three major duties of parliament. All irregularities do not belong to parliament. The government is executive branch and responsible for providing services to people. In response to the second question, Mr. Qalatwal said, "Each MP must hold bachelor degree or must have had membership of parliament in the past. The constitution has given the authority of making decision on dual citizenship of minister to parliament." He also said that until the presidential decree about taxation on phone calls has not passed the legal stages, is considered enforced.