

High Council for National Reconciliation in Afghanistan

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In News

Afghanistan's president appointed a council for national reconciliation, which will **have final say on whether the government will sign a peace deal with the Taliban** after what are expected to be protracted and uncertain negotiations with the insurgents.

More About the National Council for Reconciliation

- **Afghan President Ashraf Ghani** issued a decree establishing the **46-member council, led by his former rival** in last year's presidential election, **Abdullah Abdullah**, who is now in the government.
- The council is **separate from a 21-member negotiating team**, which Ghani appointed in March and which is expected to travel to the Gulf Arab state of Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office, for the intra-Afghan talks.
- **The council will have the final say and will ultimately decide on the points that the negotiating team takes up with the Taliban.**
- Abdullah's appointment to head the reconciliation efforts followed a **power-sharing deal** he signed in May with Ghani to end the political deadlock after last year's election, a vote in which Abdullah had also declared himself a winner.
- The High Council for National Reconciliation is made up of an **array of Afghan political figures, including current and former officials, and nine women representatives**, one of whom was named Abdullah's deputy.

- Also on the council are **mujahedeen and jihadi leaders who fought against the Soviet Union in the 1980s but who were also involved in Afghanistan's brutal civil war that followed their takeover in 1992.**
- Among them is **Gulbuddin Hekmatyar**, who signed a peace deal with Ghani in 2016 but **previously was declared a terrorist by the United States.**
- The council also includes **Abdur Rasool Sayyaf**, who was the inspiration for the Philippine terrorist group Abu Sayyaf. During the 1992-1996 civil war, **Sayyaf's fighters killed thousands of minority Shiite Muslims** led by a rival warlord.