

Profiling the Taliban II

By Zain Lookmanji (October 2021)

Qari Din Mohammad Hanif has been appointed as the current Minister of Economy in the Taliban cabinet. It is not his first time serving in the government under the Taliban; previously, he served as the Minister of Planning, and the Minister for Higher Education before the Taliban's Islamic Emirate (1996–2001) was deposed in 2001, following the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan.



Photo Credit: Tolo News, 2015

In addition to this, in 2015, he was also one of the high-ranking members of the negotiation team in the Taliban's Qatar office - an erstwhile hub for negotiations between the Taliban, the previous Afghan government, and the USA. This comes as no surprise, as an estimated 80% of the *Shura* council are from the Doha team. He was also sanctioned by the UN Security

Council on January 25th 2001, due to his being a person linked to the Taliban¹. The European Union also listed him as a person associated with the Taliban².

He was born in Yaftali Sufla District, in Badakhshan, which is in the northeast of Afghanistan.

Ethnically, he is a Tajik - the second largest ethnic group in the country- unlike most Taliban members who are Pashtun. He is one of the very few non-Pashtun faces amongst the Taliban's leadership. Despite being a minority within the group, he has nonetheless risen far in their ranks; the UN reports that he has also been the one responsible for two provinces, Takhar and his home province of Baddakshan, during his first time in the Taliban Supreme Council.³

He has dealings with Pakistani officials, most notably in 2015 in Islamabad where he - leading a group of Taliban members - met with Pakistani and Chinese diplomats, army leaders, and intelligence agents. The Pakistani leaders called on him to help resolve a dispute between Akhtar Mohammad Mansour - better known as Mullah Mansour, the former leader of the Taliban until his death in 2016 - and Abdul Qayum Zakir, the former Military Commander of the Taliban, and possibly the current Minister of Defence.

Hanif was chosen to head the delegation tasked with this mission which was of great importance, shows that Pakistani officials trust him.

Despite being the Minister of Economy, and having served as the Minister for Higher Education, he has not completed any formal education; he was educated in *madrassas* in Pakistan - with frequent lapses in education resulting from wars - but he did not complete his curriculum, instead of dropping out in his second-to-last year. This brings into question his qualification to serve as minister for technical areas such as Economics.

He faces numerous challenges in the road ahead when managing the economy of Afghanistan, as the country is facing financial collapse. The United States has suspended 9.4 billion dollars in reserves⁴, and the World Bank has stopped all loans to the country⁵. The nation was already

¹ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10465.doc.htm>

² [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2002\)117&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2002)117&lang=en)

³ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10465.doc.htm>

⁴ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-08/biden-hurting-poor-by-blocking-afghan-reserves-official-says>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-58325545>

in a very precarious position economically and heavily depended on foreign aid. With all aid being cut off, the country faces a dire shortage of cash; the prices of essential goods have skyrocketed⁶, and government functions such as state banks cannot keep up with the needs of the people, and the currency is fast losing all its value. Without foreign aid, Afghanistan faces a humanitarian disaster.

⁶ <https://nypost.com/2021/09/14/afghanistan-on-brink-of-economic-and-humanitarian-collapse/>