



Afghanistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 21 October 2014

Please provide information on Hezb-e-islam (Hizb-i-Islami) party.

An undated document published on the National Counterterrorism Center website states:

“Hezb-e-Islami, or ‘Party of Islam,’ is a political and paramilitary organization in Afghanistan founded in 1976 by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who has been prominent in various Afghan conflicts since the late 1970s. Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) is an offshoot of that original Hezb-e Islami, and is a virulently anti-Western insurgent group whose goal is to replace Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s regime with an Islamic state rooted in sharia (Islamic law), in line with Hekmatyar’s vision of a Pashtun-dominated Afghanistan. His group conducts attacks against Coalition forces, Afghan Government targets, and Western interests in Afghanistan. HIG is distinct from Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), a legal Afghan political party composed of, among others, some reconciled HIG members. HIG is also separate from Hezb-e-Islami Khalis (HIK), an insurgent group formed after another original Hezb founder, Mohammed Younis Khalis, splintered from the main party in 1979, after which Hekmatyar’s faction came to be known as the HIG.” (National Counterterrorism Center (undated) *Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin*)

A document published on the Institute for the Study of War website, in a section headed “Hizb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) in Kabul” states:

“Since 2004, a number of former Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin commanders have formed and registered a new political party under the name Hizb-i-Islami. In the 2004 Presidential elections, these former commanders numbered around 150, declared support for Hamid Karzai . The group is registered with the Afghan Ministry of Justice and has opened offices in Kabul and other major cities. Under Afghanistan’s new law on political parties, no party can have any affiliation with armed groups. HIA claims to have surrendered all their weapons to the government and have no ties with the Gulbuddin led insurgents. Relations between HIA and Hekmatyar remain unclear. HIA claims control of 30 to 40 percent of government offices. Hekmatyar’s son-in-law Ghairat Baheer, who was released from prison in 2008, is a member of the party. According to Hekmatyar’s former Deputy Qazi Muhammad Amin Waqad: ‘The party has two to three [Cabinet] ministers, five governors, a deputy minister and many other high ranking officials.’ The party claims tens of thousands of supporters across Afghanistan. Party member Humayun Jarir in December 2008 said an inter-Afghan conference would soon be held in an Islamic country for reconciliation between all Afghan factions. He said representatives from Hekmatyar’s party and the Taliban were invited and would attend the conference. In the June 4, 2009 interview Hekmatyar disassociated his group from his former commanders who are currently politically active in Kabul under the HIA banner. Asked if the presence of

Hizb-i-Islami members in the government is a sign of his party's indirect participation, the HIG leader replied that: 'Former HI members who are in Karzai government are not members of our party any more, and their participation in the American-backed government is not an indication of HI's indirect participation in the government. In fact, they joined the government with an intention to weaken the HI and to create division within the party, but they failed to do so. In the past, some people had joined our party because they thought it was the right decision at the time. Later however, some of them joined other parties and others formed their own parties.'" (Institute for the Study of War (undated) *Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)*)

An International Crisis Group report, in Footnote 41, states:

"Frictions within Hizb-e Islami emerged soon after Hekmatyar declared an alliance with the Taliban and al-Qaeda in 2002 in response to the U.S. incursion and his own expulsion from Iran the same year. Internal fissures came to a head in May 2004 when ten members of Hizb-e Islami's senior leadership travelled from Peshawar to Kabul to pledge support to the Karzai government. Led by Khalid Farooqi, a relative of Hekmatyar, an ethnic Pashtun from Paktia province, the splinter group denounced terrorism, attempted to disassociate itself with Hekmatyar and declared its intention to participate in the political process. Officially registered with the government as a political party, leaders of the faction, known as Hizb-e Islami Afghanistan, claim to have cut ties with Hekmatyar's fighting wing but are widely believed to maintain contacts with him." (International Crisis Group (27 June 2011) *The Insurgency in Afghanistan's Heartland*, p.6)

In a section titled "The Haqqani network and Hizb-e Islami" this report states:

"Unlike its Taliban and Haqqani rivals, the Hizb-e Islami-Gulbuddin faction is far less resilient on the battlefield but far more adept at negotiating political deals with both local government officials and commanders from rival factions. While Hizb-e Islami was once the dominant power in the central-eastern region provinces of Kapisa, Laghman, Logar, Ghazni and Wardak, even close associates of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who now operate under the faction's political arm, Hizb-e Islami Afghanistan, admit that the military chain of command has weakened because of many commanders joining the Afghan government and worsening security." (ibid, p.15)

This section of the report also states:

"Nonetheless, what Hekmatyar's faction has lost militarily it has regained politically with Hizb-e Islami Afghanistan, its political wing, which is strongly represented within the Afghan government. At least 49 members of the party have leadership positions as members of parliament, provincial governors or members of the cabinet. Party representatives, such as Minister of Economy Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, publicly maintain that they have no contact with Hizb-e Islami's armed wing. These claims seem dubious, however, in light of attempts by party representatives to broker a reconciliation deal between Hizb-e Islami and the presidential palace. Hekmatyar's closest lieutenants, including his chief deputy, Engineer Qutbuddin Hilal, former deputy prime minister during the Rabbani regime, and Ghairat Bahir, Hekmatyar's son-in-law and one time spokesman, met Karzai in March 2010. They laid out Hizb-e Islami's fifteen-point peace plan, which in addition to demanding NATO troop

withdrawals to begin in 2011, called for parliament to undertake a constitutional review process.” (ibid, p.15)

In a section titled “The Taliban and Hizb-e Islami” this report refers to the relationship between the two militants groups as follows:

“Relations between the Taliban and Hizb-e Islami have been tenuous. As mentioned, the Taliban had gained the upper hand against Hizb-e Islami during the civil war, resulting in the latter’s Pakistani backers switching their support to the Taliban. In 2002, Hekmatyar announced an alliance between his faction and the Taliban. Yet, despite substantial cooperation between Hizb-e Islami and Taliban fighters at the local level – particularly in the greater Kabul area, the longstanding mistrust between the two sides continues to shape the relationship.” (ibid, p.21)

A report published by the United States Congressional Research Service, in a section titled “The Role of Political Parties”, states:

“President Hamid Karzai never formed a party. However, many of his aides and supporters are from the moderate faction of *Hizb-e-Islami*. The party, composed almost totally of ethnic Pashtuns, is the only one of the mujahedin parties that is formally registered. Committed to working within the political system, it is led by Minister of Economy Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, whose leadership was reaffirmed at a party conference during October 3-4, 2012. The militant wing of *Hizb-e-Islam* is loyal to pro-Taliban insurgent leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar; it is called *Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)*.” (United States Congressional Research Service (17 September 2014) *Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance*, p.5)

In a section titled “Permanent Constitution Gives Presidency Broad Powers” this report states:

“Karzai’s closest advisers have been Pashtuns, such as chief of staff since 2011 (formerly Minister of Information and Culture) Abdul Karim Kurram. Kurram, like other Karzai advisers, is a member of the moderate wing of *Hezb-e-Islami*. In that post, Kurram succeeded Mohammad Umar Daudzai, another *Hezb-e-Islami* member, who was subsequently was appointed Afghanistan’s Ambassador to Pakistan and then (August 2013) Interior Minister.” (ibid, p.7)

See also section titled “2009 Presidential Election” which states:

“A total of 32 candidates entered the race, and 3,200 people competed for 420 provincial council seats nationwide. About 80% of the provincial council candidates ran as independents, and one party, *Hezb-i-Islami*, fielded multiple candidates in several provinces.” (ibid, p.20)

An Institute for War & Peace Reporting article states:

“Confusion surrounds an announcement by a major Afghan insurgent leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar instructing his followers to participate in the forthcoming Afghan presidential election. Hekmatyar, the leader of the Hezb-e Islami faction and one of the major commanders in the resistance to the

Soviet occupation in the 1990s, has previously said elections would be illegitimate as long as foreign troops remained in the country. Since the United States-led invasion of 2001, Hezb-e Islami insurgents under Hekmatyar's command have been aligned with the Taleban, fighting Afghan government and international troops. Despite this, some elements of Hezb-e Islami have gone over to the government side, among them Qutbuddin Hilal, a former associate of Hekmatyar now standing in the April 5 presidential election. (A profile of Hilal and the ten other candidates can be found [here](#).) A month ago, Hekmatyar took the unprecedented step of calling on his followers to vote in the presidential ballot and endorsing Hilal." (Institute for War & Peace Reporting (28 February 2014) *Afghan Warlord in Election Turnaround*)

This article also states:

"Hekmatyar's apparent commitment to a democratic process is not matched by plans to end the jihad against the current Afghanistan administration. Less than a week after Hekmatyar's letter was circulated, Hezb-e Islami claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in Kabul that killed at least two people. Commentators interviewed by IWPR say it is difficult to explain or reconcile these apparent divergent approaches. Political analyst Wahid Mozhda said the contradictions reflected complex pressures on Hekmatyar, who he said found himself in a weakened position, stranded in a 'political, economic and military vacuum'." (ibid)

A report from the Afghanistan Analysts Network states:

"Particularly over its participation in elections, HIG has been blowing hot and cold over the past months. In January this year, Hekmatyar still ruled out HIG's participation in the April 2014 presidential election but urged his party's members to participate in the provincial council elections:

Hezb-e Islami is not directly taking part in the elections due to the presence of occupation forces but will exercise the right of vote to get those candidates elected who are close to our party and ideology.... Support those candidates who are either related to us or have a positive view about the party.... Defeat and prevent bad people from entering the assemblies.

But HIG has made it clear in its statement that the group's (indirect) participation in the election did not mean it would give up its armed fight. "A part of Hezb-e Islami will continue its resistance as previously, even with more intensity and strength", it said." (Afghanistan Analysts Network (19 February 2014) *Bomb and Ballot: The many strands and tactics of Hezb-e Islam*)

This report also states:

"HIG's strategy is based on a four-year-old peace plan, the main points of which are demands for a full withdrawal of foreign troops and the establishment of an interim government that is to organise new elections based on proportional representation. The plan also reveals an interpretation of democracy that would replace the current formally open pluralistic system with *mujahedin*- and *sharia*-only 'pluralism'." (ibid)

Referring to alleged Hezb-e-Islami influence in the Kabul government this report states:

“Of course, Hezb already has a good foothold in Kabul. There are ministers (5), provincial governors, a large group in the parliament’s lower house, various presidential advisor posts (Paktia Governor Juma Khan Hamdard, former HIG Intelligence Chief Wahidullah Sabawun and others) and the president’s chef de cabinet, Abdul Karim Khorram. ‘Arguably, Karzai has wittingly or unwittingly aligned himself with this radical Islamic party,’ veteran Afghanistan watcher Marvin Weinbaum of the Washington-based Middle East Institute recently wrote. ‘The influence of Hezb-i-Islami also reaches into the bureaucracy, and its members are well represented in the national and several provincial assemblies.’” (ibid)

An article from the Afghan online newspaper Khaama Press states:

“Hezb-e-Islami (HIA) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is seeking to secure an active role in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan. According to reports, Hekmatyar’s sons have recently visited Kabul and met with the presidential contender Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai regarding the party’s future possible role in the country. The visit by Hekmatyar’s sons, Jamaluddin and Habib-ur-Rehman comes as the election contenders are engaged in talks regarding the formation of a national unity government. A senior Hezb-e-Islami (HIA) leader has confirmed that Jalamuddin and Habib-ur-Rehman have met with Dr. Ghani and other key leaders during their visit to Kabul. The HIA leader further added that Hekmatyar sent his sons to ‘personally’ assure Ghani of the group’s support.” (Khaama Press (4 September 2014) *Hezb-e-Islami seeks to secure active role in Afghanistan*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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