

KABUL AIRPORT BLASTS GLOBAL REACTION

The Taliban has joined global leaders in condemning twin suicide bombs that ripped through crowds waiting to be evacuated outside Kabul airport, killing at least 85 people, including 13 US troops. Here is a round-up of the reaction to Thursday's attack.

United States: President Joe Biden vowed to hunt down those behind the suicide bombings that killed American troops in the worst single-day loss for the Pentagon in Afghanistan since 2011. "We will not forget. We will hunt you down and make you pay," Biden, visibly shaken, said in a White House address during which he said evacuations of vulnerable people would continue until August 31.

Taliban: The Taliban slammed the blasts, but pointed out they happened in an area that was under the control of US military. "The Islamic Emirate strongly condemns the bombing targeting civilians at Kabul airport," the group's spokesman tweeted.

Russia: Russia also blasted the attacks "in the strongest possible terms." "Unfortunately, the pessimistic forecasts that entrenched terrorist groups, especially ISIS, will not fail to take advantage of the chaos in Afghanistan, are being confirmed," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

China: China said it was "shocked" by the explosions. They show "the security situation in Afghanistan is still complex and severe", foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said.

Europe: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson condemned "barbaric" attack, paying tribute to the "phenomenal effort" of those involved in the evacuation operation. French President Emmanuel Macron expressed "his condolences to the families of the American and Afghan victims".

Canada: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged to work with partners to resettle refugees in his country. "Our hearts break for the people of Afghanistan and the loved ones of the victims, including the brave women and men of our allies," he said.

OIC: The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned the "twin heinous terrorist bombings". Secretary General Yousef al-Othaimen in a statement "reaffirmed the OIC's firm, principled position against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations."

Middle East: Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry rejected the attacks as "incompatible with all religious principles and moral and human values." Turkey's foreign ministry deplored "this heinous attack in the strongest terms," while Egypt decried the "gruesome terrorism". Iran, meanwhile, condemned "the targeting of Afghanistan's defenceless people and any terrorist operation in which women, men, youth, and children are attacked."

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Taliban forces block the roads around the airport, while a woman with Burqa walks passes by, in Kabul, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Humanitarian crisis unfolding Hundreds of displaced families seek food, shelter in Kabul

REUTERS

Hundreds of Afghan families who have been camping in searing heat at a Kabul park after the Taliban overran their provinces begged for food and shelter on Thursday, the most visible face of a humanitarian crisis unfolding in the war-torn country.

While thousands of people have crowded the airport to try to flee, many others, like the families in the park, are stuck in limbo, unsure whether it is safer to try to go home or stay where they are.

"I'm in a bad situation," said Zahida Bibi, a housewife, sitting under the blazing sun with her large family. "My head hurts. I feel very bad, there is nothing in my stomach." Ahmed Waseem, displaced from northern Afghanistan said those in the park were hoping the central government would pay attention. "We are in an open field and in the heat," he said. A Taliban spokesman told Reuters the group was not providing food to the people at the park and others at the airport because it would lead to further overcrowding. They should return to their homes, he said.

The Taliban have placed its members in ministries and ordered some officials back to work, but services are yet to resume, with banks still closed.

Phalwan Sameer, also from northern Afghanistan, said his family came to Kabul after the situation rapidly deteriorated in his home town.

"There (was) a lot of fighting and bombing as well. That's why we came here. The houses were burned and we became homeless," he said.

Biden presidency shaken to core

AFP, Washington

Eyes closing, voice cracking, Joe Biden physically reflected the terrible blow to his presidency from the slaying of 13 US service members during the desperate Kabul evacuation.

Addressing the nation from the White House, Biden appeared occasionally close to tears as he spoke of the dead "heroes." And when he promised the attackers "we will hunt you down," there was steel in his voice.

No doubt that Biden's presidency has been shaken to the core by the bombing at Kabul's airport.

In January, he took office promising calm at home and respect for the United States abroad after the turbulent Donald Trump years.

Now Biden's been left with a mountain to climb if he's to persuade the nation and America's partners that either goal remains achievable.

After the fall of Kabul literally unopposed, his administration has been working around the clock for 10 days, hoping it could still pull triumph from disaster. The airlift was going far better than predicted. Then the bombs went off.



Shutting himself away with aides in the Situation Room, Biden canceled a meeting of state governors and told visiting Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett that their planned meeting in the Oval Office would have to wait until Friday.

"Joe Biden has blood on his hands," Republican congresswoman Elise Stefanik said. "This horrific national security and humanitarian disaster is solely the result of Joe Biden's weak and incompetent leadership. He is unfit to be commander-in-chief."

Republican Senator Marsha Blackburn tweeted that Biden and all his top national security staff "should resign or face impeachment and removal from office."

The Republican outcry was predictable. But the wider damage reflected in opinion polls will be more worrying for Biden.

While a USA Today/Suffolk University poll this week found overwhelmingly that Americans believe the Afghan war was not worth fighting, Biden isn't getting thanked. The poll found his overall approval at just 41 percent, with 55 percent disapproving.

Taliban working on 'inclusive caretaker govt'

Say it will include leaders from all ethnicities and tribal backgrounds in Afghanistan

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The Taliban yesterday said it is planning an inclusive caretaker government in Afghanistan after the group toppled the Western-backed administration in a stunning sweep earlier this month.

Taliban sources told Al Jazeera that the caretaker government will include leaders from all ethnicities and tribal backgrounds in the country.

Nearly a dozen names are being considered to be part of the new government, sources said. The duration of the caretaker government is unclear at the moment.

Afghanistan's ethnic diversity has been at the centre of politics and conflict in the country, with no single ethnic group enjoying a decisive majority in the country of 40 million people.

The Pashtuns are Afghanistan's biggest ethnic group, making up more than 42 percent of the population. The predominantly Sunni Muslim community speaks the Pashto language and has dominated Afghan politics since the 18th century.

Taliban sources also told Al Jazeera the caretaker government will have an "amir-ul momineen" (commander of the faithful) to lead the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

They said a supreme leadership council has been convened to decide the form of the future government and nominate ministers.



The sources added that the group wants to bring new faces in to the government, including the sons of Tajik and Uzbek tribal leaders.

They said the United States has been insisting on bringing in some members of the older governments, including former President Hamid Karzai and former Head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah.

Another Taliban source told Al Jazeera that the group remains committed to the 2020 Doha accord it signed with the US, including not allowing Afghan soil to be used to launch terror attacks.

On women's rights, the source said women will be allowed to work in various government bodies as they did in the previous government, mainly in the health and education sectors.

The source said special courts will be set up at local levels to fight corruption and make examples of corrupt officials.



Rescuers help a migrant child to disembark from a Spanish coast guard vessel, in the port of Arguineguin, in the island of Gran Canaria, Spain on Thursday. The photo was released yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



AUGUST 28

1963 - Martin Luther King delivered his "I have a dream" speech to 200,000 civil rights demonstrators who had marched on Washington for jobs and freedom.

1996 - The marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, which took place with pomp and pageantry in 1981, ended with a rubber-stamp divorce.

SOURCE: WEBSITES

Advertisement for BSMRU (Bangladesh Secondary and Madrasah Research University) featuring a table of courses and fees.

No jobs, passports for 'anti-national' social media posts in India

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION

At least three Indian states are denying passports and government jobs to people because of their social media posts or participation in protests, human rights activists said.

In a move that could jeopardise the futures of tens of thousands of vocal young Indians, authorities in Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar and Uttarakhand have issued such orders, as India clamps down on dissent online and on the ground.

"It is a reprehensible move - the police have no right to decide whether any post on social media is anti-national or not," said Nasir Khuehemi, a student leader in the restive region of Jammu and Kashmir, enmeshed in turmoil for decades.

"The need of the hour is to not create more hassles in the path of thousands of Kashmiri youth who are now in jobs or studying. It will push the youth into further alienation," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

In Bihar, state police said participating in any kind of protest could result in clearances being denied for passports and government jobs.

"Such people have to be prepared for serious consequences," said Bihar's director general of police S K Singhal.

Earlier this year, police in the northern state of Uttarakhand said they would monitor social media posts and maintain a record of those that are "anti-national" or "anti-social", and reject passport applications accordingly.

Across Asia, lawmakers have introduced a slew of legislation for governments to access internet users' data and block so-called false news, which human rights groups say raises the risk of mass surveillance and free speech violations.

Factory fire kills 16 in Karachi

AFP, Karachi

At least 16 workers died and more were missing after a factory fire in Pakistan's commercial capital Karachi yesterday, police said.

More than 25 labourers were inside the small factory in a residential area of the port city when the blaze broke out, causing it to fill with thick smoke.

"We have recovered 16 bodies so far," senior police officer Shahjehan Khan told AFP.

"We are trying to recover more stranded people but I fear they might not make it out," Khan said, adding the factory had no proper fire exits.

"The stairs leading to the roof were locked, otherwise the labourers could have survived by running to the rooftop," Khan said.

Karachi city administrator Murtaza Wahab also said there was no safe exit for the workers.

Poor industrial laws and building codes in Pakistan mean factory blazes are frequent.

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