



Wednesday 26 December 2007 - Afghan Government Requests UN Staff Member to Leave the Country



The UN is continuing talks with the Afghan officials following the government's request that a staff member at the UN mission there leave the country. The request comes after the staff member spoke with local people while in Helmand province. This area has been under the Taliban for approximately 10 months, according to the UN Mission in Afghanistan, known as [UNAMA](#).

Aleem Siddique is deputy spokesperson at UNAMA. He says the incident stems from a misunderstanding.

"Talking to people on the ground of different opinions and different views does not equate to talking to terrorists. What we were doing in Helmand was talking to ordinary grassroots communities about how we can start opening schools and hospitals, and how we can deliver the very basic services that the people of Helmand province so desperately need."

Mr. Siddique says UNAMA fully intends to comply with the Afghan government's decision. However, he adds, the mission will work to try and clarify the situation so that "the important work" of peace-building can continue.