

## Moscow Format: A Platform to Get the Taliban Trapped in Russia's Political Snare

### News:

In the sixth regional meeting on Afghanistan known as the "Moscow Format," held in Moscow, the Afghan Foreign Minister and representatives from Pakistan, Iran, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey attended. Maria Zakharova, the spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated before the meeting: "The priority of this meeting is to discuss the Afghan national reconciliation process and to expand practical interaction between regional governments and Kabul in political, economic, counterterrorism, and counter-narcotics areas."

### Comment:

The objectives of the "Moscow Format" have significantly evolved since its establishment in 2017. Initially, when this format was established, American and NATO occupying forces were present in Afghanistan, the U.S.-backed Republic was in power, and the Taliban regime had no control of the country. However, today, the situation has completely changed, and various countries, under different banners, are striving to strengthen their political, intelligence, economic, and cultural presence and influence in Afghanistan. Notably, Russia, China, the United States, European countries, and Afghanistan's neighbors are all seeking to increase their leverage in the country to isolate their competitors. Russia is concerned about the growing influence of the United States and its allies in Afghanistan, believing that the U.S. aims to use Afghanistan against Russia's regional interests and security. For this reason, Russia has taken several measures, among which the "Moscow Format" is one.

It is evident that Russia and regional countries, like the United States, are concerned about the establishment of the Khilafah (Caliphate) and the comprehensive implementation of Islam in Afghanistan and the region. In fact, Russia's fears of establishment of a Caliphate and the unity of the Islamic Ummah are for two main reasons: 1) During the era of the Caliphate, Russia has suffered severe blows from it and faced bitter defeats; and 2) Russia worries that Islamic revival in the region could lead to the downfall of its proxy rulers in Central Asia — rulers who have governed the people of these regions for years, exploiting public wealth and resources for personal gain, while the people have remained in poverty and deprivation. Additionally, the people of Central Asia have grown weary of the democratic, nationalist, and communist systems, which have brought them nothing but corruption and dependence.

In every meeting, the regional countries present packages of demands to the Afghan government which they themselves do not abide by in their own countries. For

example, they call for the establishment of an “Inclusive Government,” while in most regional countries, political power is shared among specific dynasties, families, circles, or particular states. Yet, they repeatedly promote the slogan of an inclusive government for Afghanistan to incorporate secular and democrat personalities along with their agents into the Afghan government, thereby diverting the current regime from its core path.

The regional leaders not only urge the Afghan government to abandon its Islamic objectives, but they also demand the suppression of migrant Mujahideen — those who fought for 20 years alongside the Taliban against the American occupation and pledged allegiance to the Taliban. Additionally, the "Moscow Format" expects the Afghan government to say NO to “Jihad” (which they label as terrorism) and prevent other Jihadi groups from waging Jihad against the aforementioned infidel states. These demands reflect their enmity towards Islam and Muslims.

Russia and other regional countries, through political and economic promises, are trying to draw the Taliban towards their own interests and even collaborate with them in suppressing political Islam. Despite this, the Taliban remain on Russia’s list of terrorist organizations; however, at this meeting, the Taliban were assured that they might be removed from this list. Even Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, announced during the SCO Heads of State Council Meeting on July that his government considers the Taliban an ally in combating terrorism, especially against ISIS.

This is despite the fact that Russia has historically been a direct and long-standing enemy of the Islamic Ummah and the Mujahid people of Afghanistan; and even today, in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Syria, and other regions, it continues to kill and imprison Muslims, labeling every Islamic movement as terrorism. Thus, expecting anything positive and/or goodness (Khair) from such a state is not only contrary to Islamic Sharia but is also deemed to be a political mistake.

In conclusion, regional meetings and conferences, in reality, serve as traps where colonial powers pursue their political objectives. Those with a clear understanding of politics are well aware of how the Syrian revolution and the Arab Spring was derailed through regional conferences and meetings. Therefore, instead of participating in such conferences and hoping in Russia, China, the United Nations, the U.S., and other states, the Afghan government should direct its hope towards the Islamic Ummah and strive for the establishment of the Righteous Caliphate. In this regard, it should trust Hizb ut Tahrir, a political party that has a clear understanding of the political situation and never deceives the Muslim people.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by**

**Yusof Arsalan**

**Member of the Media Office in Hizb ut Tahrir in Wilayah Afghanistan**