

## Anti-Taliban Resistance Group Afghanistan Liberation Movement (ALM): Afghan Taliban Leader Mullah Hibbatullah Akhundzada Has Been Poisoned In Kandahar

On January 21, 2023, the Afghanistan Liberation Movement (ALM), an anti-Taliban resistance group led by retired Afghan army colonel Abdul Matin Suleimankhel, claimed that Afghan Taliban emir Mullah Hibbatullah Akhundzada has been poisoned in Kandahar on the night of January 19.

ALM's English-language tweet read: "The Terrorist Taliban pro claimed leader or copy of Mullah Haibatulah has been poisoned Thursday night in Kandahar! Mulah Shirin & son is also in bad condition! #ALM -444 (118)."[1] According to the tweet, another cleric Mullah Shirin and his son were also affected by the poisoning incident.

 The Afghanistan Liberation Movement @ALM\_AFG · Jan 21  
The Terrorist Taliban pro claimed leader or copy of Mullah Haibatulah has been poisoned Thursday night in Kandahar! Mulah Shirin & son is also in bad condition! #ALM -444 (118)




A cartoon accompanying ALM's tweet.

The tweet, especially the mention of a "copy" of the Taliban leader, reflects continuing speculation in Afghan media that Mullah Hibbatullah Akhundzada, the emir of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA, i.e., the Afghan Taliban), may be dead, or a political decoy may be impersonating him.[2]

This speculation has persisted because Afghans have never reported meeting Akhundzada face to face, nor has the Afghan Taliban leadership ever released a video or photo of him meeting with the Taliban leadership or anyone else. The sole photo of him appears to be old, possibly taken decades ago, and could be of someone else.

In December 2022, Afghan writer Haroon Amirzada, in a Dari-language article titled "The Taliban's Leaderless Emirate," said: "The Taliban call their government the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and introduce their leader Mullah Hibbatullah Akhundzada. However, no one has seen this emir nor heard [from him] so far." [3]

 پامير غورځنگ (Pamir Gorzang)  
@pamirA0023  
قندها ولايت كوم كس چې د ملا حبيبتو رول لوبوي.  
تير ماخوستن په ډير ماهرانه ډول مسموم شوي،  
ددې پخلي لا نه كوو چې كوم ډاكټر يې درملنه كوي.  
ملاشيرين په يد وضعيت كې دى.  
موږ د تروريزم خلاف يو  
#ALM  
444  
118

Translate Tweet

A screenshot of Pamir Gorzang's tweet.

The claim about poisoning was reiterated in a January 21, 2023 Pashtu-language tweet by ALM member Pamir Gorzang, who stated: "In Kandahar, the man playing the role of Mullah Hibto [Mullah Hibbatullah Akhundzada] has been skillfully poisoned. It has not yet been confirmed which doctor will treat him. The condition of Mullah Shirin is deteriorated. We all are against terrorism." [4]

Although the Afghan Taliban have reported that Akhundzada has been meeting with members of the Taliban and others in Kandahar and Kabul, no one has confirmed having met with or seen him. The Taliban government has published many statements and decrees in the name of Akhundzada.

In November 2022, Afghan daily *Hasht-e-Subah* stated: "These decrees attributed to the Taliban leader have been published by the official journal, while he has not yet appeared in the public. The only picture in the archive is a passport-size photo being circulated among the people and the Taliban. No one, even high-ranking Taliban members has met him in person. He usually speaks with his back to the audience." [5]



*The photo of Mullah Hibbatullah Akhundzada released by Afghan Taliban*

[1] Twitter.com/ALM\_AFG, January 21, 2023.

[2] MEMRI Special Dispatches Series No. 9670, Is Afghan Taliban Emir Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada Even Alive? – Afghan Writer Haroon Amirzada: 'The Taliban Are A Complex Terrorist Network Whose Head Is In Afghanistan But Their Tail Is Still... In Pakistan', December 13, 2021.

[3] MEMRI Special Dispatches Series No. 9670, Is Afghan Taliban Emir Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada Even Alive? – Afghan Writer Haroon Amirzada: 'The Taliban Are A Complex Terrorist Network Whose Head Is In Afghanistan But Their Tail Is Still... In Pakistan', December 13, 2021.

[4] Twitter.com/pamirA0023, January 21, 2023.

[5] 8am.media (Afghanistan), November 29, 2022.