

## Ashraf Ghani says he fled Afghanistan to avoid being lynched.



By Carlotta Gall

Aug. 18, 2021

In his first video address since he fled Afghanistan, President Ashraf Ghani said he had left the country to avoid a lynching by the Taliban and vowed to return.

In a videotaped statement posted on his Facebook page from the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday evening, Mr. Ghani said that, despite an agreement that the Taliban would not enter the city of Kabul, his guards warned him on Sunday afternoon that the insurgents had reached the walls of the presidential palace in central Kabul.

“If I had stayed in Afghanistan,” he said, “the people of Afghanistan would have witnessed the president hanged once more.”

He was referring to the murder of President Mohammad Najibullah, who was executed and strung up in a public square after the Taliban seized the capital in 1996.

Mr. Ghani denied reports from people, among them the Russian envoy in Kabul, Zamir Kabulov, that he had left with crates of cash. He said he had passed through customs on arrival in the United Arab Emirates.

“I came just with my clothes, and I was not even able to bring my library,” he said.

Looking tired and thin, Mr. Ghani was serious and firm in his delivery of a speech that he read from written pages. He said he had tried to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the conflict but had also been coordinating the defense of Kabul right up until his departure.

“The security forces did not fail us,” he said. “It was the political elite of the government and the international community who failed.”

He said that he had every intention of returning to Afghanistan and that he was in touch with the political leaders Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, who have been in discussions with the Taliban.

Mr. Ghani also noted out that he was not the first Afghan leader forced to flee. The first Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, fled after the American intervention in 2001.

Mr. Ghani, a World Bank-trained technocrat who wrote a book titled “Fixing Failed States,” has come under withering criticism for his performance as Afghanistan’s leader and the ignominious way in which he left, which sped the government’s collapse.