

UNAMA

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Press Statement

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United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan meets with religious leaders

Kabul, Tuesday 12 April 2011 - Today the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Staffan de Mistura at his request, met separately with the Chairman of the *Ulema* Council of Afghanistan, *Maulavi* Qiyamuddin Kashaaf and the Minister of Haj and Religious Affairs, Dr. Mohammad Yossof Niazi.

SRSG de Mistura listened to *Maulavi* Kashaaf's concerns and expressed his understanding of the *Ulema* Council of Afghanistan's outrage at the sacrilegious act of destruction of the Holy Quran, recently committed by a Mr Jones in Florida – an act that has been rightly condemned by many in the strongest terms, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Maulavi Qiyamuddin Kashaaf also strongly condemned and regretted the killing of UNAMA staff. SRSG de Mistura thanked *Maulavi* Kashaaf for his words and added that no act is justification for an attack on innocent civilians who are here in Afghanistan to assist the Afghan people.

The *Ulema* Council of Afghanistan praised the work of UNAMA in Afghanistan particularly for its leading role in coordinating international assistance for Afghan reconstruction efforts. *Maulavi* Kashaaf added that UNAMA represents the whole international community, including Islamic states.

The Minister of Haj and Religious Affairs, Dr. Mohammad Yossof Niazi, while strongly condemning the outrageous act by an individual in Florida, reiterated that the Holy Quran says that a true Moslem respect guests; UNAMA staff are our guests, they have come to serve the Afghan people, they respect our belief, culture and tradition and Afghans should respect them and their lives.

UNAMA will remain firm in expressing and condemning even an intention to commit other acts that offend the Islamic faith, culture and traditions. UNAMA asks that steps be taken to prevent such acts occurring, by any available legal means, wherever in the world they might take place.

UNAMA shall continue to remain in touch with religious leaders and scholars of Afghanistan. Finally, SRSG de Mistura, responding to a request of *Maulavi* Kashaaf, reiterated the intention of UNAMA staff to stay and work for a better future for all Afghans while continuing to remain respectful of their sovereignty, culture, tradition and religion.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Kabul, Afghanistan

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