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## HAMID KARZAI

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PRESIDENT OF  
AFGHANISTAN

“LIBERATE Afghanistan  
from these people, they are  
going to hurt everybody,  
not only Afghans.”

- Inducted: 2002 -

PROFILE

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### Hamid Karzai Biography

President of Afghanistan

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Hamid Karzai Date of birth: December 24, 1957

#### LIBERATION LEADER

Hamid Karzai was born to a distinguished family of the Popalzai tribe of the Pashtun people in the Kandahar region of Afghanistan. His father, who served in the Afghan Parliament under King Mohammad Zahir Shah, was hereditary Khan or chief of the Popalzai. Young Karzai attended schools in Kandahar and in the capital city, Kabul. He was studying in Simla, India, when his native land was invaded and occupied by the Soviet Union.

During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the Western-educated Hamid Karzai served the resistance as an advisor and diplomat, winning the loyalty of the Mujahideen, or "holy warriors," who finally expelled the Soviets from Afghanistan. Karzai was deputy foreign minister in the postwar government from 1992 to 1994, but the country was soon rent by civil war as local warlords competed for power. The



Taliban movement sought Karzai's support in restoring order, and offered him the post of United Nations ambassador, but he broke with the new regime when it fell under the influence of foreign terrorists.



From a base in Pakistan, Karzai began to organize anti-Taliban opposition. When his father was murdered in Pakistan, presumably by agents of the Taliban, Hamid Karzai, was selected to succeed his father as Khan of the half-million Popalzai. He immediately defied both the Pakistan and Taliban governments by leading a convoy of tribal mourners to carry his father's body home for burial in Kandahar, a stronghold of the Taliban. The Taliban did not dare intervene. This act of defiance made Hamid Karzai the most visible leader of resistance to the Taliban among the Pashtun

people.

In October 2001, Karzai and three friends re-entered Afghanistan to raise a revolt. He had a single satellite phone, no sleeping bags or other supplies, little ammunition, few weapons, and no certainty of outside support, but day by day he attracted more followers. He narrowly escaped capture by the Taliban, and was even wounded by a stray American bomb, but by December, the Taliban had fled from Kandahar.

Four factions representing the major ethnic groups of Afghanistan met in Bonn, Germany to form an interim administration. Setting aside their old and bitter divisions, all factions agreed on the multi-lingual, cosmopolitan Karzai to head an interim administration until the traditional grand council of the Afghan peoples, the Loya Jirga, could be convened to create a provisional government and draft a new constitution.



As Chairman of the interim administration, Hamid Karzai quickly won the support of the world community for his vision of a stable, peaceful Afghanistan. In June of 2002, days after the International Achievement Summit in Dublin, the Loya Jirga elected Hamid Karzai to serve as President of Afghanistan. As President, he has survived assassination attempts and the efforts of extremists to disrupt the country's first national election. In September 2004, he was elected to a full five-year term as the first directly elected President in the country's history. His struggle to unite and rebuild Afghanistan continues; his faith in his country's future is inextinguishable.

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