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Shell-shocked residents want offices, homes rebuilt

November 25, 2012

Residents on Saturday urged the Karzai administration to take emergency steps to assess the losses resulting from Friday's suicide bombing in the capital of central Maidan Wardak province. Shell-shocked over the attack that killed three people and wounded more than 90 others, inhabitants asked the central government to accord priority to the reconstruction of offices and civilian houses that were damaged by the powerful blast.

As usual, the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack in Miadan Shahar, saying that a large number of Afghan and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops were killed. The bomber struck close to the Office of Statistics.

The provincial police headquarters, central prison, High Peace Council and Swedish Committee for Afghanistan offices, as well as several other departments, are located in the area. But the offices remained closed on account of the weekly holiday.

Two employees of a government-owned guesthouse were killed and 90 others, including women and children, were injured. Prison guards and some government officials are also among the wounded. An explosives-laden Mazda pick-up truck was used in the attack. Twenty-two prisoners and 60 civilians suffered injuries in the explosion.

Noor Rahman, a resident of Maidan Shahar, pointed to scores of damaged homes and shops, including his. "I'm not concerned only at the destruction of my shop; the devastated government departments too are our assets. The authorities should rebuild them urgently." Given the scale of losses, he suggested, the government should send a delegation to the city to

evaluate the damage and set aside a hefty reconstruction fund. In ordinary circumstances, the rebuilding effort would take several years to complete, Noor Rahman believed.