

EUROPE &amp; CENTRAL ASIA

# Afghanistan's National Resistance Front: Progression and Success

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*This author interviewed Ali Maisam Nazary, head of the National Resistance Front's Foreign Relations and Hamad Saifi, member of the NRF and former Afghanistan Army Commanding Officer, 5th Brigade of the 203rd Thunder Corps.*

In the three years since the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, Afghanistan's National Resistance Front (NRF) has worked tirelessly to liberate the Afghan people from repressive Taliban rule. Since 2021, the NRF has made great strides towards ensuring the permanent protection of civil liberties for all citizens of Afghanistan and has galvanized support across the country for the eradication of terrorism and the establishment of fair and egalitarian rule. And it has done so [without any international support](#).

Afghanistan's National Resistance Front (NRF) was created by leader Ahmad Massoud in August 2021 as a collective movement against the Taliban's oppressive rule. Based on figures from NRF Foreign Relations Head Ali Maisam Nazary, the NRF has more than 5,000 members. A growth in local support has facilitated an expansion to parts of South-Western Afghanistan and the wintry Northern areas, meaning the NRF is present in a majority of the country, nearly 20 provinces.

## Evolution of Urban Operations

NRF member and former Afghanistan Army Commanding Officer Hamid Saifi elucidated the NRF's recent developments, particularly regarding the Front's evolution of urban operations. The NRF's resistance to the Taliban has been a two-tiered, military-political approach. The organization has been slowly growing as a formidable political opposition to the Taliban, attempting to ignite governmental change in Afghanistan. Militarily, the NRF is a well-equipped force that has established itself as a strong resistance to the Taliban's jingoism. The NRF's dual

pursuit of armed resistance and political resistance has been advantageous to its cause, preventing the normalization of Taliban rule in regional countries and the international community. While this has garnered domestic support for the NRF, this has not translated into external material support.

NRF foreign relations head Ali Maisam Nazary shed light on the NRF's progression. The past three years have included both traditional and non-traditional combat without any external support; outcomes of which have exceeded all expectations. With the recent start of the NRF's urban operations, information warfare, guerilla tactics and hit run attacks have become highly useful to the NRF's campaign. Since January 2024, the NRF has had more than 207 successful operations, highlighting both an increased confidence in recruitment and targeting of [enemy fighters](#) and intelligence operatives. The NRF has been able to successfully target military bases and facilities, checkpoints, and high-level fighters and officials. The NRF's geographic growth has increased intelligence capabilities and enabled infiltrations of the Taliban's intelligence network, allowing for the success of information-based missions. This, coupled with the Taliban's failure to capture any forces since the beginning of the year, has created exhaustion, confusion and frustration within the Taliban's internal structure, with mistrust amongst the Taliban's ranks deepening every day. Nazary has affirmed that a recent memo from the Taliban's central intelligence body, GDI, expressed concerns over the movements of the NRF near Bagram Air Base, revealing apprehensiveness over the NRF's activities and concerns about territorial encroachment.

### **Mechanisms for Expansion**

As explained by Ali Mazam Nazary, the primary reason for the expansion of the NRF is the support of the Afghan people, who have extended hospitable invitations to the NRF from far-reaching provinces, seeking assistance and support. Afghan women, in particular, believe strongly in the armed resistance efforts of the NRF in order to liberate Afghanistan from fiercely oppressive and misogynistic rule. Ahmed Massoud started NRF as a grass-roots movement in 2021, receiving consultations from Afghans across the country and in faraway villages. The Afghan people see Massoud as educated and uninvolved in the corruption of Afghanistan's politics and as such, it has been easy for the NRF to mobilize the Afghan people around his charismatic image. The NRF's acquisition of resources is thanks to the people but

also thanks to the Taliban themselves, who maintain an open black market of guns and ammunition. Transnational networks finance the Taliban's weapons trade. As provided by Nazary, a recent [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\) report](#) illuminates the Taliban's financial movements, including the discovery of a shipment of arms confiscated near Latin America. Additionally, Nazary asserted concern over the Taliban's harboring of over a dozen distinct terrorist organizations within Afghanistan's borders, meaning the NRF's ruthless fight against the Taliban is more important than ever.

Another mechanism for the NRF's expansion is the organization's political presence in Central Asia, where it has countered the spread of the Taliban's influence. The NRF's structural expansion has enabled it to gain a foothold across the Khorasan, as well as in Europe and the international court system via the [Vienna Process](#), which attempts to put an end to the Taliban's rule and democratize Afghanistan. Regional countries, too, are vulnerable to the Taliban's cross-border movements as a result of weak border security and management. Tajikistan has, historically, had a stable policy in favor of the Taliban's interests, but Dushanbe has been vocal about the Afghan people's struggle for freedom. There is no duplicity in their stance. The case of Pakistan is more complex. Pakistan once supported the Taliban, granting them a safe haven to harbor Taliban leadership. After 2021, the Taliban betrayed Islamabad's support, and now support Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani offshoot of the Taliban. The TTP's public enemy number one is Pakistan, threatening the stability of the country with repeated attacks. With the TTP threatening to launch the Islamic Emirate within Pakistan, Islamabad has been more vocal about the threat of the TTP. Pakistan faces tough policy decisions ahead, with the twin threat of both the Taliban and the TTP [destabilizing](#) its north-western region.

## **The NRF's Future**

Terrorism is crippling the Afghan people, but the NRF is crippling the Taliban. In the short term, the NRF will remain alive and well, and the organization's resistance effort will continue, but another threat is looming in Kabul: the implosion of the Taliban. With the organization's internal network fragile and only continuing to fracture, [in-fighting](#) between the Taliban's factions is splintering the Taliban's system. This inevitable implosion will create a vacuum that will subsequently spark a power struggle. When this comes, the NRF will be ready to step in

militarily, but it is support from the United Nations and other international institutions that will be needed in the long run. In the current phase of operations, it is sustainable for the NRF to use inside sources for information-gathering, but the long-term demands external support from the international community. If the NRF is unable to prepare for this vacuum with the absence of external support, catastrophe will follow. As explained by General Hamid Saifi, other terrorist groups, like the TTP, Ansarullah, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and al-Qaeda (AQ) are exerting strategic patience; they know that the Taliban will eventually cease to rule Afghanistan. These groups will attempt to fill in the gaps, which will more than likely be a violent and chaotic transition of power, which the NRF hopes to remedy with the establishment of an Afghan government founded on the will of the people and one that legitimizes the right to education, the right to work and vote, and seeks justice for women. It is imperative that, [through the Vienna Process](#), the international community emboldens the NRF's fight for the dignity of Afghanistan's ancient history and the sanctity of the Afghan people. Through the Vienna Process, Afghanistan has the potential to be reinvigorated and revitalized. On [11th September 2024](#), U.S. Congressman Tim Burchett introduced a bill to leverage the Vienna Process against the Taliban, bringing together anti-terrorist political factions to collectively condemn and remedy the Taliban's oppressive regime. As [called for](#) by Ahmad Massoud, the establishment of an Afghan government in exile could provide an avenue for anti-Taliban unification. Marshal Abdul Rashid Dostum, member of the National Resistance Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan and leader of the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, [asserted](#) that setting up a government in exile does not require an abundance of financial capital. The political processes afforded by the Vienna Process supplement a unified front against the Taliban and would, more than likely, strengthen the NRF's political opposition.

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