

# Afghan constitution drafted

By Burt Herman  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan unveiled a post-Taliban draft constitution Monday, a historic milestone on what has been a bloody, bumpy and often tragic path to recovery after decades of war.

The draft starts by declaring that "Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic," then later creates the posts of president and vice president, as well as envisioning two houses of congress.

The White House hailed the draft constitution, with press secretary Scott McClellan telling reporters aboard Air Force One en route from Waco, Texas, to Birmingham, Ala., that it "marks an important milestone in Afghanistan's political development."

The president would be a strong executive who will serve a five-year term and act as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He also would have the power to appoint judges, military officers, police

and national security officials. There is a two-term limit.

The draft reflects the government's desire to bring the country together under the banner of Islam, which is practiced by the vast majority of Afghans. However, the hardline Islamic law enforced by the former Taliban regime is not expected to be a part of Afghanistan's future.

Under the Taliban, men were forced to grow beards and pray, women were banned from schools and almost all public life, and music was forbidden. Executions were carried out before large crowds at Kabul's sports stadium.

"The religion of Afghanistan is the sacred religion of Islam. Followers of other religions are free to perform their religious ceremonies within the limits of the provisions of law," the draft states, according to an English translation provided by the government.

While avoiding direct mention of Shariah, Islamic holy law, the draft states that "in Afghanistan, no law can be contrary to the sacred religion of Islam and the values of this Constitution."

The position of prime minister was cut from the final draft. Many feared a strong prime minister could have emerged as a political and military rival to the president, a major concern in a country that has known little but

**"Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic."**

— Afghan draft constitution

war for a quarter-century. "The most important thing that a country like Afghanistan needs is stability," said Jawid Luddin, a spokesman for President Hamid Karzai. "This constitution is made for Afghanistan for the next 100, 200 years."

Under the draft, considerable power will be invested in the president, who will appoint one-third of the members of the upper house of parliament. Of those, half must be women.

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