



Sense of Community

To Maintain Social Order and Law Enforcement

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Project Brief (414 WORDS)

Scanning:

Lack of citizens' trust in law enforcement forces in society, war, and political turmoil are serious problems in Afghanistan. In mistrust between the police and citizens, political and violent behavior of the police, at times, has contributed to worsening the situation. This has become a challenge for the police to maintain social order. On the other hand, citizens do not know how to approach police and ask for help. In some cases, they cannot share their requests with the police because of their low level of awareness and literacy, and this has led to:

- Reducing law enforcement credibility
- Increasing criminal activities
- Increasing mistrust between citizens and the police

Analysis:

This situation has hindered the Afghan Police in succeeding to perform their duties. Criminal networks reinforce this trend and continually use this opportunity to their advantage. In broader level, there was no (still is no) proper infrastructure for people to have direct and defined contact with the police; people did not know how to and where to report a crime. Although, National Police emergency response numbers, 119 and 100, have been activated in the country; however, lack of awareness on the police and citizens part, and the cost of calling, this has not been effective yet.

Response:

Lack of human, technical, and financial resources in police has caused this force's incapability to take charge. Unless the citizens, with a collective sense and responsibility, help police counter crime and provide social order, not much will change. Having learned this, we wanted to see if establishing councils at our station, Police District 9, that would consist of local residents, including women and ethnic minorities, can help us solve these problems. Our approach included:

1. Establish councils at each sub-district (minimum 100 houses)
2. Hold meetings with these councils and influential people
3. Distribute mobile phones for heads of councils (to facilitate a network between them and the police for easy reporting)
4. Circulate contact numbers of police officials to the public

Assessment:

Based on assessments of the crime state at the Police District 9 of Kabul Police, we found that crime levels significantly decreased compared to previous years. Citizens' became more willing to file complaints. Local Medias reported that citizens complained less about police misbehavior now; mistrust, also, seemed to be waning between people and the police. This issue was solved with better coordination between people and the police. Meanwhile, with the help of these councils, local people solved other social problems as well.

Project Description (3995 WORDS)

Scanning:

War and conflict in the past forty years in Afghanistan has caused disintegration of public entities; there are no effective and reliable law enforcement entity in the structure of the government. On the same note, citizens have lost trust in Afghan National Police - the law enforcement body of the Afghan government - which provides to instability in the society. This entity was destroyed during Taliban and the Mujahedeen government, between 1991 and 2001.

People have not depended on the government entities to solve their problems. Instead, they addressed their problems through Jirgas, ethnic assemblies, based on their ethnic customs and traditions. This continued to persist even after the fall of Taliban and formation of the new government with the support of international community. Despite the problems that people had encountered previously, they accepted the Afghan law enforcement forces with good intentions. However, widespread corruption, and low levels of professional capacity in the law enforcement entities in early years of the new government, made it impossible for criminal cases to be thoroughly investigated, and the relationship between citizens and police to be clearly defined. Citizens reported misconduct and human rights abuse of police personnel through media. Civil activists and citizens have also complained about lack of trust between police and themselves to government officials; even to the president¹ and parliament members at times. Meanwhile, police leadership were often aware and tried to solve, but to no avail in the short run. Mr. Wais Ahmad Barmak, former Minister of Interior Affairs, in fall 2017 stated that people do not trust police².

This gave criminals the opportunity to strengthen their positions and continue their work safely. Citizens did not properly inform the police about criminal activities, and in some cases even hid them; because people thought that police was not reliable and should not be trusted. Realizing this, police officials started reforms on different levels. However, implementing these reforms still remain a challenge.

PD 9 covered 45km² and a population of 400,000 persons³. It is one of the most strategic areas of Kabul city that includes green security area. It is adjacent to the Presidential Palace, the US Embassy, the Italian Embassy, the Embassy of United Arab Emirates, several ministries, Supreme Court, Hamid Karzai International Airport, International hostels, UN Compound, Afghanistan Independent Election Commission, Pul-e-Charkhi-Kabul Industrial Park, Kabul Customs and Kabul-Jalalabad highway. The population in this area are of different ethnicities and occupations.

Although most residents were born and have lived in Kabul, they still prefer their ethnic traditions to law; so, they try to solve their problems traditionally. They would rather protect their ethnic traditions than the law. This causes a disrespect and distrust to the law and its implementation; in other words, since they solve their problems among themselves and do not report, the police, as the law enforcement force, remains unaware of many things that go on in the society. This unawareness can lead to inaction, and can further widen the gap between citizens and the government. Hence, this strengthens the theory to solve their problems in a traditional way and away from the law. This also leads to undermining rule and enforcement of law in the society.

This situation has created the following challenges for the police:

1. Decreasing citizens' trust
2. Failure to register criminal complaints
3. Not understanding crimes and victims
4. Not knowing criminals and vulnerable areas
5. Improper treatment of criminals
6. Lack of communication between citizens and police

I understood the issue and carefully evaluated citizens' demands that were reported through media and their representatives. With the beginning of my responsibility in March 2018, I considered what the police face is quite serious; thus, I thought of the role of citizens in ensuring public security, social order, and counter crime activities that can be rather important and effective. That's why I decided on my mission to create a collective sense in the community to maintain social order, provide general security and fight crime in the area. Since my endeavor, people started cooperating and trusting the police in PD 9. As a result, criminal offenses and insecurity in the area of my responsibility decreased, and this response augmented the morale of the society. Since the fledgling system of the Afghan National Police has become more vulnerable because of decades of war, turmoil, and uncertainty, the grounds were laid for those who benefit from the lack of a system. My intention was to create a relation between citizens and the police, so the citizens know that National Police exists to serve them, ensure social order, and counter crimes.

Analysis:

In order to solve these challenges, a comprehensive plan was required, and I came up with the following:

1- Meeting local residents:

To have a clear understanding of the situation, I embarked on meeting with people in their communities⁴. Asking questions and listening to them helped me and my team to understand the problems, and demands from the police. The fact that there had never been a relationship or contact between people and the police in the area came up continuously during these meetings. I found out that only a limited number of people had intermittent contact with the police on countable occasions. To make matters worse, interest in establishing such relationship was somewhat weak among people too.

People did not know what their responsibilities in providing security and countering crime activities in their area were; or what should they expect from the police. In these meetings, I came across numerous cases that were not related to the duties of the police, such as road construction, drilling water wells, or reconstructing mosques. Some thought that police represented the entire government, and can/should address/ solve all their problems. This expectation somehow was rooted in the past, when the police, as law enforcers, reacted to the violation of the law. For instance, making sure that people do not cut down trees, and similar cases had created the impression that the police can prevent these behaviors.

Walking the backstreets:

Kabul city has an organic structure, and has grown unplanned in the recent two decades. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive system to store information or find addresses; even big mapping companies in the world, such as Google have been unable to help fix this. I tasked several teams to carefully survey the area and collect these information, which is part of the Ministry of Interior Affairs' plans as well. To gather precise information, police officers had to go to the houses and check closely. At times, I personally went to the area to control and monitor their performances, and cross check the information. By doing this, in addition to collecting information for the Police District 9, I could properly learn about the area under my control. Lack of information about the geographical location, especially in areas that are not according to urban planning norms can be problematic for the police. This helped me gain good insight about the areas' public places, possible routes and areas used by criminals, local culture and traditions. I remember one Friday I went to Qabel Bai community, to pray at a mosque, and meet people. An old man in his seventies introduced himself and said he did not remember in his lifetime that the head of a police station comes to the mosque to pray with people⁵. To me, this implied the depth of the gap that existed between people and the police.

2- Evaluating the obtainable data of criminal activities in PD 9:

To understand the problems properly, I had to refer to existing documents and reports. These reports were collected from two sources:

A. Information detected by Police officials: By attending the Jirga(s), ethnic assemblies, or recruiting resources, police had collected information about crimes, and detected criminal incidents. This information was officially recorded and tracked in the police database. However, due to lack of technical capacity, we could not access the majority of information in this database.

B: Complaints filed by citizens: As noted above, citizens had little interest in filing complaints with the police; they resolved their problems through Jirga(s). However, there were complaints there filed with the police by citizens. Evaluating these helped me identify crimes that had occurred in police district 9.

3- Police emergency numbers:

Investigating calls⁶ made by residents of PD 9 to 119 and 100, police emergency response number was another method used to learn what went on in the area. We received the cases that were about the PD 9 residents which mostly contained the type of crime and place of the crime. Regrettably, this information was stored at the Central Police Emergency Management Office, but not at PD levels; the information would get lost once the case was solved. But we were able to create a database at PD 9 and store the information for analysis.

Also, because of unprofessional behavior of a number of law enforcement departments, citizens had unfavorable impression of them, and shared these memories with their families and friends. This perpetuated the police's bad reputation in society. Unfortunately, religious clerics consider government laws to be contrary to divine commandments in the Holy Quran; they think that the laws enacted by the government would make Islamic values vulnerable and lead the country to eastern communism and western democracy; neither of which are very favorable among them. Though, efforts have been made to include Islamic law in the Afghanistan legislation. A large number of citizens were/still are illiterate and influenced by religious preachers with the above interpretation. Meanwhile, misconduct of a number of law enforcement agencies had led to creating a distance between citizens and police over the years.

Common crimes:

Analyzing data, I found that crimes such as car theft, petty robbery, armed robbery, theft of valuables such as mobile and women's' handbags, murder, suicide attacks, commercial and financial crimes, and drug sales happen in this area.

Victims:

Naturally all the residents of PD 9 were the victims of this situation. Criminals hid among people under different names. In some cases, people feared them and due to lack of a supportive mechanism, no one reported them to the police. This doubled the number of victims. Government employees and international organizations' staff whose office is located in the area were among the victims who commuted the Kabul-Jalalabad highway on daily basis. In some cases, they were the victims of armed robbery, vehicle theft, and kidnapping.

Location:

PD 9 is located at the center and east of Kabul city. In general, 10% of the area is according to municipality urban development plan and 90% of the area is outside the municipality plan.

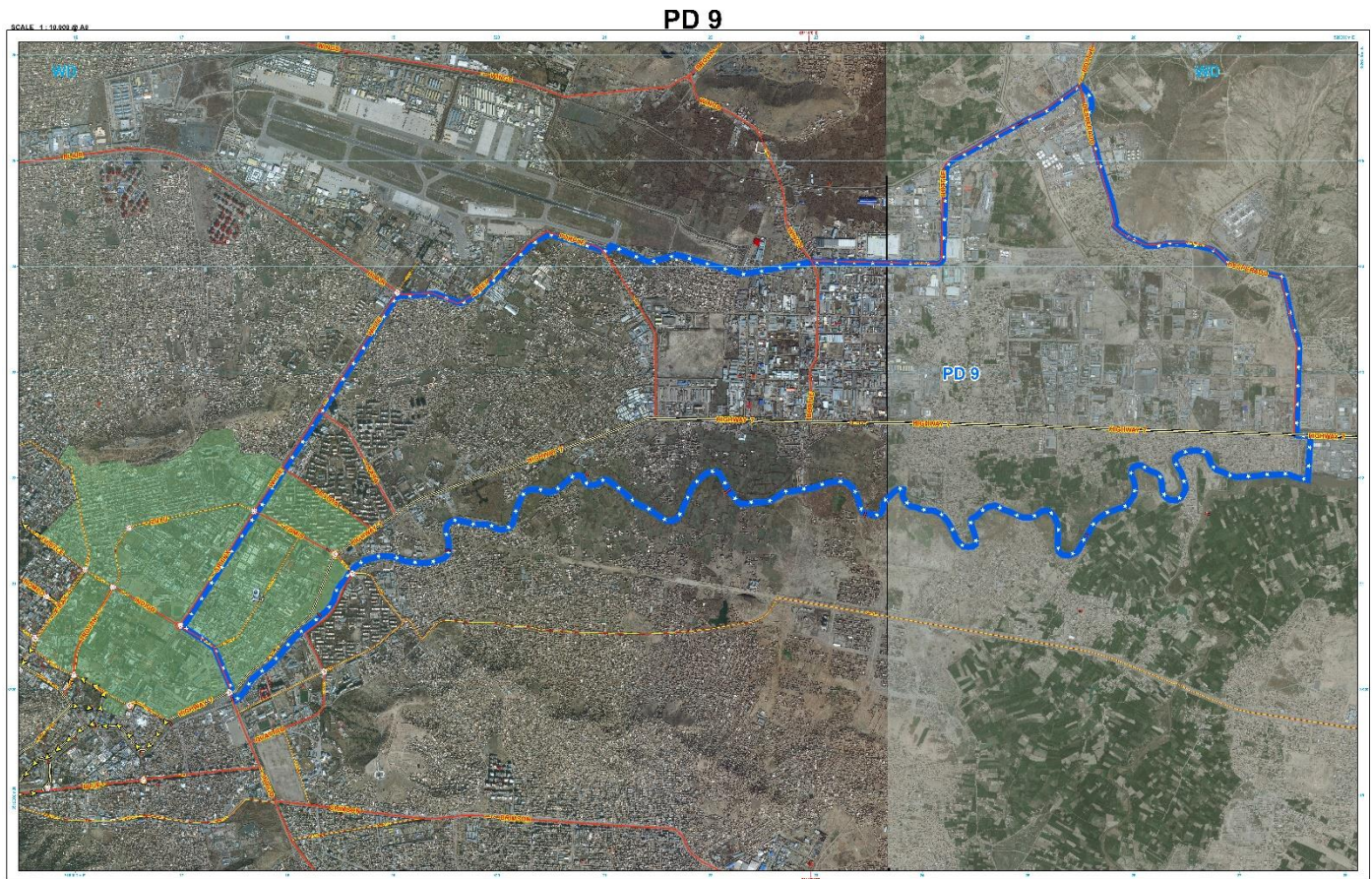


Figure 1- PD 9, Kabul City, Afghanistan

By analyzing these information, we understood that most robberies happen because of the way houses are constructed; they are jammed together. Robbers/thieves simply can enter one house and escape from the other. Domestic violence (beating, obstruction of education, obstruction in choosing a spouse, inheritance and divorce) are other types of crime that happened here; because the residents have low levels of literacy, and tradition prevails among them.

Irregularity in the structure of urban development in this area created an opportunity to hide drug dealers and drug users; because police could not patrol narrow backstreets easily all the time.

Kabul – Jalalabad highway:

This highway is one of the most important connecting routes of Kabul with eastern provinces; it also serves as transit route to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Robbers have always used various tricks on this highway, such as using of light weapons and knives in early mornings to rob travelers' bags and valuable things; at times, they have kidnaped government and non-government employees.

Suspects:

Analyzing the collected information, we obtained the following:

1. Residency:

The majority of suspects were local residents in cases as domestic violence, drug dealing and murder; but in crimes such as robbery, and theft of vehicles and valuable things, suspects came from outside PD 9, especially the neighboring PDs.

2. Gender:

The investigations show that 99.9% of offenders were male. A limited number of women were arrested as suspects in cases such as robbery of women's handbags, pocket stealing, and managing brothels.

3. Age:

Our investigations revealed that 90% of suspects were between the ages of 10 – 40 years old. Children between the ages of 10 – 18 were mostly engaged in pocket stealing, drug trafficking, and cellphone theft. Those aged 18-30 were mostly engaged in drug trafficking, car theft, and domestic violence. Suspects aged 30-40 were mostly engaged in murder, drug dealing, pimping, car theft, gambling, and land theft.

4. Literacy level:

About 90% of suspects did not have college or high school education. These individuals were caught for crimes such as theft, burglary, drug dealing, pocket stealing, domestic violence, and pimping. The remaining 10% committed murder, alcohol drinking (which is illegal in Afghanistan because it is an Islamic State) and domestic violence.

Response:

Having analyzed the problem, we took the following measures:

1- Awareness

I divided the awareness program into two categories:

A. Raising awareness among police personnel:

Since the population of Afghanistan is widely illiterate, so are a large number of government employees, including police personnel. This illiteracy is not only the inability to read and write, it includes their inabilities in social conducts and civil rights. To tackle this, I had to set up a literacy test for those who had the most contact with citizens. I found that a good number of my personnel need to improve their literacy capabilities, and become more aware of their duties. To improve their work capacity, I tasked managers of each department to carry out this awareness program in their relevant departments. This proved to be helpful because we routinely checked personnel capabilities with rounds of tests on different issues and levels.

B. Raising awareness among citizens:

As mentioned above, majority of citizens did not know what kind of assistance they could ask the police. They had unfavorable impression of law enforcement officers in the past. To address this concern and raise awareness of police responsibilities, and in what circumstances the police can assist citizens, I held several meetings at the meeting hall of PD 9, as well as at the mosques in the area. I personally participated in these meetings and explained police mandates, and facilities our police had at hand. I went to schools and training courses to respond to concerns and questions of youth to raise their awareness as well. Meanwhile, for the first time in history of PD 9, in 2018 I arranged to publish 10000 calendars with names, pictures, rank and responsibilities, and contact numbers of PD 9 police officers. We also had articles of Afghanistan Constitution, universal declaration of human rights, police regulations, emergency phone numbers, and contact numbers of hospitals and fire departments designed into this calendar. On the other hand, I provided our patrol officers with mobile phone numbers, and asked them to write their numbers on the walls around the area. This made it easier for citizens to get in touch with the police. Likewise, we created a Facebook page to publish information about achievements of PD 9, and address problems of

local residents. Besides publishing security news and criminal events, we shared necessary information of law articles, as well as the flow of traffic in PD 9.

2- People Solidarity:

After these meetings, citizens also understood that there was a gap between their information about police performance, and the reality on the ground. I always asked them to continue holding these meetings and work to figure out how can we maintain security and counter crimes in PD 9.

Ministry of Interior Affairs activated 119 call center in 2007, and set up People's Police in 2012 to strengthen relations with citizens; these efforts were focused to address complaints of citizens. However, it was not carried out effectively. So to address these challenges, we established a council in each sub-district. These councils included at least 15 persons⁷, and maximum 30 persons who were either retired, or on duty Afghan National Defense and Security Force officers, judges, prosecutors, civil activists and advocates who lived in the area.

We let people to elect council members based on election mechanism with following conditions:

- Be a resident of PD 9
- Be at least 18 years or older
- Be interested to cooperate with police and the community
- Have no criminal record with police
- Have the ability to participate in meetings between people and the police

The councils were created in the communities, and we registered them at our station. Since we knew that one possible reason why people did not report crimes in the area were due to the hidden cost of calling; we distributed cellphones and a SIM card to the heads of each council, so they could be in constant contact with the police. From each council, we selected a liaison officer. The liaison shared information with us.

3- Inspiring people:

We made regular plan for councils to meet. I personally attended most these meetings with my counter crime personnel. I heard them out, then encouraged them to take part in securing their communities. I referred to Holy Quran, and Afghanistan Constitution when necessary. I reminded people that they should take responsibility in securing their community. Local residents could also attend these meetings along with council members. These meetings were not only a way to help citizens work together to maintain security, but they were also awareness raising⁸.

Previously police detained people in different pretexts; most common was arresting young girls and boys in cafes/parks with the conviction of illegal sexual relationship. Then they were sent to hospital for virginity test⁹. The virginity test was carried out on young girls, but the boy caught with her was also sent along. This was indecent in terms of culture and law. To restore police credibility, I ordered my personnel to refrain from this. I feel proud to say this attracted attention from the government and was included in Afghanistan Punishment¹⁰ law later.

Assessment:

Unfortunately, the government of Afghanistan and especially the Ministry of Interior Affairs, does not have any established evaluation mechanism to measure policies' effective or ineffectiveness. So the measures we took in PD 9 could not be officially measured. However, there are unofficial evaluations that were helpful to understand how successful our approach has been. These evaluations are done in two levels:

A- Internal:

To understand the effectiveness of our performance, we evaluated statistics of criminal events, crime area, crimes types, and suspects every three months. Results showed that during March - August 2018 criminal events had 57% decrease¹¹ than last year. Citizens' behavior towards police became kinder. On the other hand, according to reports, four meetings were held in PD 9 station in 2017; whereas in 2018 these meetings had increased to 24.

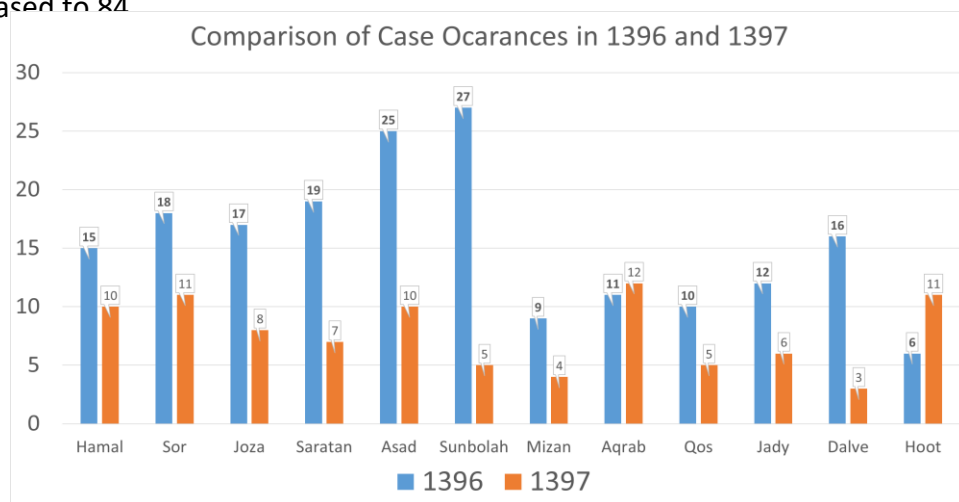


Chart 1- comparison of crime cases in PD 9, 1397 Vs 1396, based in Hijri Calendar.

Previously, only one council existed in PD 9; however, we increased it to 54. Citizen compliance with the law, and sharing information with the police significantly increased. I continuously was invited by media to discuss our approaches¹².

As a result of our response, citizens shared information with us that helped us arrest several criminal cases, including 02 VBIED, 05 IED, 50 AK-47, 2000 AK-47 bullet, drugs and suspects¹³.

B- External:

Local councils, as direct observers of police in PD 9, repeatedly expressed their satisfaction with police performance by awarding certificates. On ANDSF Day in Afghanistan calendar, residents of PD 9, presented flowers to the police officers and thanked them. Media also has an important role in observing police performances and reflected our work very positively¹⁴.

Additionally, after evaluations and surveys by the Afghanistan Institute for Peace, and local media, Afghanistan Better Governance entity selected me as one of the top managers of Afghanistan¹⁵.

Unintended Consequences:

The main purpose of our response was to create public sense of security, counter crime, and eliminate the gap between people and police. This project helped us achieve the following positive consequences as well:

- a. Identified residents' problems

- b. Created unity and solidarity among residents to address their problems
- c. Raised residents' awareness about police mandate
- d. Increased public awareness about law and criminal activities
- e. Increased police awareness about local traditions
- f. Residents used the councils for non-security purposes as well, such as development programs

Project Stability:

Based on MoI Strategic Plan, this project has become stable, and is ordered to be implemented in other parts of Afghanistan as well.

Almost a year ago I left my job at PD 9 station. This project has continued and has further strengthened the relation between police and people.

Challenges:

Most of the work in this project was done voluntarily by people. There was no serious challenge to its implementation; however, the fact that some police officers do not have professional capability to carry out the duties, remain a challenge in similar situations. Hence, this might continue to decrease trust between citizens and the police.

Suggestions:

To implement similar projects in a traditional society like Afghanistan, and with the low level of literacy of citizens, it is better to make the following efforts:

- 1- Arrange legal documents to support these councils
- 2- Implement procedures of restorative justice in handling criminal cases as a legal principle
- 3- Consider honors for councils that cooperate more with police at the end of each year
- 4- Involve other governmental entities; such as education institutes, religious entities, sports centers, and municipalities, in the sense of responsibilities and their role in achieving the goals of the project

References

The web pages are in Dari language.

- ¹ Kabul residents complained from unprofessional action of police: <http://afghannews.af/%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8>
- ² MoI Minister: People do not trust Police: <https://ariananews.af/fa/%D9%88%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%B1>
- ³ - Till now, no accurate census has been done in Afghanistan, so this is some approximate statistics.
- ⁴ - The municipal districts of Afghanistan consist of several areas; each area comprises at least of 100 households.
- ⁵ - The video of this conversation is available.
- ⁶ - 119 and 100 numbers are for emergency response of police across the country, and has national function.
- ⁷ - PD 9 consists of 52 alleys and now the Kabul Municipality in a reform program try to standardize it.
- ⁸ - If there aren't any ways to deal with the issue of restorative justice in Afghanistan's criminal law, local tradition requires it to be used.
- ⁹ - Afghan women still jailed alongside murderers for 'failing' virginity test: <https://openasia.org/en/2018/11/afghan-women-still-jailed-alongside-murderers-for-failing-virginity-test/>
- ¹⁰ - PD 9 Chief of Police bans virginity test: <https://www.etilaatroz.com/58087/%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1/>
- ¹¹ - Taban: The criminal activities decreased 57% in PD 9: <https://www.etilaatroz.com/67905/criminal-crimes-in-kabul-pd9-have-fallen-57-percent/>
- ¹² - These interviews are available on the internet.
- ¹³ - Kabul Police rescued the lives of people: <https://ariananews.co/news/%D9%BE%D9%88%D9%84%DB%8C%>
- ¹⁴ - Accreditation and Reform; Fifty-The function of PD 9 Police Chief.:<https://www.etilaatroz.com/63517/%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B2%DB%8C-%D9%88-%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%9B-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D9%BE%D9%86%D8%AC%E2%80%8C-%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%87/>
- ¹⁵ - The Afghanistan top managers introduced, <https://hi-in.facebook.com/223009317836213/posts/1366735800130220/>