

Dr. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen
Minister of Information and Culture
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The Daily Beast owes me an apology!

To the manager of Daily Beast Website,

Your website recently published an article entitled "Afghanistan's Million Dollar Minister," which is full of unfounded allegations and factual inaccuracies. For more than a year now some former employees of my ministry, who were fired for cause, have perpetuated false allegations and rumors regarding my character. I regret that you have become an outlet for the furtherance of these unfounded claims. I have been exonerated of these allegations in the past and, because the truth always triumphs in the end, they will again be found baseless.

I would like to respond to the allegations leveled against me. It is important, first to acknowledge that those who have made these claims were fired from the Ministry due to misconduct, misuse of authority and critical faults in their performance. Knowing this, you should not expect them to speak well of me. Furthermore, it is unfortunate that you would publish their allegations without first investigating their claims fully. Had you done your due diligence you would have found that I not the person described by my detractors.

Your article opens with an inaccurate fact regarding Radio Free Kabul or Radio Voice of Mujahidin. This equipment was donated to anti-Soviet effort in Afghanistan by a number of French humanitarian organizations, not by the CIA as you state. Following this inaccuracy you report that I have become a "corrupt minister" based solely on the comments of an unnamed former minister. Who is the former Minister who does not have the courage to be named and face me or to speak the truth? How does he know that I became corrupt? Why he is hiding himself? Your allegations leave many questions unanswered regarding the validity of your sources.

The accusation made by the unnamed sources in your article regarding my acceptance of one-million dollars is completely fabricated. The South

Asian Foundation (SAF) never transferred one-million dollars in funds to the Ministry, me, nor to any other mission of SAF in Afghanistan. The total amount of money transferred during my tenure as the director of the SAF mission in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2007 was \$229,000 USD. This is verified by documents held in the central office of SAF in Paris and based on bank statements from the Afghan National Bank.

A total of \$192,000 USD of these funds were expended on the reconstruction of the Cultural Heritage Center. Contrary to what you have heard, these funds did not come from the regular budget of the Ministry.

The first installment of funds from SAF that I received was an amount of \$60,000 USD and was credited to a bank account opened in my name with the address of the Ministry of Information and Culture. This amount was immediately transferred to the bank account of the Ministry of Information and Culture. In the same manner, an amount of \$80,000 USD was transferred to the State account. All the necessary slips and receipts confirming this transaction along with their English translation are attached.

In one instance the amount of \$40,000 USD was transferred to the Ministry of Finance and was not returned to the Ministry of Information and Culture because the fiscal year concluded before the funds were spent. These funds, initially allocated for the payment of reconstruction work were transferred to the State account. Subsequently we withdrew the same amount from the government MoIC account and paid for the services of the company conducting the reconstruction work. Following my departure from the Ministry after my first term, my successor Mr. Khoram sent an enquiry to the Ministry of Finance requesting a transfer of \$40,000 USD, referring to the SAF funds. The response from the Ministry of Finance was the same and the funds were not made available. The original text of this letter of request along with an English translation is attached.

Thus, not a single penny from the regular budget of the MoIC has been expended for the reconstruction of the Cultural Center. It is untrue that the MoIC was not aware of the transfer of funds as the details of these three main installments are outlined in a letter signed by my successor Mr. Khoram. Moreover, this activity is confirmed by bank statements.

The three former employees of the Ministry cited in your article claim that I have stolen funds from the SAF are purposefully deceiving you and your readers. Quoting one of these former employees you write that the

Ministry has paid an amount of \$250,000 USD for the reconstruction of the Cultural Center. This is inaccurate. Based on the existing documentation, the total amount donated by the SAF was \$229,000.

Zia Bumia's comments regarding my alleged misuse of funds which you have published are baseless. You should be aware that I fired him because of his continuous unethical and rude behavior towards Ministry employees, especially women, and because of his regular use of vulgar slang in an official work environment. His conduct was in violation of the Labour law, Civil Service law and Code of Conduct of Civil Servants of Government of Afghanistan. The decision to dismiss him was made to preserve the reputation and honor of the MoIC and to ensure a productive working environment for other employees.

In 2009, I returned with honor to the Ministry after obtaining a vote of confidence from the parliament of Afghanistan. Contrary to your suggestion, my selection and return to the Ministry was warmly welcomed by artists and intellectual who held public demonstrations of support for me in several major cities and in the provinces of Kabul, Balkh, Herat and Logar. I have always relied on my personal knowledge, experience, perseverance and honesty to obtain my positions in the Government of Afghanistan and not on the favor of powerful or influential individuals as you suggest.

The allegations made by Mumtaz, another former employee of the Ministry, regarding complaints made by the late Mr. Madanjeet Singh are completely false. Mr. Mumtaz did not ever meet Mr. Madanjeet Singh. Furthermore, Mr. Madanjeet Singh had no reason to complain about my performance and, even if he had, he certainly would not have done so with an individual that he didn't even know.

It is much more rational to rely to the statements of the late Madanjeet Singh's spouse who is the current leader of the SAF instead of the comments of a man who never met him. You can refer to the content of her emails to see her confidence in my honesty and transparency.

Mr. Mumtaz's allegations that Mr. Mandanjeet Singh had decided to stop supporting the Ministry of Information and Culture in 2009 are also not true. As recently as 2011 Mr. Mandanjeet Singh invited me to visit him in Paris where I spent the night in his home and visited with him in Niece. He continued to support me and the efforts of my Ministry as long as he was alive.

The allegations you have printed about Ahmad Shah Sultani, are also unfounded. Several years ago Ahmad Shah Sultani came to me and reported

that he had purchased hundreds of pieces of Afghan art in Europe with the intention of returning them to Afghanistan. I do not know anything about his background, but I welcome the efforts of individuals who can buy and return pure and valuable works of Afghan art to their country of origin. Individuals who purchase these works of art abroad and legally import them to Afghanistan with the intention of returning them to museums are not criminals.

Dear Sir,

The malicious things that you have published about me based on the accusations of former employees which I fired for their misconduct amounts to slander and an attack on my character. I find this conduct irresponsible and offensive. I am an honorable and hardworking public servant of Afghanistan and not the character falsely painted in your article by disgruntled former employees. For your information I have asked the

President to appoint a committee to investigate the case

Surely your vigilant conscience requires that you issue me an apology.