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Ghani Says He Fled Afghanistan to Prevent Kabul Violence

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Former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said Wednesday he fled the country last month to avoid more violence in the streets of Kabul.

As Taliban fighters took control of the city August 16, Ghani left Afghanistan for the United Arab Emirates in a helicopter. He denied taking government money as he left.

“I left at the urging of **palace** security, who advised me that to remain risked setting off the same **horrific** street-to-street fighting the city had suffered during the civil war of the 1990s,” Ghani said in a statement. “Leaving Kabul was the most difficult decision of my life, but I believed it was the only way to keep the guns silent and save Kabul and her 6 million citizens.”

The 72-year-old Ghani said he worked for 20 years to create a democratic government in Afghanistan. But he admitted that he, like other Afghan governments of the past, had failed to create “**stability** and **prosperity**.”

The United Arab Emirates said it welcomed Ghani “on humanitarian grounds.”

Ghani said he would give more detailed reasons for why he fled in the “near future.” He denied accusations that he left Afghanistan with millions of dollars.

Russia’s RIA news agency reported that he fled Kabul with four cars and a helicopter full of cash. He had to leave some cash behind because he could not fit it all in, RIA reported.

Afghanistan’s ambassador to Tajikistan also accused Ghani of taking \$169 million in government cash.

The charges are false, Ghani said in his statement.

He added that he and his wife have been responsible in their personal finances and has publicly declared all his money and property. Ghani said he would welcome a United Nations review of his finances or another independent investigation.

In an interview with Afghanistan's TOLO news channel, the United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken was asked if he helped Ghani flee the country.

Blinken replied, "What he told me in that conversation the night before he fled is that he was prepared to fight to the death."

I'm Dan Novak.

Ken Bredemeier reported this story for VOA News. Dan Novak adapted it for VOA Learning English. Susan Shand was the editor.

Words in This Story

palace – *n.* a very large and impressive house

horrific — *n.* causing horror or shock

stability — *n.* the quality or state of something that is not easily changed or likely to change

prosperity — *n.* the state of being successful usually by making a lot of money
