

# *Karzai Releases Dozens of Prisoners in Defiance of U.S.*

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Kabul, January 13 (RHC)-- Afghan President Hamid Karzai has ordered the release of 72 prisoners in defiance of U.S. pressure. The Barack Obama administration says the prisoners were involved in killing U.S. troops and Afghan civilians, but Karzai says there is insufficient evidence to warrant their continued detention.

The prisoners' fate is the latest issue to strain U.S.-Afghan relations amid Karzai's standoff with the White House over a long-term security pact. A number of U.S. lawmakers have threatened to cut aid to Afghanistan over the prisoners' release.

Adding to their rift with Washington, Afghan officials have accused the United States of continuing to operate illegal "black prisons" where prisoners are tortured.

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