**People suspected of al Qaeda, Taliban links can appeal UN blacklisting**

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

• U.N. blacklist was created in 1999, after al Qaeda bombings of two U.S. embassies

• Those on the blacklist are suspected of connections to al Qaeda or the Taliban

• Those on the list are subject to asset freezes and restrictions on international travel

• New U.N. "ombudsperson" will review requests from people who want off the list

United Nations (CNN) -- The avenue of appeal is now open for people who believe they are unfairly on a U.N. Security Council blacklist of individuals with suspected connections to al Qaeda or the Taliban.

A United Nations official, who will review requests to get off the list, appeared before reporters in New York Thursday, for the first time since being appointed last month. Kimberly Prost has the title of "ombudsperson" for the highly sensitive position with the controversial list, which was established in 1999.

Prost said that she views the creation of the job as a "good faith, serious effort" by a U.N. sanctions committee to answer the "serious concerns" raised about due process regarding the list.

Those on the blacklist are subject to asset freezes and restrictions on international travel. The list was created by the Security Council in 1999, in the wake of al Qaeda bombings of two American embassies in East Africa.

Prost will receive direct appeals from those wishing to be de-listed. She will review cases and present her findings to the sanctions committee. But she will not include a recommendation on whether the person be de-listed. It will be up to the sanctions committee, composed of Security Council members, whether to remove the petitioner.

Prost is a former Canadian prosecutor who has since 2006 served as a judge on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Austrian Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting, who heads the Security Council sanctions committee that manages the list, described her as "the most qualified candidate we could think of."

The opening of the ombudsperson's office comes at a time when Afghan President Hamid Karzai has sent the Security Council ten names he wants removed from the list.

Diplomats who recently met with Karzai in Kabul say that he would like even more names removed, as the Afghanistan government seeks inroads with Taliban sympathizers.

Ambassador Mayr-Harting thought that the public outcry on the blacklist was growing too large to ignore. "It was the [sanctions] regime where the lack in due process was criticized most strongly by courts, by political structures, and also within the U.N. system," he said at a press conference Thursday. The creation of the ombudsperson position was mandated by a Security Council resolution that was passed last year.

Prost acknowledges that there is much work to be done for her office to be effective.

Perhaps most importantly is simply publicizing its existence. "This office will be of little value if it's not known, if it's not visible, and if it's not easily accessible," she said. Many of those on the list do not speak English, and may have a hard time navigating the United Nations system.

To that end, Prost said that she will set up an independent website that will show potential petitioners how to get in contact with her office. She promised to meet with "relevant representatives of countries where those issues of accessibility will be significant." And she added that submissions via a representative would be accepted, even if that representative was not a lawyer, as long as she was convinced of the application's legitimacy.

There were no specific criteria for de-listing laid out in the Security Council resolution. But Mayr-Harting said that there was an understanding among committee members on at least three: renouncing violence, breaking all ties with al Qaeda and the Taliban, and -- in the case specifically of Afghanistan -- accepting the Afghan constitution.

Prost conceded that she may face roadblocks trying to gather all the information on why an individual was put on the list, especially if that information came from national intelligence agencies. But she said she would make the review process as thorough as possible.

"I'm not simply going to sit back and say, 'Bring me your application and Ill check it off,' you know, yes or no. I'm going to work with the individuals with a view to getting all of the information and doing a thorough analysis," she said.

It is not clear that the establishment on an "ombudsperson" will completely satisfy President Karzai, who views reconciliation with the Taliban as an important step towards peace in his country. Prost will only review petitions that come directly from individuals or organizations on the list, not from governments. Those appeals will continue to go directly to the sanctions committee.