

Joint-Statement: Afghan Diaspora Organizations recommendations to the European Union's (EU) response to the crisis in Afghanistan

We Afghan Diasporas Organisations in Europe, are concerned about the current situation in Afghanistan, as the country now faces severe, multi-faceted, and interlocking humanitarian, economic, and political crises, which have unfolding implications on basic services. A humanitarian crisis of incredible proportions has grown even more complex and severe since the Taliban took control of the country.

The country is currently facing the second drought in four years and the worst of its kind in 27 years. Unemployment, lack of cash flow and soaring prices are creating a new class of hungry in Afghanistan.^[1] According to the [WFP update](#) on food insecurity, 22.8 million people or half of the population will face acute food insecurity from November 2021, including 8.7 million at risk of famine-like conditions. The country is on the brink of economic collapse, with the local currency at an all-time low and food prices are on the rise. Acute malnutrition is above emergency thresholds in 25 out of 34 provinces and is expected to worsen,^[2] according to UNICEF during the past 4 months 3.3 million children had no access to sufficient food.

Women and girls face great uncertainty when it comes to respect for their basic rights such as education, freedom, livelihoods, and participation.^[3] Some 4.2 million young Afghans are already out of school, 60 per cent of them are girls. There has also been a decline in girls' secondary school attendance, even in provinces where the *de facto* authorities have permitted them to attend schools due to the absence of women teachers since in some locations girls are only allowed to be taught by women and fears from Taliban. Furthermore, most of the women are prohibited from working, except for some teachers, health workers and NGO staff.

Despite a general amnesty by the Taliban, announced in August, there are reports of continuous persecution and torture of former government employees and security forces, human rights defenders, journalists, religious elders, humanitarian staff and sectarian-motivated attacks. Afghan civil society activists have also come under attack in recent months. The achievements of the past 20 years are lost, and the Taliban are ruling Afghanistan like they did in 1996.

According to a [report](#) published in December 2021 by Reporters without Borders, since the Taliban seizure of the country, 40% of Afghan media have closed and 80% of women journalists have lost their jobs.^[4] Since August, at least eight activists and two journalists have been killed, and others injured, by unidentified armed men. [UNAMA](#), has documented nearly 60 cases of apparently arbitrary detentions, beatings, and threats of activists, journalists, attributed to the *de facto* authorities. Several women's rights defenders have also been threatened. Many media outlets have been shut down.

The situation of refugees who already entered neighbouring countries or are waiting at the borders is appalling.^[5] Recent reports from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicate that Iran departs over 25,000 Afghans every month back to Afghanistan. In Pakistan, there are confirmed reports from sources on the arrests and detention of members of former government security forces and officials who fled to Pakistan for protection by the Pakistan intelligence agencies.

We call on the EU and its Member States (MS) as the main humanitarian donor and a key stakeholder in Afghanistan, for their expedited response to the current crises in Afghanistan specifically under the key priority areas as outlined below:

1. Urgent response to the current humanitarian crises considering the increasing demand for humanitarian assistance.

We welcome the EU's and its MS efforts on channeling emergency humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan. We suggest the below recommendations for your consideration:

- Humanitarian aid should be increased to respond to the increasing demand. This should happen in coordination with other stakeholders using a transparent delivery mechanism and ensuring that the framework of accountability of aid to the affected population (AAP) be at the centre of any humanitarian response.
- Humanitarian aid should address both the immediate needs of the most vulnerable population and should be linked to long term development to reduce the dependency of the population on emergency aid.

- As per information from our local sources, there are instances of the *de facto authorities* interfering at the local level by conditioning the inclusion of the names of their members on the beneficiaries' lists, especially in cash distribution projects. This is very concerning as it includes the risk of aid falling into the hands of *de facto authorities*. Therefore, it's important to increase efforts of continuous, independent monitoring/oversight and timely response for minimizing this risk to ensure independence in the delivery of humanitarian aid without any interference of *de facto authorities*.
 - Although the EU mostly contract international humanitarian organizations for the delivery of humanitarian's assistance, local civil society and diaspora organizations should not be sidelined; their added value of having local expertise and knowledge of local and cultural contexts as well as their broader network should be recognized and included by connecting them with the international partners.
 - Having knowledge of the local context and the need for continued engagement with Afghan CSOs in supporting the local communities in different parts of Afghanistan is crucial. It is equally important that the Afghan diasporas be engaged/consulted during the design of any response plan or policy/strategy development for Afghanistan by the EU.
 - Preserving access for humanitarian actors should be incorporated into international negotiations and international responses. Critical services for women and girls must continue to be delivered, and this requires female aid workers who are able to access communities and create safe spaces for women and girls.
 - Deliver immediate humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees, targeting the most vulnerable people, through international humanitarian organizations and diasporas in the targeted countries.
- 2. Expedite the establishment of an independent system for channelling funding to resume the delivery of public services and avoid the collapse of Afghanistan's economy without compromising on the five benchmarks agreed by the EU.**

The efforts by the EU and other stakeholders to establish an independent mechanism for channelling funding without the involvement of *de facto* authorities, to support the salaries of civil servants to resume public services, especially in essential sectors such as education and health as well as injecting sufficient cash to the banks to avoid collapsing the banking system in Afghanistan. This is a crucial initiative to save both the system from collapse and facilitate the delivery of critical services to the people of Afghanistan. However, the progress is very slow due to a lack of coordination between the EU, World Bank and the UN. As time is running out and it is important to act quickly to prevent the systems from collapse, therefore, we urge on EU to:

- Expedite the collective and coordinated efforts to gather with other stakeholders taking into account the time-sensitivity, the huge investment of the past 20 years, and the future consequences.
- 3. Continue to provide support for the evacuation, resettlement, and protection for Afghans in Europe, neighboring and regional countries.**

We welcome the European Commission announcement of 40,000 pledges on the resettlement of Afghan refugees by 15 EU Member State and the EU's efforts for engagement with the Afghan de-facto authorities on the provision of safe routes. However, we are concerned about the lack of clarities about the 40,000 pledges and urge the EU and its MS to separate the calculation of the evacuation programmes from resettlement or other humanitarian admissions. We also appreciate the EU's dialogue with Afghanistan's neighbouring countries to address the protection of Afghan refugees, and the continuous commitment for evacuation of those who are at risk, However, the EU's support of Afghan refugees should not be conditioned on preventing Afghans from coming to Europe.

In Europe, Afghan asylum seekers are facing several challenges such as divergence in recognition rates, lengthy time in the asylum procedure as well as the types of protection they receive in MS.

- Continue the critical efforts to establish and implement safe and regular routes to access protection in Europe, including for those who are at immediate risk after the Taliban seizure of the country.

- Provide Afghan asylum seekers with clear information and communication and simplify the asylum procedures, considering the context and limitation of Afghan asylum seekers such as limited access to the internet or computer, problems in obtaining original documentation during the journey.
- European countries should provide rapid access to fair asylum procedures to Afghans who seek protection in Europe.
- The need for the protection of Afghans should be at the centre of the EU agenda at any relevant dialogues and discussions on Afghanistan crises at the International, Regional and Neighboring countries levels.
- EU dialogue with the neighbouring countries to address the protection needs of Afghan refugees should not be meant as migration control management with the aim of preventing Afghans from coming to Europe but support them to be able to have a dignified life in the region as well.
- Efforts to put in place to halt deportations to Afghanistan from Afghanistan Neighboring Countries.
- Efforts should be put in place to halt the arrestation and detention of members of former government security forces and officials who fled to Pakistan by the Pakistani intelligence agencies.

4. Re-establish safe and secure conditions and ensure respect for the fundamental rights of the people of Afghanistan.

EU's engagement with the Taliban to ensure their commitment for their cooperation in providing access for the independent delivery of humanitarian assistance and negotiation for the realization of the fundamental rights of the people of Afghanistan, especially women and girls as well and an inclusive government is critical. We would like to emphasize that:

- The interests of the people of Afghanistan should be at the centre of any engagement and dialogue with the *de facto authorities* in Afghanistan and any engagement should not lead to recognition until the [five benchmarks](#) are met by *de facto authority*.
- Publicly and consistently press *de facto* authorities to respect internationally recognized human rights, including by ending summary executions and enforced disappearances, and holding those responsible for abuses accountable.
- Impose targeted conditions on the direct assistance for non-humanitarian purposes and all other forms of cooperation by the EU with any potential future government until they take credible steps towards respecting fundamental rights of all Afghans and meeting its international human rights obligations.

^[1] World Food Program recent update

^[2] Situation Reports UNICEF Afghanistan

^[3] OHCHR report about Afghanistan

^[4] UNAMA Report on Documentation of cases of human rights violation

^[5] IOM report on deportation to Afghanistan from neighboring countries

Signatories:

