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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



A call to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights about the human rights situation in Afghanistan

CAP Liberté de Conscience is deeply concerned about the situation of human rights in Afghanistan as it was regularly reported by the Brussels-based NGO Human Rights Without Frontiers in its regular newsletters published in 2021(1) and 2022(2) since the Taliban came to power in Kabul in late August 2021.

We have recently received the testimony and the recommendations of Zarifa Ghafari(3), a female mayor of Maidan Sharh, in the Wardak province elected before the Taliban takeover that we want to share with you:

“I would like to share with you the recent updates about the prevailing Human Rights situation in Afghanistan and also the multidimensionality of challenges we face as Afghans in both domestic and international domains.

The challenges from lived experiences came very early to me, the moment I decided to work as an activist for the upliftment of the vulnerable sections of the population. On the one hand, my appointment as a Mayor in Wardak province (which is among the most conservative regions in Afghanistan) was lauded as a significant step in the democratically elected government’s commitment towards women empowerment. At the same time, my mayorship was the beginning of direct confrontation with the country’s conservative forces and the Taliban. In the last two years, I survived three assassination attempts and lost my father and numerous friends, and so many loved ones to the Taliban assassins.

With ample reports of destitution and the exponential rise in violence against women, the ongoing efforts to accommodate the Taliban seem to run counter to the professed ideas of the international community.

Although considerable time has passed since the Taliban has been trying to gain legitimacy from international community, this time, the willingness of the international community to unconditionally engage with the Taliban comes as a shock to the thousands of activists and volunteers like me who staked their lives for the cause of stable and inclusive Afghanistan.

Even if the international community may arrive at a working relationship with the new regime, I shall take this opportunity to share the sentiment of the Afghan majority that we do not recognize the Taliban as our legitimate government. There is no legal or populist basis on which the Taliban can claim to be a legitimate government in Afghanistan.

The only reason to be of their existence at the helm of affairs in Kabul is that of a forceful acquisition of the monopoly of violence with cross border logistical and armed support. In the last few years the promise to combat ISIS led to the American tactical cooperation with the belief of battling a ‘common enemy’. However, this rationale seems to be distant from the ground realities where the Taliban and ISIS are notoriously popular for rotating members across their respective organizational lines.

I want to highlight that the Taliban has consistently manipulated the international community in its quest to seek legitimacy.

How could the international community support or even engage with a regime which has been formed through a forceful ouster of an elected government?

The Taliban has been asking the people of Afghanistan to cooperate with them and return to their respective workplaces. We are ready to work with them but only if they stop working for interests that lie beyond the Afghan border. It is impossible to ask for cooperation from the Afghan masses if the Taliban continue to deploy violence on the nation’s vulnerable sections, including former government officials, minorities and women.

Instances of public flogging, disappearance of the female working class and media blackouts have become a common sight in the Afghan public sphere. With such atrocities on the Afghan citizens, it is impossible to comprehend how they expect trust and cooperation from the Afghan citizens.

I also want to highlight that most of the Taliban leaders have no educational background in the Afghan institutions. They were socialized with ideas purely oriented to subjugate

Afghanistan's progressive sections and to implement oppressive discourses to prevent women from even expressing themselves.

In the last twenty years, the international community has invested immensely in Afghanistan in the form of development, security, infrastructure and socio-economic upliftment of the people. In the process, thousands of Afghan and international soldiers lost their lives, and millions of dollars were diverted away from developmental purposes.

The international community should not forget that it committed resources to rebuild Afghanistan into a gradually evolving but a robust democracy. We thought we were on the path to achieving our objectives, but we were left behind. What gave us the deepest sense of anguish is that those who came into Afghanistan twenty years ago claiming to be our saviours are behaving exactly the opposite way by hosting the Taliban.

We plead with the international community to consider some of our demands, which stem purely from a humanitarian point of view.

First, UN member states must open their doors to those Afghans who apply for asylum abroad. Also, the refugee situation in Afghanistan needs to be looked into with greater care.

If possible, the UN Security Council could establish a monitoring mechanism that looks into the human rights records of the Taliban.

Lastly, I would wish to draw the attention to Pakistan's preponderant role in supporting and sustaining the Taliban. It is well known that the Pakistani military establishment has been instrumental in facilitating the Taliban's negotiations with the Americans. With the Taliban's complete control over the Afghan territory, Afghanistan's security falls under the direct ambit of Pakistani agencies. This calls for a greater accountability mechanism to be instituted in order to regulate the use of Afghanistan for any kind of cross-border influence operations as it would jeopardise the entire security of South and Central Asia.

The Afghans have full faith that the United Nations shall act soon and work towards ameliorating our present condition, and institute a regime of accountability in its dealings with the Taliban."

Zarifa Ghafari testified about the situation of women in Afghanistan at the European Parliament in early February 2022.

Human Rights Without Frontiers, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

1 https://hrwf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ASIA_WR.pdf

2 https://hrwf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ASIA_WR.pdf

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zarifa_Ghafari