

**Statement Condemning Increased Violence and Targeted Killings in  
Afghanistan on behalf of 35 of the members of the Group of Friends of  
Afghanistan and/or the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan**

A group of 35 of the cross-regional Members of the Group of Friends of Afghanistan and/or the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan as listed below, condemn in the strongest possible terms the continued violence and targeted killings in Afghanistan including those committed by the Taliban and the Haqqani Network, as well as other armed groups, and transnational terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) and their affiliates, in particular ISIL-Khorasan Province. These actions impede the prospects of peace, undermine civil space and the freedom of expression, and obstruct the delivery of basic services to populations in need. These heinous acts of targeting journalists and media workers, civil society members, civil servants, religious scholars and intellectuals, many of whom are women, must stop immediately, and we call for the perpetrators to be held accountable. We express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims.

According to a recent report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, no fewer than 11 human rights defenders and media workers were killed in targeted attacks in Afghanistan from September 2020 through to 31 January 2021. A total of 65 human rights defenders and media professionals were killed in the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 January 2021. Since the publication of the report, at least three more young women media workers have been murdered - Mursal Waheedi, 25 Sadia Sadat, 20, and Shanaz Raufi, 20.

We express our support to the people of Afghanistan and for their hopes and expectations of peace, justice, and development in the country. We express our strong support for the peace process in which the gains achieved in the past 20 years must be preserved and advanced, including through the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at every stage of the peace process. Women in Afghanistan are at the forefront of society, youth are engaged as agents of change, and the independent and free media plays a critical role in a democratic Afghanistan. Attacks against them are attacks against the shared values of the international community and the people of Afghanistan.

We stand united with the people of Afghanistan and reiterate the international community's strong condemnation of all targeted killings and attacks and other human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. We call on all parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law in all circumstances, in particular those related to the protection of civilians, including humanitarian and health workers, and to allow and facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

We further reiterate our urgent call for an immediate reduction in violence leading to a comprehensive ceasefire, in line with Security Council Resolutions 2532 and 2565, and the need to bring an end to the conflict through an inclusive political settlement that ensures a sovereign, united, and democratic Afghanistan, at peace with itself, the region and the world. We also call on all actors, to engage in the peace process in good faith and to translate their commitments to peace into tangible actions for the benefit of all Afghans.

1. Afghanistan
2. African Union
3. Australia
4. Belgium
5. Canada
6. Denmark
7. Estonia
8. Finland
9. France
10. Germany
11. Greece
12. Hungary
13. Italy
14. Indonesia
15. Ireland
16. Japan
17. Kyrgyzstan
18. Lebanon
19. Lithuania
20. Netherlands
21. Norway
22. Poland
23. Qatar
24. Republic of Korea
25. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
26. Slovakia
27. Slovenia
28. Spain
29. Sri Lanka
30. Sweden
31. Turkey
32. Turkmenistan
33. United Arab Emirates
34. United Kingdom
35. United States of America