

10/29/20

To: European Union Leaders

From: A Coalition of Afghan Women*

Subject: Stand with Us to Protect Rights and Achieve Durable Peace

Dear Allies,

As the Intra-Afghan talks continue in Doha, Qatar, we write to express our appreciation for your continued and principled support to the people of Afghanistan. While much of the sequencing that led to the negotiation table was held without the participation of the Afghan government and Afghan women, we want to ensure that this opportunity for ending the relentless violence in our country is not squandered.

In the past 20 years, the commitment and support of the European Union and our international allies across the globe helped in changing the lives of countless Afghans, in particular of Afghan women. Today, Afghan women occupy positions of power across the country. We have been peacebuilding at the local and national levels and have participated in rebuilding our country and in providing services to our fellow citizens. We know that if Afghan women have a meaningful participation in the current peace process and are given the opportunities to shape and influence it, the chances of achieving a durable and just peace would be more likely.

We welcome all steps towards ending the violence and protracted conflict in our country, particularly in light of the near unprecedented increase in targeted attacks and killings of public servants, rights defenders, young people and civilians across the country. We write to ask you to stand with us as we continue to work towards ending the violence in Afghanistan and securing a just and durable peace. We want a peace that protects the rights of all Afghans and recognizes all citizens including women and minorities, as equal and free. We know that we will not be able to carry the heavy weight without the support of our international allies and friends. In particular, we would like to ask your support to:

- Push for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire across Afghanistan by using your leverage with the Taliban;
- Facilitate the meaningful participation of women in the negotiations and in the post-negotiations stage, including in the monitoring of the peace agreement implementation;
- Help us preserve, sustain and strengthen the gains of the past two decades, including protection of right;

- Protect rights defenders, and in particular women rights activists;
- Support and facilitate the delivery of justice for victims of war, including victims of sexual and gender-based violence;
- Facilitate the inclusion and participation of women from Afghanistan and the diaspora in key international and regional conferences, including the Geneva conference;
- Set an inclusive monitoring task force of Afghan women in Afghanistan and in the diaspora to meet the peace process supporters (individuals/organizations/governments), particularly regional governments and negotiating teams;
- Make aid conditional if power is shared with the Taliban group and other political and ideological parties to ensure commitments are fulfilled;
- And continue to support our civil society which has played a key role in delivering services and building bridges between the people and the government.

While we are hopeful that peace might be within reach, we fear that the increased violence and killings of recent months is creating more victims and despair. We are also deeply concerned about the protection of the rights of women, ethnic and religious minorities post-peace agreement. We believe that failing to protect these rights in the current negotiations will jeopardize the hard-won gains made with your support for vulnerable groups and communities in Afghanistan. Research and experience in Afghanistan demonstrate that persistent exclusion and marginalization is a key driver of conflict and only leads to new dynamics of violence.

We thank you sincerely for your continued support, especially as our country and people face this critical juncture. We are ready and willing to work with you in achieving these goals and to reach a dignified, just, and durable peace.

For peace and solidarity,

Our Voice-Our Future
Together Stronger
Afghan Women's Network

**We are a Coalition of Afghan women, comprised of Afghan women from across the country and outside Afghanistan. The Afghan Women's Network together with a larger coalition of Our Voices - Our Future and Together Stronger work to achieve peace and demand an end to the conflict and an equal representation of women across fields in Afghanistan. We believe in inclusive, just, practical, and sustainable peace in which women are equal citizens of Afghanistan.*