

## Afghanistan: Prevent targeted killings and ensure peace

**(Bangkok/Kathmandu, 23 February 2021)** – The targeted killings of prominent Afghans must end immediately to enable a secure environment for all Afghan people, said the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA).

A United Nations convoy was attacked on February 11, killing five Afghan security forces members near Kabul.<sup>1</sup> On February 10, at least four blasts were reported in Kabul<sup>2</sup> killing two people, including a police chief and recently, three judicial officers including two female judges of the Afghan Supreme Court were shot dead by unidentified gunmen.<sup>3</sup> There is now a consistent wave of bomb attacks and almost daily targeted attacks against prominent citizens in Kabul that has now spread to other parts of the country. Although no militant groups have claimed responsibility for these attacks, the Afghanistan government blames the Taliban.

‘The recent attacks and targeted killings of prominent Afghan citizens are deliberate attempts to instil fear and insecurity among the public. The attacks posit the alarming situation of deterioration of peace and stability in Afghanistan, which calls for immediate attention from the international community,’ said Shamini Darshni Kaliemuthu, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA.

Among those killed in recent months include human rights defenders, journalists, judges, government officials and security forces.

FORUM-ASIA documented at least 8 killings of human rights defenders in 2019 and 2020, apart from two murder attempts. These cases included the killing of two staff members of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).<sup>4</sup> Last year, it was reported that nearly 136 civilians and 168 security forces personnel were killed in targeted attacks.<sup>5</sup> According to a new UN report, 11 human rights defenders including media professionals were killed in targeted attacks since September 2020.

These continuous, targeted killing of journalists has resulted in self-censorship and reduced reporting.<sup>6</sup> Afghanistan mainly depends on international humanitarian aid, and although need is increasing, the escalation of violence has impeded the delivery of assistance, according to aid agencies. The war in Afghanistan – the world’s deadliest ongoing armed conflict – enters a crucial reframing phase in 2021 as the United States government under its previous leadership made an agreement of complete troops

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-attacks-united-nations/u-n-convoy-in-afghanistan-attacked-by-gunmen-five-afghan-security-force-members-killed-idUSKBN2AB25P>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-attacks/four-blasts-hit-kabul-district-police-chief-among-the-dead-idUSKBN2AA1MQ>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/3/afghan-judge-shot-dead-in-jalalabad-ambush>

<sup>4</sup> [http://l.forum-asia.org/AIHRC\\_killings](http://l.forum-asia.org/AIHRC_killings)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/02/world/asia/afghanistan-targeted-killings.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aihrc.org.af/home/press-release/9048>

withdrawal from Afghanistan by May 2021. As the new US administration has announced to review the decision, peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban are now stalled.<sup>7</sup>

FORUM-ASIA condemns these attacks against human rights defenders, civilians and government officials, and urges Afghan authorities to fulfil their responsibility to protect its people while urging the Taliban to end violence. All parties should speed up efforts to achieve sustainable peace for the Afghani people who have been living through a decades-long war.

#### **About FORUM-ASIA:**

*The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is a Bangkok-based regional network of 81 member organisations across 21 Asian countries, with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity-development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has sub-regional offices in Geneva, Jakarta, and Kathmandu. [www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org)*

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-talks-idUSKBN29I20E>