

FORUM-ASIA's Position Statement on Afghanistan

Last updated: 31 August 2021

FORUM-ASIA stands in solidarity with all civilians of Afghanistan, especially, women, children, minorities as well as human rights defenders, journalists, civil society activists, academics, judges and lawyers and their families who are at heightened risk of violence, reprisals and persecution following the seizure of power by the Taliban.

The takeover of Afghanistan has dramatically escalated the already dire human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country. Credible reports of grave abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law by the Taliban including mass executions of civilians, and members of the former and ousted Afghan government and security forces continue to emerge. Women, children and ethnic and religious minorities are at grave risk of violence and repression, given the patterns of grave violations under previous Taliban rule.

Human rights defenders, journalists, civil society actors, academics, lawyers, judges, artists and their families are at increased risk of persecution and reprisals for their legitimate work and for working with the international community. Recent progress in the protections of fundamental freedoms, in particular the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression and dissent are being abrogated.

The Taliban and all parties to conflict in Afghanistan must cease all acts of hostility, violence, intimidation, and threats against civilians, especially women, girls, minorities, and internally displaced people, and ensure human rights defenders, journalists, civil society activists, academics, judges, lawyers and foreign nationals do not face any reprisals for their peaceful and legitimate work. The Taliban and foreign forces in Afghanistan must establish a safe humanitarian corridor from and to Kabul airport for anyone who wishes to leave the country.

- FORUM-ASIA will continue its work towards ensuring protection for human rights defenders and their family members and they are able to carry out their legitimate work safely and securely.
- FORUM-ASIA calls on the international community and neighbouring countries to expand, expedite, and facilitate humanitarian access for civilians, especially women, children, human rights defenders and all who are at risk of persecution and reprisals by the Taliban.
- FORUM-ASIA will continue to advocate with regional and international partners, especially governments in South Asia to respect and uphold the principles of human rights, as well as their legal and moral responsibility to provide safety for refugees and asylum seekers. States should remove administrative burden on families wishing to relocate by providing transparent information on evacuation, expediting visas and travel documents, and coordinating evacuation efforts including flight services.
- The UN Human Rights Council must, at minimum, establish an independent investigative mechanism to monitor and report on violations and abuses of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and all applicable international law by all parties, including the Taliban, and to ensure accountability for such violations and abuses.

- As an Asian regional human rights organisation, FORUM-ASIA will not recognise the Taliban as a legitimate government, and are calling and advocating towards a constitutional and democratic government to be chosen by free and fair elections.

FORUM-ASIA will continue to monitor the developments in Afghanistan pertaining to the development of emergency responses and protection of human rights. We reiterate our call for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans be respected and protected in accordance with international law.

Note: FORUM-ASIA may recalibrate its position to align it with the rapidly changing context in Afghanistan