Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Resolution 2403 (2021)**[1]

# The situation in Afghanistan: consequences for Europe and the region

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its deepest concern at the situation in Afghanistan following the military withdrawal of the United States of America and its NATO allies and partners and the Taliban's return to power, which has opened a phase of political uncertainty in which violence continues and the potential for civil war is not excluded. This state of affairs leads to heightened risks to peace, stability and security in Afghanistan, the region and beyond.

2. The Assembly is convinced that tackling the immediate and future momentous challenges posed by this situation requires a coherent, co-ordinated and concerted response by the international community and believes that Council of Europe member States should spare no effort to achieve this objective.

3. The first imperative should be addressing the harrowing humanitarian crisis, which affects the lives and livelihood of millions of people and has been caused by the combination of a protracted military conflict, successive droughts and the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the international conference on humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan organised by the United Nations in Geneva (13 and 14 September 2021), during which donors pledged more than one billion US dollars.

4. The Assembly regrets that, despite the unanimous and repeated calls by the international community and the Taliban's initial public statements, the interim government is neither inclusive nor representative. The Assembly believes that only a government which reflects Afghanistan's political, religious and ethnic diversity, includes women and engages in a genuine process of reconciliation in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) can lead to a durable political settlement and aspire to legitimacy and international recognition.

5. Similarly, extremely alarmed by credible reports of serious human rights and humanitarian law violations by the Taliban, the Assembly recalls that, as *de facto* authorities, they have obligations and can be held accountable in this regard. To this end, the Assembly considers the setting up of a specific, robust and independent mandate of the United Nations to monitor human rights violations in Afghanistan as the best way to collect objective and systematic information on the ground and bring it to the attention of the international community.

6. Reiterating in the strongest terms its condemnation of terrorism in all circumstances, the Assembly expresses its deep concern at the high number of Taliban figures that are subject to the system of sanctions established by Resolution 1267 (1999) of the UN Security Council who are now members of the interim government.

7. It recalls that the fight against terrorism is one of the formidable transnational challenges arising from the current situation which could potentially spill over with disastrous and destabilising effects, together with organised crime, drug trafficking, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings. In this context, the Assembly underlines that addressing these challenges will require a stronger dialogue, partnership and solidarity with countries in the region.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 30 September 2021 (29th sitting) (see Doc. 15381, report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Sir Tony Lloyd). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 September 2021 (29th sitting).

8. In light of the above, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:

8.1. work towards achieving a coherent, co-ordinated and concerted response in relation to Afghanistan;

8.2. step up efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan;

8.3. continue the evacuation of foreign nationals and eligible Afghans, and make additional efforts to ensure the co-ordination and effectiveness of evacuation operations;

8.4. support the central role of the United Nations and its specialised agencies in co-ordinating international efforts in relation to Afghanistan, starting with humanitarian assistance;

8.5. support the setting up of a specific, robust and independent mandate of the United Nations Human Rights Council to monitor the respect for human rights across the whole of Afghanistan, including in rural areas;

8.6. establish a cautious, pragmatic and operational engagement with the Taliban, with a view to addressing the areas of concern which are identified in this Resolution;

8.7. make any upgrading of their operational engagement with the Taliban conditional upon:

8.7.1. the respect for human rights, in particular those of vulnerable groups such as minorities, women and LGBTI people, and humanitarian law;

8.7.2. the rejection of terrorism and violent extremism, as demonstrated by conclusive actions;

8.7.3. the formation of an inclusive and representative government and starting a reconciliation process;

8.7.4. the provision of unhindered access to Afghanistan for the United Nations and for humanitarian relief agencies;

8.7.5. the practical facilitation of the evacuation operations organised by foreign countries;

8.8. ensure that any removal of Taliban members from the list of UN sanctions pursuant to Resolution 1267 (1999) of the UN Security Council is conditional upon an actual change in the individual circumstances which led to that person's inclusion on the list in the first place;

8.9. support the establishment of mechanisms aimed at ensuring that the freezing of Afghan financial assets does not aggravate the socio-economic situation of the population;

8.10. find ways to provide development aid to Afghanistan to avoid the collapse of the economic situation, which would further aggravate the humanitarian crisis and act as a push factor for migration;

8.11. introduce visas for Afghan students enrolled in universities of member States;

8.12. shoulder their moral and legal responsibilities as regards refugee protection and, in this context to:

8.12.1. ensure respect for the principle of *non-refoulement*;

8.12.2. make greater resettlement opportunities available for Afghans, especially for those who are more at risk and vulnerable, in particular minorities, women and LGBTI people;

8.12.3. introduce humanitarian visas, temporary protection or special visa programmes, especially for women and other vulnerable groups such as minorities and LGBTI people;

8.12.4. reassess current and recent asylum applications by Afghans in light of recent developments;

8.12.5. refrain from enforcing forced returns to Afghanistan;

8.13. increase diplomatic efforts, at global and regional level, to promote peace, security and stability in Afghanistan and the region and to develop a common, coherent approach towards the Taliban.

9. In addition, given the frontline role of the countries of the region, in particular neighbouring countries, in tackling the consequences of the Taliban takeover, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to make available political and financial support to help them in their efforts to:

9.1. provide shelter and protection in dignified conditions to people fleeing Afghanistan;

9.2. tackle threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, drug trafficking, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings and other transnational criminal activities.

10. The Assembly also asks its Bureau to consider strengthening interparliamentary dialogue between the Assembly and countries from Central Asia and their regional organisations, with a view to contributing to greater dialogue, mutual understanding and resilience in the face of the need to promote regional stability and avoid the risks of any further spillover.

11. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on the Taliban, as the *de facto* authorities in Afghanistan, to:

11.1. put an end to violence;

11.2. engage in a broad national dialogue with a view to setting up a representative and inclusive government including women and members of religious and ethnic minorities as well as representatives of the previous government;

11.3. introduce an amnesty for Afghans having been members of the security forces, civil servants and those having held public responsibilities under the previous government, while refraining from and sanctioning any form of harassment or persecution against them;

11.4. facilitate the safe departure of foreign nationals and Afghans who are in possession of the necessary documentation and wish to leave;

11.5. ensure respect for human rights and humanitarian law;

11.6. respect the cultural, social and legal progress that has been achieved in the past twenty years as regards human rights and individual freedoms and refrain from any statement or action that could undermine it, including with regard to:

11.6.1. girls' access to education;

11.6.2. women's freedom of movement and their access to work, healthcare and sports;

11.6.3. representation and active participation of women and persons from minorities in all areas of public and political life;

11.7. allow full, safe and unhindered access to all areas of Afghanistan for the United Nations, its specialised agencies and implementing partners, and all those engaged in humanitarian relief activity, including with respect to internally displaced persons;

11.8. accede to requests for information or co-operation by the United Nations, its specialised agencies, bodies and mechanisms;

11.9. respect the immunities and inviolability of diplomatic missions and staff;

11.10. refrain from any action or statement that could support terrorism and violent extremism in or outside Afghanistan, including recruiting or providing training, financial support or shelter to terrorists;

11.11. take resolute action to tackle the production and trafficking of narcotics and dismantle networks involved in domestic or transnational criminal activities.

12. The Assembly calls on the national parliaments of Council of Europe member and observer States as well as parliaments of States enjoying observer or partner for democracy status to scrutinise their governments and hold them to account for the way in which they respond to the current situation.

13. Finally, the Assembly considers that, given the far-reaching implications of the current situation in Afghanistan, it should continue to be seized of the matter.