

Afghanistan must not be left behind as it braces for the Coronavirus pandemic

To ensure that humanitarian aid is able to reach the most vulnerable people in Afghanistan, we reaffirm the United Nations' call for a humanitarian ceasefire and urge Secretary Pompeo, European, NATO, P5 leaders to support this initiative by the UN and furthermore, call upon all parties in the conflict in Afghanistan to:

- Agree to a full and immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The pandemic will not wait for intra-Afghan negotiations to agree to a comprehensive ceasefire;
- Boost immediate preparedness and response operations for a) Water, Sanitation and Hygiene activities to prevent the spread; and b) medical supplies and health infrastructure to contain the virus;
- Take proactive steps to ensure that emergency measures do not compromise the space for human rights, women's rights, refugee protection laws and norms, and the space for independent civil society to operate in safety.

The world is facing an unprecedented crisis. Covid19 has claimed thousands of lives and the number increases daily. This pandemic requires a global response, and one that ensures that no country is left behind. Covid19 will not be stopped by borders, nationality, ethnicity, faction or faith and we must respond to it together.

International allies are understandably pre-occupied with their own national emergencies at this time, but the situation in Afghanistan threatens to rapidly become one of the worst affected countries, intensifying this global public health crisis. Afghanistan already has one of the most at-risk populations in the world. The [recent announcement](#) by the US State Department to cut \$1 Billion worth of aid raises serious risks at a moment of heightened fragility. This cut could have major humanitarian implications, as any drop in funding to institutions and services would reduce the country's ability to treat patients and contain and control the virus in Afghanistan and beyond.

The international community has a critical role to play in preventing deaths on a huge scale. This global crisis can only be addressed in Afghanistan if all sides to the conflict agree to a full and immediate humanitarian ceasefire. We must support the call by UN Secretary General António Guterres for a global ceasefire.

An outbreak of Covid19 in Afghanistan will be devastating as the country now faces multiple crises: a fragile peace process, escalating conflict, weakened international support, and now Covid19. While official numbers of infection remain low, likely due to a lack of testing, the Afghan Health Minister has warned that up to 80% of the population will be infected, with little capacity or provisions to support or treat the sick.

In recent weeks, at least [115,000](#) Afghans have crossed the border from Iran. Without robust control and containment mechanisms at border crossings, combined with limited medical provisions, the number of cases across the country will soon spike.

Access to health care in Afghanistan is significantly compromised due to violence and insecurity, and its public health system remains weak: with many facilities facing chronic shortages of medicines, equipment and doctors. On average, [just \\$8 per capita](#) per year is spent on health care in the country. Health facilities and practitioners have regularly been targeted throughout the conflict. [Escalating violence](#) now threatens to add to the strain, making it even more difficult for those in need to access life-saving services.

We are all in this together. A global response to battle this pandemic must include the citizens of the most vulnerable countries in the world. This is the only way to protect our collective public health.

Afghan Association of London, UK
Afghan Cultural Centre, Austria
Afghan Diaspora Network, Norway
Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau, Afghanistan
Afghan Professionals Network, UK
Afghan Students Association, Switzerland
Afghan Voice Radio, UK
Afghan Women Skills Development Centre (AWSDC), Afghanistan
Afghan Women's Education Centre (AWEC), Afghanistan
Afghan Women's Network (AWN), Afghanistan
Afghan Youth Association, UK
Afghanistan Civil Society Forum (ACSFo), Afghanistan
Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), Afghanistan
Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society (AICS), Afghanistan
Afghanistan Youth Greens (AYG), Afghanistan
Alliance for Peacebuilding, International
Arman Basharat Cultural and Service Institute, Afghanistan
British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), UK
Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, Canada
CARE, International
Centre for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), US
Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Cambodia
CINEP / Peace Program, Colombia
Civil Society Working Committee (CSWC), Afghanistan
Conciliation Resources, UK
Danner Afghanistan Women Empowerment Organization, Afghanistan
Dialogue Solutions, Trinidad and Tobago
Dr Sima Samar, Minister of Human Rights and International Affairs, Afghanistan
Dynamique Citoyenne, Cameroon
Equality for Peace and Democracy (EPD), Afghanistan
General Muslima Amani Deputy Director, Passport Office, Afghanistan
General Nafisa Neekmanish, Head of Security Department Herat, Afghanistan
Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, US
Global Legal Action Network (GLAN), UK
Global Witness, International
Gulalai Akbari MP, Afghanistan
Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar, UK

Help Refugees, International
Homa Ahmadi MP, Afghanistan
Human Rights 360, International
ICAN, International
Intercultural Development Centre, Austria
Labour Friends of Afghanistan, UK
Madre, International
Mercy Corps, International
Mother of Hope, Cameroon
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
Organisation for Social and Economic Development, Helmand, Afghanistan
Oxfam International
PATH Organization, Afghanistan
Peace Museum Vienna, Austria
Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI), Greece
Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), International
Roshanai Social Service Organisation (RSSO), Afghanistan
Search for Common Ground, International
South Western Afghanistan and Baluchistan Agency for Coordination, Afghanistan
The European Afghan Women's Gathering, Europe
The Farkhunda Trust, UK
The Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), Sweden
The Friends Committee on National Legislation, US
The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, International
Training Human Rights Association, Afghanistan
Universal Peace Federation, Austria
Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation, Austria
Women and Children's Legal Research Foundation, Afghanistan
Women Cross DMZ, International
Women for Justice Organisation, Afghanistan
Women for Peace and Participation, International
Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth (WMC), International
Women's Capacity and Development Organisation (WCBDO), Afghanistan
Women's Regional Network, South Asia