

20 April 2023

**Open Letter from Women Inside and Outside of Afghanistan to the UN Secretary-General
on the Concerning Statement by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed**

Dear Secretary-General António Guterres,

We, the undersigned women leaders, human rights defenders, peacebuilders, and civil society representatives from Afghanistan call on the United Nations (UN) leadership, members of the Security Council (UNSC), and all member states to stand firm on their collective commitment not to provide any form of formal recognition to the Taliban, who seized power by force in Afghanistan in August 2021, and who have systematically violated the human rights of women and girls in the country over the last 19 months.

We are deeply concerned and alarmed at the [statement](#) made by UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, on 17 April 2023, that the UN would convene a conference of Special Envoys for Afghanistan in Doha on 1-2 May, to provide an opportunity to “find those baby steps to put us back on the pathway to recognition” of the Taliban.

Be it in [briefings](#) to the UNSC or any other medium or forum, Afghan women have unequivocally advised against granting any formal recognition or legitimacy to the Taliban since before August 2021. We have also called for the Taliban to face the consequences for their brutal actions.

Afghan women have also been clear that:

- Our rights are not negotiable or expendable.
- There should be no unconditional engagement with the Taliban until they have met the basic conditions in letter and spirit—including (but not limited to) respect for human rights, especially those of women and girls.
- Without women, principled humanitarian aid delivery is not possible.
- Decisions taken without meaningful consultations with diverse Afghan women, inside and outside the country, are neither legitimate nor ethical.

We reiterate

The Taliban have grossly violated international law, including the UN Charter; decimated the rights of women, girls, and minorities; and have felt emboldened enough to take the unprecedented step of banning Afghan women from working for the UN.

Any recognition of or unconditional engagement with the Taliban under these circumstances is an act of rewarding a violent group whose relentless targeting and systematic violation of women’s rights has been condemned by you, Under Secretary General Sima Bahous, independent experts, and countless Afghan women as gender apartheid. Any attempt to recognize or legitimise the

Taliban would also undermine the UN's credibility and the basic principle of not recognizing any entity that seizes power by force.

We therefore urge you to:

1. Ensure that all UN leadership and staff are clear and consistent in their messaging that human rights, including women's rights and gender equality, must be front and center in all efforts to engender peace and security in Afghanistan. In this regard, we ask that you **immediately suspend** all of Ms. Mohammed's engagements with the Taliban. Given her recent statement, we are concerned that rather than advocating for the protection of Afghan women's rights, she is amplifying the Taliban's demands and messages.
2. Ensure that the UN **does not** comply with the Taliban's ban on Afghan women working for the UN. The ban thoroughly violates international law and the UN Charter.
3. Ensure that diverse Afghan women are **meaningfully consulted** on any and every matter pertaining to the future of Afghanistan, including the upcoming meeting of Special Envoys in May 2023.
4. We also urge **all concerned parties** not to grant the Taliban a seat at the UN.

Afghan women welcomed your [condemnation](#) of the Taliban's ban on Afghan women working for the UN and your call for the immediate reversal of all measures that restrict the rights of women and girl to education, employment, and freedom of movement. However, to produce any meaningful outcome, these words need to be backed by concerted action. It is therefore crucial that the UN takes a principled stand and continues to press the Taliban to reverse their restrictive policies.

We look forward to your response on the above requests.

Sincerely,

SIGNATORIES

Outside of Country:	Farima Nawabi	Inside of Country: (Anonymous)	Badghis	Women's Coalitions, Forums, and Non-Governmental Organizations:
Sofia Ramyar	Farukh Leqa	Yari	Wardak	Together Stronger Coalition
Naheed Farid	Unchizada	Nasiri	Bamiyan	Women Aid Afghanistan
Manizha Wafeq	Sahar Ehsan	Samangan	Jawzjan	Against Illiteracy and Poverty
Fawzia Koofi	Nahid Shahalimi	Paktika	Kabul	AKIS:Afghanische Kultur Verein
Mariam Safi	Horia Mosadiq	Paktia	Parwan	Center for Human rights advocacy
Najiba Sanjar	Dr. Habiba Sarabi	Herat		Ertebot
Judge Najla Ayubi	Wazhma Tokhi	Kabul		The European Afghan Women's Gathering
Hadiea Amiry	Sonia Iqbal	Nimroz		Raad Van Bestuur: Afghanese vrouwen in Nederland
Malalai Habibi	Hadisa Ehsani	Kandahar		Publisher of Afghan Women's Ideas in Europe
Roshan Mashal	Atefa Tayeb	Kunar		Association of Administrative Members of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Heela Najib	Nargis Nehan	Nangarhar		Aryana Legal Association
Sara Wahedi	Frozan Areeb	Logar		Human's Rights Training Center
Mehri Rezayee	Nazila Jamshidi	Balkh		Solidarity with Afghan Refugees Association in Europe
Anisa Shaheed	Dr. Alema Alema	Kunduz		Publication House for Afghanistan Women in Europe
Elham Kohistani	Spouzhmai	Badakhshan		Por Adabi Kanoon
Nilofar Moradi	Akbarzai	Diakundi		
Afsana Rahimi	Yalda Royan	Nooristan		
Parwana Paikan	Zarqa Yafitali			
	Angela Mehri			