

Afghanistan: Where the world failed humanity - workshop recommendations 13 April 2023

Workshop 1 : Safe pathways to Europe and access to protection in Europe for Afghans at risk - moderated by Olivia Sundberg, IRC

In the first part of the workshop, participants highlighted the severe risks that many Afghans continue to face in the country and the region, and the need for pathways to safety in Europe to be urgently expanded. Whereas several European governments have set up humanitarian admission schemes for Afghans in recent years, severe obstacles to accessing them remain. People experience difficulties in leaving the territory, delays in processing of their applications, untransparent and changing admission criteria, strict documentation requirements, and very narrow eligibility criteria.

Based on this, we put forward 3 key recommendations.

1. EU institutions should continue calling on member states to expand and establish new resettlement, humanitarian visa schemes, and expanded family reunification, refugee resettlement from the region. They should call on governments to adopt flexible, humane, and pragmatic solutions to make existing pathways more accessible – such as easing documentation requirements, expanding eligibility criteria, and broadening the definition of the family.
2. EU coordination and operational support should be strengthened, including through a reinforced role for the EU Asylum Agency. This could include joint operational support to process cases, shared admission lists, shared flights, and consulate capacity, as well as joint EU efforts to inform Afghans in the region of the different pathways to safety that exist and how to access them, providing official and verified information. This coordination would enable a truly European response to help Afghans at risk, modelling the strong EU-wide coordination of the Ukraine response.
3. EU institutions should continue closely engaging the Afghan diaspora and refugees' perspectives and expertise in policymaking, reflecting the partnership principle, as well as involving Afghan-led and refugee-led organisations in trainings for officials, case workers, and interpreters.

Second, our workshop also discussed the barriers to protection that Afghan asylum seekers continue to face long after reaching Europe. These range from pushbacks that deny them access to the territory, obstacles to fair and full asylum procedures – including the use of safe third country concepts, and reception in unsuitable, remote, and detention-like facilities.

To reverse these trends, we make 3 calls on EU institutions:

1. Strengthen access to asylum in Europe under all circumstances – including immediately ending the practice of violent pushbacks at Europe’s borders, establishing independent border monitoring mechanisms, and reversing the widespread use of derogations to asylum standards in Europe. EU institutions should use all tools available to uphold existing EU law and enforce accountability.
The ongoing New Pact negotiations provide a framework for the Parliament to ensure respect for the right to asylum in Europe, without exceptions, avoid a mainstreaming of detention and closed reception models, and move towards a permanent, mandatory and predictable solidarity mechanism between member states.
2. Afghan asylum seekers deserve clear, predictable, and durable support in Europe. EU institutions should closely monitor national practices to ensure that Afghans are not left in limbo, that forced returns to Afghanistan and the region remain formally suspended, and that Afghans’ asylum applications are assessed fairly, fully, and on their merits.
3. Third, and lastly, governments must invest into sufficient and dignified housing for refugees, including buffer reception capacity. EU funding can play a valuable role here, and should firmly favour community-based accommodation, that enables people to access integration and inclusion support from day one.

These challenges require a combination of renewed political will, innovative and pragmatic technical solutions, and continued solidarity between all states involved. I would like to end by thanking the Parliament for its continued commitment to protecting refugees and others in need, and for continuing to keep this on the agenda.

Workshop 2: No to gender apartheid in Afghanistan! - moderated by Patoni Teichmann, European Organisation for Integration/ Afghan Women Network

We request the European parliament and the policy makers of European countries to:

1. Label the discrimination against women under the Taliban as “gender apartheid”
2. Not recognize the Taliban regime as the representative government of Afghanistan
3. All Taliban members should be banned from traveling abroad
4. All political centers that somehow lobby for the Taliban should be blocked immediately, including the political representation of this group in Qatar
5. Identify and cut off any channels of international financial support of the Taliban group
6. The European Union and the political representation of the European Union in Afghanistan together with the United Nations in addition to implementing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should document current historical Injustice, oppression and human rights violations, especially women's rights violations and be the voice of Afghan women in important international decision-making forums
7. The European Union and the international community should react against the countries supporting the active terrorist groups in the region and the Taliban in Afghanistan and express their position clearly

8. The European Union and European policy makers as facilitators, facilitate meaningful inter-Afghan dialogue to create a temporary government with the real participation of all sections of the society, including women.
9. Financial aid and humanitarian support and development for people, especially women and children in Afghanistan, should be continued through aid agencies.
10. The European policy makers should support the human right activists in particular the protesting women and take practical steps for their immunity.
11. Afghan women whose lives are in grave danger should be helped to leave Afghanistan and receive support while leaving the country
12. EU member states should provide scholarships and work visa to eligible Afghans
13. Together with the UNHCR, the European policy makers should support the Afghan immigrants and refugees in Afghanistan's neighboring countries to have access to education and work.

Workshop 3 - Are the Hazaras subjected to genocide in Afghanistan? - moderated by Tahir Khairkhowa, World Hazara Council

The session outlined the situation of the Hazara in Afghanistan in recent centuries and placed the policy of extermination against the Hazara in the context of the definition of genocide. After a deep and intense discussion, the following recommendations were drawn:

We demand the European Parliament to:

1. recognize the nature of the systematic attacks on the Hazara in Afghanistan as genocide in a resolution as they fulfil the definitional elements of genocide
2. to recognize the Hazara Genocide in late 19th century in a resolution
3. to call for an investigation group in the European Parliament and/or on the level of the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council to follow the news on Hazara and be alert for any potential risk
4. to establish an internationally assisted, supported, and monitored protection mechanism for the Hazara on the level of the EU or the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council – or to participate in such a mechanism on the international level (for ex. in the frame of the UN).
5. to urge member states to prioritize the Hazaras in their resettlement schemes due to the urgently and earnestly needed protection for the members of this community, who are in refugee camps, or are fleeing Afghanistan to third countries
6. to reach out to the responsible services of the commission to ensure a fair distribution of aid in Afghanistan
7. to hold a dedicated conference in the regular work of the European Parliament on Hazaras for discussing the issue deeply

Participation in the conference and the session was enriching for everyone. In our opinion, it is a very good approach to let the people concerned speak for themselves. We would like to thank all those who made it possible to hold the conference.