

*As US and NATO Forces Withdraw,
We Must Not Abandon
The Afghan People and
Their Democratic Republic*

We are facing unprecedented times and this past year has been difficult for citizens globally. Today, no matter where we are in the world, we can all relate to feelings of loss, uncertainty and isolation. The pandemic has demonstrated irrefutably that we are all interconnected and that certain challenges can only be addressed if all allies collaborate and act jointly. During his recent visit to Europe, President Biden reaffirmed America's commitment to NATO and stressed the importance of the trans-Atlantic alliance and capacities of democracies to meet new challenges and threats. Urgent support for our Afghan allies, who are fighting threats against human rights and democratic principles on multiple fronts, must remain a key priority.

Biden's commitment to NATO comes at a pivotal moment. As US and NATO forces prepare to leave Afghanistan, it is the obligation of all NATO and European countries to continue to strongly stand by our Afghan partners. Our Afghan allies are standing against an emboldened Taliban and militant networks who are using violence to silence and oppress the Afghan people. They are assassinating schoolgirls, women leaders, journalists, judges, doctors, charity workers, teachers, government officials, minorities and even religious scholars. The killing and destruction of the people and institutions that uphold our shared values is not only a threat to the Afghan people who have been our allies for twenty years, but also to our core principles, legitimacy and global security. The Afghan people, just as our other allies, deserve peace, justice, liberty and dignity. We must not abandon the Afghan people and their democratic republic at this critical moment.

EU and NATO countries must come together to demonstrate that we remain steadfast in our commitment to human rights and democracy in Afghanistan, including for Afghan women and minorities and that we will continue to support the Afghan National Security Forces

(ANDSF) who are fighting to protect Afghan lives from terrorists as well as work towards our shared security interests. Together, we must:

- **Re-affirm robust financial support to ANDSF** which is the most popular and respected institution in Afghanistan. Technical and financial support, intelligence-sharing, and training and assistance programs are essential for ANDSF to effectively combat terrorism and defend their country. To address concerns around corruption, the international community must immediately develop a joint plan with the ANDSF on a framework that can mitigate corruption and ensure continued support as they work to fill the security vacuum catalysed by the withdrawal.
- **Continue development assistance to key institutions** that deliver basic services. With an emboldened Taliban and their affiliates threatening crucial institutions and civic spaces, it is imperative to support education, health, and community programmes.
- **Reaffirm support for civil society and human rights.** Women and human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, as well as civil society activists, are facing deadly violence daily. Increasing support for these actors is essential.
- **Continue humanitarian assistance given through international organisations must include a human rights component as a condition.** We must ensure that the rights of women, minorities and other vulnerable groups are upheld and protected at all times.
- **Develop a transatlantic approach to a regional framework at the highest levels of leadership.** This will allow for utilizing the full range of levers and bilateral relationships across allies to push regional countries to end 'spoiler' actions and influence their proxies.
- **Support a strong UN role in the Intra-Afghan peace talks** to ensure that the peace talks do not fail and will result in a sustainable, just, and inclusive outcome for the Afghan people. To achieve this, a strong and neutral mediator is critical. While the appointment of the personal envoy of the UNSG has been positive, it is paramount that the UN has more power to support the progress of the talks among the two parties in Doha.

The withdrawal of US and NATO troops is not only a defining moment for Afghanistan, it is a test for what our democracies are prepared to champion and can achieve together. Let us fulfil our obligations by preventing further chaos and violence and by making a powerful contribution to peace in Afghanistan and ultimately to our global community. We must keep our promise to the Afghan people and stand with them, shoulder to shoulder, and face what lies ahead together.

Algeria	Hafida Benchehida	Founding member, Mediterranean women mediators network; Founding member, Arab Women Parliamentarians Network for Equity
Argentina	Susana Malcorra	Former Foreign Minister of Argentina & Chief of Staff at the UN Secretary General
Australia	Dr. Emma Leslie	Executive Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
Canada	Ambassador William (Bill) Crosbie	Former Ambassador to Afghanistan
Denmark	Uffe Ellemann-Jensen	Former Minister for Foreign Affairs
France	Guissou Jahangiri	Vice President, International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), Executive director of OPEN ASIA Armanshahr Foundation
Germany	Dr. Antje Herrberg	Senior Mediation Advisor, European Union
Italy	Federica Mogherini	Former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice President of the European Commission.
	Prof. Nathalie Tocci	Director, Istituto Affari Internazionali
Lithuania	Ambassador Vygaudas Usackas	Former Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Ambassador to USA and St. Court of James's as well as EU ambassador to Afghanistan and Russia
Maldives	Dr. Mariyam Shakeela	chairperson of Addu Women's Association (AWA); former Cabinet Minister, Government of the Maldives
Netherlands	Bert Koenders	Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
Philippines	Amina Rasul Bernardo	Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID)
Poland	Aleksander Kwaśniewski	President of the Republic of Poland 1995 - 2005
United Kingdom	Ahmad Masood Amer	Executive Director, Centre for Afghanistan Policy Studies
	Lieutenant General Sir James Jeffrey Corfield Bucknall, KCB, CBE	Retired British Army officer and former Commander of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps
	Lieutenant General Sir James Benjamin Dutton	Royal Marines Officer, former Governor of Gibraltar
	The Rt Hon Baroness Frances D'Souza	Member of the House of Lords
	Baroness Mary Goudie	Member of the House of Lords
	Sahar Halaimzai	Time4Real Peace, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council
	The Rt Hon Baroness Arminka Helic	Member of the House of Lords
	The Rt Hon Baroness Fiona Hodgson Of Abinger	Member of the House of Lords
	Zainab Homam	CEO of Afghan Action U.K.
	Prof. Mary Kaldor	Director, Conflict and Civil Society Research Programme, LSE
	Lieutenant General Sir Graeme Cameron Maxwell Lamb KBE, CMG, DSO	Former Commander of the Field Army at Land Command
	General Sir John Chalmers McColl, KCB, CBE, DSO, KStJ	Senior British Army officer, former Lieutenant Governor of Jersey. Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe from 2007-2011.
	Homa Hoodfar	Interim International Director, Women living under Muslim Laws

The Rt Hon John Montague, 11th Earl of Sandwich	Member of the House of Lords
General Sir Nicholas Ralph Parker, KCB, CBE	Former Commander of Land Armies
Sir William Patey KCMG	Former UK Ambassador to Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Sudan
General The Lord Richards of Herstmonceux	Former Chief of the Defence Staff
Major General Andy Salmon, CMG, OBE	Retired Royal Marines officer, former Commandant General Royal Marines
Rahela Sidiqi	Founder and Director, Rahela Trust
Marika Theros	Policy Fellow, LSE Ideas
Tom Tugendhat	Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.
Dr. Rim Turkmani	Research Director, Conflict Research Programme – Syria, LSE IDEAS
United States	
Sanam Anderlini	Women Alliance for Security Leadership
Arash Azizzada	Afghans For A Better Tomorrow
Ambassador Ryan Crocker	Former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan
Ambassador James Cunningham	Former US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Israel, and the United Nations
Rose Gottemoeller	Deputy Secretary General, NATO
Tanya Henderson	Executive Director, Mina's List
Ambassador Hugo Llorens	U.S. Spécial Chargé D'Affaires Afghanistan 2016-17, and Assistant Chief of Mission in Kabul (2012-13)
Ambassador P. Michael McKinley	Former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan
Amb. Ron Neumann	Former US ambassador to Afghanistan
Annie Pforzheimer	Former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Afghanistan
David Sedney	Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia, U.S. Department of Defense
Ellie Smeal	President, Feminist Majority Foundation
Ambassador Melanne Verwee	Executive director, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security
Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne	Formerly Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, Ambassador to Argentina, Mexico and Deputy Ambassador to Afghanistan

Organizations

Afghan American Women Association (A-AWA)	United States
Afghan American Foundation	United States
Afghan Women's Organization Refugee and Immigrant Services	Canada
Alliance in Support of the Afghan People	United States
Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan	Canada
Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators networks	Global (Six Regional Networks with 700+ members)
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)	United States
The Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL)	Global
Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth (WMC) Network Afghanistan Focus Group	Members from 22 Commonwealth countries
Women for Peace and Participation, UK	United Women for Peace members, Network of women peacebuilders in the Diaspora and countries.
Women's Regional Network, Rukhshanda Naz, President	Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India

This letter is organised by a coalition of Afghan women and friends of Afghanistan. The Afghan Women's Network together with a larger coalition of Our Voices - Our Future and Together Stronger work to achieve peace and demand an end to the conflict and an equal representation of women across fields in Afghanistan. We believe in inclusive, just, practical, and sustainable peace in which women are equal citizens of Afghanistan.