



## **ATLAS Network Call for Urgent Action**

**ATLAS** is an active global community of female-identifying lawyers, activists, and jurists with expertise in various facets of public international law. **In view of the worsening humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, ATLAS is calling for urgent action from the international community, namely member states formerly deployed in Afghanistan as members of the coalition, as well as international organisations tasked with peace and security, to establish a humanitarian corridor and to act swiftly and clearly to ensure the protection of those most in danger. In particular, and while Hamid Karzai International Airport remains open, we call for:**

- increased coordination between State forces on the ground, especially when it comes to securing access to the airport and disseminating information on airport openings and closures;
- the publication and dissemination of clear and transparent information on eligibility criteria for evacuations, including the priority orders that have isolated and delayed the travel to safety for many human rights defenders, especially women traveling with children.

In support of a recent statement emanating from the United Nations Special Procedures<sup>1</sup>, we note that the Taliban are engaging in actions that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. We are drawing attention to the categories the most at risk, women and girls, as well as members of the Hazara community, targeted on the basis of their ethnicity.

**However, the situation on the ground has rapidly deteriorated since the 23rd of August as the Taliban intensified attacks on Afghan civilians attempting to cross into the airport compound, multiplied their checkpoints, and issued calls that the evacuations would soon no longer be allowed. As of the time of writing, on the night of 25th of August, the airport is largely inaccessible, with only two gates remaining**

---

<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan: UN experts urge swift global action to protect human rights and prevent 'civilian slaughter' 16 August 2021  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27384&LangID=E>

**open, during a curfew, with large crowds waiting outside and an incremental withdrawal of American, British, Canadian, and German armed forces.**

**Those evacuations, from the 14th of August, were conducted on an ad hoc basis facilitated by volunteers around the globe, assisted by their personal contacts on the ground. This is untenable, and represents an abject failure to coordinate at an international level. Assessing the need, and relying on precedent, we demand:**

- the establishment of a designated humanitarian corridor across Afghanistan - and outside, enforced by supranational organizations such as the ICRC or UNHCR, without any external interference with the movement of refugees; this could mean the establishment of a peacekeeping operation consistent with the provisions existing under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Paragraph 16 of UNGA Resolution 1674 lays down the basis for the establishment of a humanitarian corridor under UN auspices.
- emergency humanitarian support from the IRC or similar NGOs to provide convoys for safe passage to the airport itself, to ensure that for-profit humanitarianism and security risks for human rights defenders are mitigated; in the event that the airport is permanently closed, such logistics should extend to transport by land to neighboring countries, with the view of resettlement through asylum and refugee requests in receiving countries to ensure the safety and security of displaced persons;
- urgent action from the United Nations Security Council, Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Member States, to ensure that human rights defenders have access to safe passage to the airport and the ability to evacuate from Afghanistan. We call on all relevant actors to acknowledge the outstanding work of Afghan human rights defenders, most of them women, to Afghan society; and, in view of this, for States to extend resettlement opportunities to those not affiliated with international organisations. Human rights defenders should all have access to protection based on the nature of their work and the risk they are facing under an oppressive regime, not based on their affiliation to organizations based in the Global North.
- increased logistics coordination to address the backlog created by the lack of coordination on landings and the rushed processing that is leaving approximately 3,000 potential SIV holders stranded in Doha.
- full respect for the internationally guaranteed right to asylum and protection across UN Member States.
- further action from the UN Human Rights Council; we cannot request future compliance with human rights obligations, we need tangible action. We reiterate the call of UN Special Rapporteurs for the urgent establishment of a fact-finding mission in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan: UN experts urge swift global action to protect human rights and prevent 'civilian slaughter' 16 August 2021  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27384&LangID=E>

**Time is of the essence, and prioritization of human rights defenders is crucial. With the presence of ISIS being now confirmed in Kabul, the threat is being compounded beyond management.**

**We demand immediate action on a corridor facilitating airlifts and land evacuations with humanitarian assistance provided at points of exit from Afghanistan, as well as safe passage into the corridors.**

