

Joint statement: Afghan and European civil society oppose EU engagement with the Taliban on deportations

We, the undersigned civil society organisations (CSOs) including Afghan diaspora organisations across Europe, are profoundly concerned, outraged, and deeply disappointed by [reports](#) that the European Union (EU) intends to host representatives of the Taliban in Brussels for discussions on deportations to Afghanistan.

Opening the doors to Taliban representatives to discuss deportations sends a dangerous and devastating signal when the people of Afghanistan continue to endure one of the world's gravest [human rights](#) and [humanitarian crises](#) under Taliban rule. The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants against the Taliban leadership and many of the Taliban leaders are on the EU and UN sanctions list. The proposed invitation undermines the EU's credibility, values, and long-standing commitments to human rights, democracy, accountability, and international law.

Since seizing power in August 2021, the Taliban have systematically dismantled constitutional protections, [erased](#) women and girls from public life, violently suppressed dissent, and much more, leading a regime of discrimination and fear. Multiple [United Nations experts](#) and [international human rights organisations](#) have described the Taliban's treatment of women and girls as amounting to a potential gender apartheid.

The EU's own [five benchmarks](#), which explicitly condition any engagement with the Taliban on respect for human rights, the rule of law, and Afghanistan's international obligations should guide any engagement with the Taliban. Cooperating with the Taliban on deportations not only contradicts these benchmarks but also disregard the European Parliament's [repeated resolutions](#) and calls for a principled, rights-based approach towards Afghanistan. The Parliament's most recent [resolution](#) (May 2026) regrets the proposed invitation of Taliban representatives to Brussels and calls on the European Commission and EEAS on non-recognition and non normalisation of the Taliban.

For millions of Afghans, particularly Afghan women and girls, human rights defenders, journalists, academics, judges, artists, former government employees, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQI+ persons, and those forced into exile, Brussels symbolises the defence of democratic values, human dignity, international protection, and principled support for human rights including in Afghanistan. The EU has played a critical role in consistently raising concerns over ongoing human rights violations in Afghanistan. It supports a number of initiatives, including more recently the establishment of an independent [UN human rights monitoring mechanism](#). These efforts that have been deeply valued and widely appreciated by Afghans and the international human rights community alike. The decision to host Taliban representatives in Brussels to discuss deportations undermines any trust built so far.

We are particularly alarmed that this initiative appears linked to discussions on deportations to Afghanistan. The current realities inside the country render such discussions deeply irresponsible. Afghanistan under Taliban control cannot be considered safe for deportations.

More than [90% of displaced Afghans](#) continue to be hosted by Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, particularly Iran and Pakistan. While Afghans remain among the largest national groups seeking asylum [in Europe](#), their number remains comparatively low compared with the

displacement borne within the region. The number of Afghans arriving in Europe has also significantly decreased in recent years.

Although Afghan asylum seekers generally benefit from relatively [high recognition rates](#) (73.3% at the first instance in 2025 which includes national forms of protection as well), they continue to face profoundly inconsistent and unequal treatment among EU Member States. Recognition rates for Afghan applicants have ranged from [as high as 98%](#) in some Member States [to below 5% in](#) others, without any credible explanation linked to the substance or profile of the cases concerned. Such extreme disparities strongly suggest that Afghans in need of protection are not being assessed according to uniform standards and safeguards across Europe.

[Serious concerns](#) regarding the safety and legality of deportations to Afghanistan are raised even prior to the Taliban's takeover. Today, the deteriorating human rights situation, the absence of effective legal protection, the collapse of institutional safeguards, and the ongoing risks of persecution and reprisals only make clearer that Afghanistan cannot be considered safe for return. Courts across Europe have [rightly intervened](#) to halt deportations in recognition of these realities. UN human rights bodies, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [have recently called on states](#) to halt involuntary returns to Afghanistan given the grave and ongoing human rights situation in the country.

UNHCR's official assessment of the situation is that [many Afghans](#) seeking asylum will have international protection needs. Where Afghans are found not to be in need of protection, European countries should prioritise rights-based and sustainable alternatives, including the granting of regular status, access to residence rights, and other measures that ensure dignity, stability, and protection for Afghans unable to safely return.

Any attempt by the EU or its MS to advance deportation arrangements with the Taliban risks violating the principle of *non-refoulement*, a cornerstone of international refugee and human rights law prohibiting the transfer of individuals to situations where they face persecution, torture, or other serious harm.

Afghan civil society, particularly Afghan women-led organisations and human rights defenders have repeatedly ([here](#) and [here](#)) warned against policies that contribute to the political normalisation of the Taliban while excluding the voices of victims and those directly affected by Taliban rule. Yet, those whose future and safety will be profoundly affected are marginalised from ongoing discussions. We cannot condone this.

We therefore call on the European Commission, EU Member States and the European External Action Service to:

- Immediately reconsider and suspend any planned invitation or official hosting of Taliban representatives in Brussels;
- Ensure that any engagement related to Afghanistan remains strictly conditioned on measurable and verifiable improvements in human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls;
- Reject any cooperation arrangements that facilitate deportations to Afghanistan under current conditions;

- Fully uphold the principle of *non-refoulement* and the EU's obligations under international refugee and human rights law;
- Guarantee meaningful and structured consultation with Afghan civil society, women's rights defenders, refugee-led organisations, and human rights experts in all policy discussions concerning Afghanistan;
- Expand safe protection pathways for Afghans at risk, including asylum access, family reunification, humanitarian visas, resettlement, and relocation mechanisms;
- Continue supporting independent international accountability mechanisms documenting violations and possible international crimes committed in Afghanistan;
- Ensure that the EU's Afghanistan policy remains firmly grounded in human rights, democratic principles, and accountability rather than migration deterrence objectives.

Signatories:

Afghanistan LGBTIQ+ Organisation

Afghans Empowered.org

Africa Solidarity Centre Ireland (ASCI)

AFRICAN MEDIA ASSOCIATION MALTA

ARENE (Afghan Refugees Experts Network in Europe)

asylkoordination austria

AWO Bundesverband e.V.

Centre for Peace Studies

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)

Ciré

Deutsch-Afghanische Freundschaftsgesellschaft Baaham e.V.

Diakonie Deutschland

Dutch Council for Refugees

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

Emmaus Europe

Empowerment For Her

Estonian Refugee Council

European Network of Migrant Women

European Network on Statelessness

European Women's Lobby

European-Global Civil Society Organization (EGCSO)

FARR, the Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups
Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy
Female Fellows e.V
Finnish Refugee Advice Centre
Forum réfugiés
France terre d'asile
Fundacja Ocalenie
Gender Persecution in Afghanistan Accountability Working Group (GPWG)
Generation Outside Afghanistan .org
Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)
Greek Forum of Refugees
HIAS Greece
International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) Europe
Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe
KEIHAN Foundation
Melissa Network of Migrant Women in Greece
Migrant Women Hungary Association/ She4She
NANSEN (The Belgian Refugee Council)
NETWORK OF AFGHANISTAN DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS IN EUROPE (NADOE)
NOAS Foundation
Passerell
PIC - Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants - PICUM
Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR)
PRO ASYL
Rainbow Afghanistan
Red Acoge
Refugee Advisory Board
Refugee Support Aegean (RSA)
Renovar Mouraria
Safe Passage International

Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe (Swiss Refugee Council)

SOLIDAR

Symbiosis-Council of Europe School of Political Studies in Greece

UNIRE-APS

Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen

ASB