

Peace Cannot Be Achieved in Afghanistan Without Guaranteeing and Safeguarding the Security and Human Rights of Hazaras and other Persecuted Communities

Statement of Hazara Diaspora regarding the ongoing “Intra-Afghan Peace Talks” in Doha, Qatar

30.09.2020

The ongoing peace process is an opportunity to establish long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan. In order to ensure the success of the negotiations, the global Hazara community encourages the steadfast commitment of the negotiating parties as well as the supporting states and international organizations to protect the fundamental principles of human rights, justice, freedom of religion and belief, the rule of law, and equality of all citizens of Afghanistan. We strongly wish to see an end to the war and suffering on all sides. At the same time, we emphasize that any political settlement needs to consider both the history and the diverse needs, interests, and concerns of all citizens of Afghanistan, particularly historically persecuted and marginalized ethnic groups such as the Hazaras.

In particular, we emphasize the central importance of protecting the security and human rights of all disadvantaged or marginalized groups such as women, religious minorities such as Hindus and Sikhs, and persecuted communities, particularly the Hazaras, who have been victims of ethnic and sectarian violence throughout the modern history of Afghanistan. The Taliban have committed mass atrocities against Hazara civilians, including the massacres in Mazar-i-Sharif [1998], where they publicly declared their intent to kill Hazaras based on their ethnicity and faith. Other massacres took place in Yakawlang [2001], Robatak [2000], and Mirza Olang [2017], as well as other locations. The Taliban also destroyed our cultural heritage sites such as the Buddha statues [2001] in Bamiyan.

In more recent years too, Hazaras have suffered targeted violence by extremist groups, particularly the Taliban. We regret that the Government of Afghanistan has consistently been negligent in protecting the Hazara people, nor has it addressed the pleas of its Hazara citizens for increased security and justice for the victims of targeted violence. We are concerned by the Taliban’s increasing offensives in recent months in Hazara-populated regions where they have threatened the local communities and killed civilians. This inevitably has resulted in deep apprehensions and mistrust, raising concerns among the Hazara community about the Taliban’s views and commitments to peace.

Given the history of the Taliban’s relations with the Hazaras, it is essential that the ongoing peace negotiation in Doha addresses the fundamental concerns of the Hazaras and guarantees their existing constitutional rights in a potential peace settlement. We bring attention to these realities not to prevent progress, but to ensure that peace with the Taliban is reached within a framework that can effectively protect Hazara rights, dignity, and lives, as well as those of other vulnerable populations, including women and various ethnoreligious groups in Afghanistan. The security of the Hazara people is non-negotiable. Guaranteeing the constitutionally-protected fundamental rights of the Hazaras and other persecuted groups in Afghanistan must be an integral part of any peace agreement with the Taliban.

Thus, this statement seeks to put forward what we believe to be essential components of a lasting peace in Afghanistan. On behalf of the Hazara diaspora communities, we present the following calls to action and expect that the negotiating parties as well as the supporting states and organizations ensure their full consideration during the Intra-Afghan Peace Negotiations:

1. **RECOGNITION:** The peace negotiation should recognize the historical persecution of Hazaras based on their faith and ethnicity by the Taliban, and ensure that:

- a) As a distinct cultural and ethnic group, the fundamental rights and security concerns of Hazaras are recognized and protected in the peace negotiations.
- b) As predominantly Shi'a Muslims, the religious rights of Hazaras are recognized as in the current Constitution of Afghanistan, and that their opportunities as equal citizens of Afghanistan are not limited because of their sectarian beliefs.

2. **INCLUSION:** A peace settlement must ensure full and equal participation of Hazaras in post-peace government structure and political system:

- a) We demand the peace settlement with the Taliban guarantee full inclusion of Hazaras and other ethnic groups in the post-peace political system and government structure and provide equal opportunities for them to take part in all spheres of public life in Afghanistan.

3. **SECURITY:** Amid heightened vulnerabilities of Hazaras to ethnic and sectarian violence, particularly by the Taliban, it is imperative that the security of Hazaras are guaranteed in the peace negotiations:

- a) The Government of Afghanistan and the International Community involved in supporting the peace negotiations must adopt measures to protect ethnoreligious groups such as the Hazaras against threats of religiously motivated violence including massacres, forced displacements, target killings, and abductions.
- b) To demonstrate and pledge good faith in the peace process, the Taliban must immediately cease all attacks against the Hazara regions and civilians throughout Afghanistan.

4. **DEMOCRACY:** The democratic principles, human rights, and fundamental freedoms guaranteed in the constitution of Afghanistan must be protected as a result of peace negotiations with the Taliban:

- a) Hazaras believe the security of all citizens in Afghanistan can only be ensured within a democratic political system. For this reason, we only support a political system that is based on free and fair elections in which all citizens have equal rights and opportunities to elect their representatives and government leaders.
- b) Afghanistan's Constitution is among its most important achievements post-2001 and must be protected; Chapter Two [Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens] is non-negotiable.

5. **EQUALITY:** An end state to the peace negotiation should eliminate the inequality, systemic and structural injustices that perpetuate and exacerbate the socio-economic and political marginalization of the Hazaras in Afghanistan:

- a) Justice and equality are the foundations of a lasting peace. The "Intra-Afghan Peace Negotiations" and the expected potential Peace Agreement must ensure the equality of all citizens of Afghanistan irrespective of their ethnic, religious, gender, cultural, and other collective identities and affiliations.
- b) All citizens of Afghanistan must enjoy equal opportunities to participate in the public life of their country, including the opportunity to elect and to be elected to political offices at any level based on universal democratic principles.
- c) In order to ensure equality of all citizens, peace negotiations must respect Afghanistan's international human rights commitments and obligations [i.e. *Universal Declaration of Human*

Rights, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other treaties].

6. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** There must be a legally binding and pre-negotiated accountability mechanism that ensures the rights and security of the Hazara people, which can offer clear guidelines on what will trigger enforcement mechanisms should the Taliban fail to respect human rights laws:

a) Further international aid and reconstruction support must be contingent upon the protection and promotion of the rights of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as women and persecuted communities such as Hazaras.

b) The Taliban have demonstrated that they do not adhere to international human rights laws and democratic values. We demand that the Taliban recognize all international human rights related documents that Afghanistan has signed. We also demand that the international community involved in the peace process ensures that human rights values are upheld during the peace negotiations, and that the Taliban are held accountable where they violate human rights laws, including continuing their targeted violence against Hazaras.

Submission by: Hazara International, Hazara Council of Great Britain, World Hazara Council, Canadian-Hazara Humanitarian Services, Salsal Association in Sweden, The Hazara Research Collective, Hazara Kulturverein Hamburg, Katib Cultural Association in Denmark, and World Ismaili Hazara Network in Canada.

