



Plenary sitting

B9-0321/2021

7.6.2021

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Afghanistan
(2021/2712(RSP))

Clare Daly, Mick Wallace, Idoia Villanueva Ruiz
on behalf of The Left Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Afghanistan
(2021/2712(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous reports and resolutions relating to Afghanistan,
 - having regard to the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, of the other part,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
 - having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998,
 - having regard to the UN Secretary-General's report of 29 March 2021 on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence,
 - having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 2131 (XX) entitled 'Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty',
 - having regard to Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations,
 - having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) entitled 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples',
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in February 2020 the US and the Taliban signed an agreement that paved the way for the first direct talks between the Taliban and representatives of the Afghan Republic since 2001; whereas the peace agreement between the USA and the Taliban made no mention of human rights or of women; whereas under the agreement impunity was preserved for serious crimes under international law by all parties; whereas on 13 April 2021, US President Joe Biden announced the withdrawal of all remaining troops in Afghanistan by 11 September 2021;
- B. whereas 20 years have passed since the illegal US- and NATO-led intervention, which resulted in countless casualties, massive displacement, the crippling of the economy, the

proliferation of the drugs trade, the empowerment of armed militias and the general militarisation of the society; whereas this has led to a situation where there is no effective sovereign power in charge of the country, and the numerous political and armed factions each have connections with foreign powers who they often depend on for financing and advice;

- C. whereas *The Washington Post* published the results of an investigation in which political and military leaders of US governments recognise that they knew they could not win the war in Afghanistan, while in public it was claimed that victory was possible; whereas they claimed that ‘constant progress’ was being made in the war, sometimes with the intention of justifying the sending of more troops, and whereas they were very aware of the failure of the occupation;
- D. whereas since 2001, the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States (CIA) has maintained an anti-terrorism operation in Afghanistan; whereas the CIA has recruited, equipped, trained and deployed Afghan paramilitary forces to combat Al Qaeda and Taliban forces and, since 2014, militants affiliated with the Islamic State; whereas these groups have killed, detained and disappeared civilians during night raids, and attacked health facilities for allegedly treating insurgent fighters; whereas in parallel to these operations, air and drone attacks have been launched;
- E. whereas a BBC investigation indicates that the British Ministry of Defence and some elements within the Armed Forces have repeatedly covered up evidence of war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- F. whereas in 2019 Afghanistan was identified as the most drone-bombed country in the world; whereas attacks and retaliation attacks have caused severe loss of life;
- G. whereas the security situation throughout the country remains dire; whereas Afghanistan was ranked the least secure country in the world in the 2020 Global Peace Index;
- H. whereas according to the International Organization for Migration, there were 4 million people internally displaced in Afghanistan in 2020, an increase from 1.2 million in 2016 and half a million in 2013; whereas many of these people suffer from food insecurity, inadequate shelter, insufficient access to sanitation and health facilities, and a lack of protection, and whereas many are children classified as particularly vulnerable to the risk of child labour, sexual abuse or potential recruitment to criminal and terrorist groups; whereas there are almost 2.5 million registered refugees from Afghanistan; whereas they comprise the largest long-term refugee population in Asia, and the second largest refugee population in the world;
- I. whereas after the signature of the US-Taliban Agreement in February, a number of US airstrikes caused civilian casualties, most notably the airstrike on February 17 in Kushk district in Herat, which destroyed a house, killing three women and five children;
- J. whereas the Taliban forces and other armed groups have frequently committed war crimes and human rights abuses, including indiscriminate attacks that have killed and injured numerous civilians; whereas, however, this can never justify violations by the Afghan or US government;

- K. whereas although President Ashraf Ghani pledged to ban night raids in September 2019, these operations by special forces have continued;
- L. whereas on 24 May 2021, intensified clashes between government and non-government forces in Eastern Laghman Province, including the use of small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades, have directly affected private residential areas, reportedly killing three civilians and driving 1 600 families to the city of Mehtarlam in Laghman Province;
- M. whereas as the clashes are ongoing, the World Food Programme's (WFP) seasonal food security support activities for Alishang and Alingar districts have been suspended; whereas these clashes are part of intensified fighting, with at least five administrative districts' centres having fallen into the hands of the opposition since the beginning of May;
- N. whereas on 12 of May 2020, the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)-run maternity wing of the Dasht-e Barchi hospital in Kabul was attacked, resulting in the killing of at least 24 people, including five women in labour, 10 who had recently given birth, a healthcare worker, and three new-born babies, and injuring 14 others; whereas simultaneously the Islamic State - Khorasan Province (ISKP) carried out a suicide attack at a police commander's funeral in Nangarhar, killing 24 and injuring 82; whereas as a result of this attack, MSF suspended its support for the hospital, citing a failure by the authorities to adequately investigate the incident;
- O. whereas according to the 2021 first quarter report by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), there has been a 38 % increase in civilian casualties in the six months after the start of the Afghanistan Peace Negotiations in September 2020 in comparison to the same period a year earlier; whereas anti-government elements continued to be responsible for the majority, 61 %, of all civilian casualties in the first three months of 2021, while pro-government forces continued to cause 27 % of the total civilian casualties; whereas in 2020 there were 8 820 civilian casualties, with 3 035 killed and 5 785 injured; whereas in 2020 women and children together comprised 43 % of all civilian casualties;
- P. whereas the armed conflict continues to cause psychological trauma and poverty, and has left many civilians reliant on humanitarian aid and with limited access to education and justice;
- Q. whereas there has been an increasing number of civilian casualties and attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities since early in the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak;
- R. whereas Afghanistan's weak healthcare infrastructure was overwhelmed when COVID-19 swept across the country; whereas a total of 52 011 cases and 2 237 deaths were recorded, which almost certainly did not represent the true scale of infection in the country; whereas in most Afghan provinces there is no possibility of receiving a COVID-19 test, and samples are transported to the capital;
- S. whereas the number of people living in poverty remains high, at 55 % of the population, and whereas this figure is predicted to rise because of the economic slowdown caused by the pandemic;

- T. whereas in February 2020, the Ministry of Women's Affairs reported an increase in registered cases of violence against women, including murder, assault, and rape;
- U. whereas an estimated 87 % of Afghan women suffer gender-related violence; whereas Afghanistan ranks 153rd out of 189 countries on the 2019 UN Gender Inequality Index; whereas according data, 62 % of Afghan women have experienced multiple forms of violence, which is almost three times the global average - which is itself already considered exceptionally high; whereas impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence continues; whereas the UNAMA reported that even murder and rape cases often never go to court;
- V. whereas women's participation in government has remained limited; whereas the few women in government faced intimidation, harassment and discrimination; whereas women are not able to access office resources on equitable terms with male colleagues, and are often denied overtime work and payment; whereas women have been further denied adequate opportunities in decision-making roles, and the attacks they face while working in government offices have rarely been investigated, with impunity persisting for the perpetrators; whereas before the US intervention and the rise to power of the Mujahideen in the 1970s and 80s women in Afghanistan – under the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan – enjoyed freedoms comparable to the situation of women in the EU; whereas since then there has been an enormous rollback of women's rights;
- W. whereas the NGO the Logar Youth, Social and Civil Institution has denounced the existence of a paedophile network in the Logar region; whereas at least 546 children were victims of sexual abuse and assault committed by teachers and local authority figures; whereas other secondary schools in the region are being investigated, as it is believed that thousands more children may have been abused; whereas several authorities, including the governor of the region and the local police, have denied the truth of these facts; whereas several of the victims have been killed after being identified;
- X. whereas despite the sexual abuse of children being well-publicised, and the criminalisation of the abusive practice of 'bacha bazi' (male children being sexually abused by older men) in 2018, the authorities have made little effort to end impunity and hold perpetrators accountable;
- Y. whereas children continue to be recruited for combat, particularly by armed groups and the afghan security forces – pro-government militias and local police – and face multiple abuses, including sexual abuse
- Z. whereas, according to UNAMA, Afghanistan continues to be 'one of the deadliest countries in the world for children', with both pro-government and anti-government forces responsible for more than 700 child casualties each;
- AA. whereas according to UNICEF, over 2 million girls remain out of school, and according to government figures about 7 000 schools in the country have no building; whereas large numbers of children continue to be pressed into forced labour or begging on the streets;

- AB. whereas conditions are more difficult for journalists, media workers, and activists due to increasing insecurity and the targeted killings of activists and journalists; whereas the government has introduced a draft mass media bill, which would have imposed further restrictions on the right to freedom of expression;
- AC. whereas according to Amnesty International, attacks against human rights defenders in Afghanistan have been intensified but these attacks are not being investigated, and the Human Rights Defenders are sometimes accused of inventing their complaints;
- AD. whereas for the re-construction of a country in peace it is necessary to strengthen an independent judiciary, safeguard women's and children's rights, protect the freedom of the media and determine how to disarm irregular militias; whereas in December 2020, the Afghan government established the Joint Commission for protection of human rights defenders and civil society activists in Afghanistan;
- AE. whereas just prior to the 2001 invasion, Afghanistan's rulers had made opium production illegal and had almost completed a successful opium production eradication programme where they offered subsidies to farmers to cease opium production; whereas immediately following the invasion production levels increased dramatically; whereas the bulk of the increase in production was under the direct control of the warlords partnered with and supported by the US Government; whereas in 2018 Afghanistan was the origin of 82 % of global opium production according to UN data; whereas illicit trafficking in opiates further fuels instability and insurgency, and increases funding to terrorist groups in Afghanistan;
- AF. whereas the EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on migration issues was introduced as a means of making aid conditional on the readmission of Afghan nationals in the EU, and was passed without Parliament's consent given the absence of a formal readmission agreement; whereas Afghans remain one of the largest groups of asylum seekers in the EU; whereas Member States have endangered thousands of Afghan asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors, by forcibly returning them to a country where they are at serious risk of torture, kidnapping, death and other human rights abuses;
- AG. whereas according to the Commission, since 2002, the EU has provided more than EUR 4 billion in development aid to Afghanistan, which makes Afghanistan the largest beneficiary of EU development assistance in the world; whereas nevertheless, the economy remains seriously damaged and dependent on foreign aid;
- AH. whereas following the recommendations of the IMF and other actors, the Afghan government has introduced a series of harsh neo-liberal reforms, including a flat-rate tax, and has lowered customs duties on imported goods from 43 % to 5.3 %; whereas these reforms have failed to produce any significant increase in state revenue, resulting in budget and trade deficits; whereas in April 2021 the IMF reached a staff-level agreement on Afghanistan's economic reform programme under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF);
- AI. whereas NATO's 'Comprehensive Approach' has failed, ending up in the subordination of development aid to political and military objectives; whereas this approach can implicate certain civil actors in the conflict, as they are seen as part of it by the insurgents;

- AJ. whereas in March 2020, the Judges of the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) unanimously decided to authorise the office of the ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, to initiate an investigation into alleged crimes committed on Afghan territory since 1 May 2003, as well as into other alleged crimes with a nexus to the armed conflict in Afghanistan, but which were committed on the territory of other States Parties to the ICC in the period since 1 July 2002; whereas the US administration has imposed sanctions, including asset freezes, against the ICC Prosecutor, who was poised to lead an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity by all parties to the conflict since 2003;
- AK. whereas Afghanistan appears to be entering a phase of increased instability; whereas just this week there have been numerous reports of more assassinations and deaths of government forces, with the Taliban dramatically increasing their control over formerly government-held areas; whereas the prospect of a peaceful resolution through new national elections looks increasingly unlikely;
1. Points out that on the 20th anniversary of the US and NATO-led intervention, which has resulted in countless casualties, the self-sustainability and sovereignty of the Afghan state are still not guaranteed; recalls that this military presence, and especially its offensive operations, have further fuelled part of the conflict; welcomes that fact that the United States under President Joe Biden have set 11 September 2021 as the deadline for a full troop exit from Afghanistan;
 2. Denounces the long history of failed and illegal NATO military interventions that have brought so much destruction, destabilisation, displacement, and death to West Asia and North Africa in particular, often empowering extremist forces in the process; calls for the disbanding of NATO, the rollback of the military industrial complex, and the promotion of diplomatic relations with our neighbours based on mutual respect, facts and international law;
 3. Welcomes the peace agreement even though there is a lack of guarantees on human rights; stresses that the peace process must be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led; calls for the EU to support the Afghan government in its pursuit of a comprehensive and inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process, actively including the whole range of civil society and all parties to the conflict, including – following a ceasefire – combatant, insurgent and militia groups, since no lasting solution to the conflict can otherwise be achieved;
 4. Is concerned that the security situation throughout the country remains dire, with high levels of violence against civilians and Afghan security forces even as the Taliban have refrained from attacking US forces;
 5. Condemns the US airstrike of the 17 February in Kushk district in Herat, which destroyed a house, killing three women and five children, just days after the peace agreement had been signed;
 6. Is concerned about the current political situation in Afghanistan; notes that a majority of Afghans want peace, but also want to preserve the current constitutional system that guarantees democracy, personal freedoms, a free media, and women's rights; is deeply concerned that the Taliban have done little to reassure citizens that their views have

changed from the extreme coercion that was brutally enforced in the 1990s

7. Calls on the EU and its Member States to urgently scale up efforts to support the country's four million internally displaced people (IDPs), who have been left badly exposed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic;
8. Highlights that COVID-19 has caused both humanitarian and economic hardships on top of already severe poverty, food insecurity, and climate vulnerability in an already fragile economic and social system; calls on the EU and Member States to provide economic and social assistance to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan;
9. Calls on Afghanistan to protect all children within its jurisdiction from all forms of abuse, including sexual abuse, and to hold perpetrators into account in line with international children's rights standards as set in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Afghanistan in 1994; urges the Afghan authorities to fully enforce the UN-Afghan Action Plan signed in Kabul on 30 January 2011 regarding the practice of 'bacha bazi' and enabling the rehabilitation of child victims of sexual abuse;
10. Calls on the authorities to promptly enforce its criminal code prohibiting child abuse and to eradicate it in practice; calls on the authorities to ensure that all cases of sexual violence against boys, including cases involving officials, are promptly and impartially investigated, and that perpetrators are held accountable; believes that the general impunity for child abuse could be considered torture and ill-treatment; urges the Afghan government to start a nationwide campaign to educate society about the prohibition of 'bacha bazi' and the rights of minors to be protected from such physical abuse;
11. Denounces the attacks against human rights defenders, activists, and NGOs and expresses its grave concern at the judicial harassment and smear campaigns targeting prominent human rights defenders and their organisations; urges the authorities to ensure these groups are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including judicial harassment;
12. Calls for the EU to support the Afghan Government in its pursuit of a comprehensive and inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process, actively including the whole range of civil society and all parties to the conflict, including – following a ceasefire – combatant, insurgent and militia groups, since no lasting solution to the conflict can otherwise be achieved;
13. Calls on all parties involved in the conflict adhere to international humanitarian law and respect the rights of all members of society, in particular minorities, women and children, who are disproportionately affected by the situation;
14. Calls for the EU to actively support an Afghan-led disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme for former insurgents; calls also for support to be given to the Afghan government to immediately dissolve and disarm all paramilitary forces operating outside the ordinary military chain of command and to cooperate with independent investigations of all allegations of war crimes and other abuses against human rights; calls especially for prompt and impartial investigation into current allegations of secret detentions and enforced disappearances, for those detained to be located and released illegally, and for those responsible to be prosecuted, including for

command responsibility for;

15. Requires the EU, its Member States and the US to ensure that the alleged war crimes involving the participation of military or civil servants of their countries are subject to an adequate and effective investigation by a totally independent body and, where appropriate, that those responsible are prosecuted without political interference from any member of the government; demands that all those responsible be held accountable, including all those in the direct and indirect chain of command, such as senior officers and ministers responsible for the armed forces;
16. Insists on the fact that the fight against terrorist groups can only be efficient if we address the causes of terrorism, and specifically problems related to inequality, unemployment and poverty; highlights the fact that the terrorist attacks should not be a pretext to derogate from the rule of law and to restrict human rights and fundamental freedoms; believes that terrorist attacks must not be used to combat any form of opposition or to commit crimes, especially extrajudicial crimes;
17. Recalls that Pakistan is distinguished both by the sweep of its objectives and the scale of its efforts, which include soliciting funding for the Taliban, bankrolling Taliban operations, providing diplomatic support as the Taliban's virtual emissaries abroad, arranging training for Taliban fighters, recruiting skilled and unskilled manpower to serve in Taliban armies, planning and directing offensives, providing and facilitating shipments of ammunition and fuel, and on several occasions directly providing combat support; urges Pakistan to respect the sovereignty of Afghanistan and to stop facilitating the work of the Taliban and other militant groups in the region; calls on the directly neighbouring countries to engage in peaceful and productive talks with the Afghan government in order to combat the rise of terrorist groups in the region;
18. Welcomes the decision by the ICC to authorise the office of ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, to commence an investigation into alleged crimes committed on the territory of Afghanistan since 1 May 2003; condemns threats by the US towards those who cooperate with the ICC investigations; condemns, in this regard, the ICC judges' decision rejecting the Prosecutor's request to open an investigation into war crimes and human rights violations committed in Afghanistan, alleging the lack of full state cooperation and budgetary constraints; regrets that this decision could further weaken the ICC's credibility;
19. Believes there should be an independent investigation under UN auspices, including into extrajudicial killings by drones, with a view to ending the culture of impunity as a key element for a stabilisation process in Afghanistan, and for creating public trust;
20. Calls on the Member States to immediately stop deportations back to Afghanistan and to regularise Afghan asylum seekers, as the situation clearly shows that Afghanistan is not a safe country; calls on the EU and the Member States to cease making aid conditional on returns and externalisation of EU border controls;
21. Stresses the need for inclusive regional cooperation with the objective of promoting long-term peace, stability and security in the wider region; favours a new approach to the security situation in Afghanistan and its neighbours, in the form of a multilateral forum for dialogue and negotiation between the countries and regions concerned,

covering commitments relating to political, security, social, economic, environmental and human rights issues; stresses that such a forum could signal a new and constructive approach based on ownership, self-determination and the responsibilities of states towards their citizens and to each other; emphasises that this forum should be initiated in cooperation with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the UN;

22. Notes the lack of substantial progress on human and fundamental rights, in particular with regard to women and girls in Afghanistan; is alarmed by the increasing resurgence of violence against women and the obliteration of women's rights; is deeply concerned that Afghan women continue to be victims of discrimination, violence, sexual abuse and rape under Sharia law; repeats its call on the Afghan Parliament and the Afghan Government to revoke all laws that contain any discrimination against women, which are in breach of the international treaties signed by Afghanistan; calls on the government to further implement the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) and to fund it adequately, and to also implement the law on the elimination of violence against women (EVAW) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); fully supports full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and other domestic measures to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Afghanistan, as well as to tackle violence against women;
23. Encourages the Afghan government to engage in establishing an independent judiciary and to guarantee freedom of the press;
24. Calls on the Afghan authorities to commute all death sentences and to reintroduce a moratorium on executions with a view to achieving the permanent abolition of the death penalty; also calls on the Afghan government to put an end to all forms of torture and abuse, especially in prisons;
25. Is concerned about the high rate of unemployment, especially among young Afghan people, the lack of access to medical care and primary education, the poor state of the health system, and the fact that more than half of the population is living in poverty; underlines the need for the EU strategy for Afghanistan to focus primarily on development policy, in particular in rural areas, where the majority of the population lives, and on poverty alleviation, and to focus development aid on public infrastructure development in Afghanistan, in order to create urgently needed jobs and thus wean the country off dependence on foreign donors; remains concerned at the scant success so far of the measures to phase out opium cultivation in Afghanistan; calls for the creation of viable alternative livelihoods and for measures to help improve living conditions for populations in rural areas in general;
26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of Afghanistan, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the UN and NATO.