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Plenary sitting

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<TitreType>MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION</TitreType>

<TitreSuite>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</TitreSuite>

<TitreRecueil>pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure</TitreRecueil>

<Titre>on the situation in Afghanistan</Titre>

<DocRef>(2021/2877(RSP))</DocRef>

<RepeatBlock-By><Depute>Tineke Strik, Francisco Guerreiro, Alviina Alametsä, Ignazio Corrao, Viola Von Cramon‑Taubadel, Rosa D’Amato, Sylwia Spurek, Thomas Waitz, Anna Cavazzini, Heidi Hautala, Hannah Neumann, Ernest Urtasun, Alice Kuhnke, Mounir Satouri, Erik Marquardt, Eleonora Evi, Damien Carême, Monika Vana, Manuela Ripa, Saskia Bricmont, Diana Riba i Giner, Damian Boeselager, Jordi Solé, Kira Marie Peter‑Hansen, Grace O’Sullivan</Depute>

<Commission>{Verts/ALE}on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group</Commission>

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B9‑0455/2021

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Afghanistan

(2021/2877(RSP))

*The European Parliament*,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Afghanistan,

– having regard to the press statement by Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) Josep Borrell at the informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers (Gymnich) of 3 September 2021,

– having regard to the declaration by the VP/HR on behalf of the EU on Afghanistan after the extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council of 17 August 2021,

– having regard to the speech of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet at the emergency session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) of 24 August 2021,

– having regard to the statement of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet of 10 August 2021 on Afghanistan,

– having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2021 on human rights protection and the EU external migration policy[[1]](#footnote-2),

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 978/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council applying a scheme of generalised tariff preferences and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 732/2008 (GSP Regulation)[[2]](#footnote-3),

– having regard to the 2020 Afghanistan pledging conference,

– having regard to the UN Security Council’s resolutions on Afghanistan,

– having regard to the UN Human Rights Council’s resolutions on Afghanistan,

– having regard to the UN Refugee convention of 1951,

– having regard to the UN Global Compact on Refugees,

– having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948,

– having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,

– having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979,

– having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas after a military offensive the Taliban control wide parts of Afghanistan;

B. whereas the Taliban declared the ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’ on 19 August 2021 and announced an interim government on 7 September 2021;

C. whereas the US military left Kabul airport on 30 August 2021, which has since been controlled by the Taliban;

D. whereas the Taliban control all major land crossing points with Afghanistan’s neighbours;

E. whereas while the USA, the UK and the EU Member States evacuated more than 120 000 people from Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover, many people at risk including former local staff of EU and Member States’ missions and implementing partners of EU and Member States’ projects have not yet been evacuated;

F. whereas two terrorist attacks at Kabul airport on 26 August 2021, for which the Islamic State in Khorosan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility, killed more than 160 people;

G. whereas an estimated 5 million Afghans have been internally displaced within Afghanistan and an estimated 2.2 million Afghan refugees already live in neighbouring countries;

H. whereas more than 600 000 Afghans have been displaced this year, of which 80 % are women and children;

I. whereas more than 75 % of the Afghan state’s budget and more than 95 % of its military budget came from the international community;

J. whereas Afghanistan is confronted with a humanitarian disaster, with more than 40 % of the population facing acute food insecurity;

K. whereas the recent surge of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, the lack of vaccines and medical supplies, the drought and the upcoming winter are circumstances likely to even further exacerbate the current socio-economic and humanitarian crisis;

L. whereas the aim of the EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) to seek sustainable development and eradicate poverty in developing countries cannot be fulfilled in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover and the human rights violations that are occurring;

M. whereas the Taliban took control of considerable quantities of weapons and equipment, including small arms, from NATO countries and it is unknown whether third-party appropriation of this arsenal is being prevented;

N. whereas EU officials, European allies and high-ranking Afghan army generals have underlined a lack of consultation in the planning and implementation of the retreat of NATO forces;

1. Regrets that after a military offensive the Taliban have taken control of the country;

2. Acknowledges the need for a comprehensive response to international terrorism but deplores how the US has framed its response to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 as a war on terror, as if it could be combatted with only military means; deplores the lack of evaluation with respect to the mandate and length of the US and NATO presence in Afghanistan;

3. Deplores the lack of communication between the US and European countries, which contributed to the chaotic process of evacuation, leaving many people behind who are now being exposed to repercussions from the Taliban;

4. Expresses its gratitude for the bravery of all servicewomen and servicemen, humanitarian aid and development personnel, diplomats and local staff who worked, and in part still work, in Afghanistan;

5. Is appalled by reported violations received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights after the Taliban takeover including executions of civilians and members of the Afghan national security forces, recruitment of child soldiers, repression of peaceful protest and expressions of dissent and restrictions of human rights especially targeting women and girls, human rights defenders, LGBTI+ people, religious and ethnic minorities, journalists, writers, academics and artists;

6. Strongly condemns any form of backlash against gender equality and LGTBI+ rights and any roll-back on fundamental rights in the country; is extremely concerned about the reports of women having been expelled from their jobs and universities, about numerous disappearances, rapes and forced marriages, about school closures and gender segregation and about the general state of fear which means many women no longer dare to leave their homes;

7. Urges the Taliban to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular women’s and girls’ rights to education, work, health and freedom of movement, as well as the rule of law and freedom of the media; urges the Taliban to ensure women’s full political rights;

8. Strongly condemns the nominations by the Taliban for their interim government, which only includes men, among which members of the Haqqani network with a history of involvement in terrorist and militant activities; believes that a transitional government should be reached through negotiations among political forces in Afghanistan; is of the opinion that such a government should be truly representative and inclusive especially towards women and religious and ethnic minorities;

9. Calls on the Taliban to adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 2593 and their own pledge by allowing the departure of those who want to leave the country;

10. Calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Member States to make any action that can be perceived as a recognition of a new regime conditional on respect for the human rights of Afghan citizens, both in law and in practice;

11. Strongly condemns the terrorist attacks at Kabul airport on 26 August 2021; extends its condolences to the bereaved families;

12. Calls on the EEAS and the Member States to make use of all diplomatic tools in order to ensure safe passage and the reopening of Kabul airport for regular civilian flights which allow people at risk within Afghanistan to leave the country; asks Member States to provide security to all diplomatic personnel, possibly via a presence on the ground if the security situation allows, that works on establishing and maintaining communication channels with the power-holders in Afghanistan;

13. Deplores the lack of EU coordination and use of EU tools in the preparation and processing of the evacuations; calls on the EEAS and the Commission to step up and use their coordinating role in the necessary further actions to evacuate and issue humanitarian visas to Afghan citizens at risk of persecution; calls on the Member States and the EEAS to increase their personnel at and provide the necessary resources to embassies and delegations in neighbouring countries;

14. Urges all Member States to support a coordinated European approach to evacuating those in need of protection, especially human rights defenders, women, girls, LGBTI+ people, religious and ethnic minorities, journalists, writers, academics, artists, former local staff of EU and Member State missions and implementing partners of EU and Member State projects, the latter of which were initially not included in the evacuation efforts of the EU or the Member States;

15. Expresses its concern about the safety of human rights defenders in Afghanistan and those crossing to neighbouring countries over land borders, in particular to Pakistan; regrets the lack of coordination by the international community in this respect and urges EU Member States to exploit all possible diplomatic leverage and tools to ensure access to land borders, safe passage and access to diplomatic facilities for human rights defenders; calls on the Pakistani authorities to simplify identification and bureaucratic procedures and grant permission to leave the country for those eligible for processing under certain third country schemes for human rights defenders and at-risk groups; stresses the critical coordination role of EU delegations in Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in providing practical support to human rights defenders crossing the borders from Afghanistan; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to step up support to ProtectDefenders.eu;

16. Asks the Commission and the EEAS to clearly define local staff covered by existing protection schemes as well as to define the envisaged protection measures in the light of possible future emergencies that necessitate these measures; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to make the necessary preparations for these protection measures in all non-EU countries with EU missions, measures, programmes, and projects on the ground; believes that the category of local staff should at least include all staff that have worked for the EU, including those working with common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions, EU Delegations, the Commission’s Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), the Commission’s Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) and other EU measures, programmes and projects, especially also implementing partners of EU funded projects;

17. Calls on the Commission to coordinate and ensure EU funding and capacity building, including through the support provided by EU agencies for urgent resettlement of Afghans in need of protection; welcomes the planned September Resettlement Forum; asks Member States to make ambitious pledges for an EU scheme of resettlement additional to existing schemes and pledges and to other pathways such as family reunification and humanitarian visas; recalls the international commitments of the EU and its Member States; reiterates its call for increased resettlement pledges in its resolution on human rights protection and the EU external migration policy;

18. Notes that municipalities and cities across the EU have expressed their will and capacity to welcome Afghan refugees and asylum seekers; calls on the Commission to urgently make adequate and appropriate EU funding available and ensure local authorities are informed of its availability; calls on the Commission and Member States to use Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) emergency funding to receive Afghan asylum seekers and refugees, ensuring it reaches cities and regions that welcome them;

19. Calls on the Commission to organise an international humanitarian conference for Afghanistan including all relevant stakeholders and countries to ensure that Afghans at risk who wish to leave the country can be resettled and that there is sufficient funding for the humanitarian support that is needed by Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, including humanitarian aid for refugees in their host countries; welcomes the aid conference in Geneva convened by the UN on 13 September 2021 as a first step in this regard;

20. Urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure the availability of safe and regular pathways for refugees to seek protection in the EU; calls on the Commission to develop a common procedure for issuing humanitarian visas; asks Member States to issue humanitarian or other protection visas to persons in need of international protection; asks Member States to facilitate family reunification for Afghans with relatives already in the EU; strongly criticises the statement of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 31 August 2021 which lacked any commitments to safe and regular pathways for refugees to seek protection in the EU;

21. Urges Member States to extend temporary visas of Afghan citizens on their territory through accelerated and unbureaucratic procedures to assure people that they will not be at risk of irregularity and imminent forced return; calls on Member States to support people whose asylum claims have been previously rejected or who are otherwise in EU Member States without a protection status in submitting new claims in the light of the changed circumstances in Afghanistan;

22. Urges Member States to grant prima facie refugee status to all Afghan asylum seekers; notes that similar measures have been used previously by Member States to recognise large groups of people at risk and to provide access to protection swiftly and alleviate the pressure from overburdened national asylum systems;

23. Urges the Commission to pursue the informal proposal made by VP/HR Borrell in a joint session with Parliament’s Foreign Affairs and Development Committees on 19 August 2021 and to propose the use of Council Directive 2001/55/EC (Temporary Protection Directive)[[3]](#footnote-4) to guarantee immediate response and access to fair asylum processes and protection in Europe for those who arrive and to ensure equal responsibility sharing among Member States;

24. Strongly emphasises that it does not consider Afghanistan a safe country for migrants to return to as long as minimum standards cannot be guaranteed upon return; calls on the Commission to urge Member States to immediately suspend returns to Afghanistan and countries hosting a large number of Afghan refugees and to grant Afghan asylum seekers in EU Member States asylum, including those whose claims have previously been rejected; calls for close monitoring of Afghan nationals who have already have been returned, in particular minors; urges the Commission to suspend the Joint Declaration on Migration Cooperation;

25. Strongly emphasises that it does not consider countries where there is no guarantee of effective protection for migrants as safe countries for them to return to; calls for a monitoring mechanism to ensure Afghan refugees are not subjected to human rights violations in countries receiving EU aid;

26. Notes with concern the serious allegations of numerous pushbacks by many EU border countries; deplores the dire situation of Afghan nationals at the EU’s external border with Belarus, which has led to the imposition of interim measures by the European Court of Human Rights in Poland, Latvia and Lithuania; notes with concern the situation of Afghan asylum seekers at the French border; calls on the Commission to ensure that their situation is given special attention, that they are offered adequate protection and that a dialogue is opened with the British authorities in order to allow for family reunification procedures; urges the affected Member States to uphold their commitments under EU and international law to assess the claims of those seeking protection, including at the border, and to immediately ensure access to necessary medical and psychosocial support; calls on the Commission as the guardian of the treaties to ensure Member States comply with relevant EU law;

27. Urges the Taliban to ensure free access for humanitarian aid and the safety of humanitarian aid personnel; stresses the importance of a safe working environment for humanitarian aid organisations; encourages the EU to exploit all diplomatic possibilities to secure the safety of organisations delivering humanitarian aid; is inspired by the independent humanitarian organisations who continue their work in Afghanistan to prevent a humanitarian crisis; believes that the international community needs to step up its efforts for humanitarian support to Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries;

28. Stresses that the EU humanitarian aid budget for Afghanistan and neighbouring countries should be substantially increased to support and protect vulnerable Afghans and their families, including internally displaced people and refugees, and to enhance resettlement; demands that, unless respect for human rights and especially the rights of women and girls can be guaranteed, development assistance through budget support to the Afghan regime must remain suspended and be redirected towards independent development and humanitarian organisations in line with EU external action objectives;

29. Calls on the Commission to continue financial support and other actions with nongovernmental organisations and to the benefit of civil society and local communities including organisations for the defence of women’s rights, and to fund specific assistance and humanitarian protection programmes for Afghan women who are victims of or at risk of violence, as well as their relatives who support them;

30. Highlights that the Taliban now have access to digital identification systems and technologies including sensitive personal information which they might use to target critical voices in society; believes that enhanced approaches to these systems are needed in order to better protect citizens, for example through decentralised data storage and control; asks the Commission to support independent research on this in order to ensure the development and implementation of enhanced digital identification systems for development;

31. Reiterates its call for a fact-finding mission with a gender-responsive and multi-year mandate and resources to monitor, regularly report on and collect evidence of human rights violations and abuses committed by all parties across Afghanistan including on the situation of women’s rights in the country; calls for this mission to have a gender-balanced composition and include gender equality experts; strongly criticises the latest UNHRC resolution S-31/1 for not mandating such a mechanism; expects Member States to ensure the adoption of a robust resolution to establish a fact-finding mission on Afghanistan as a matter of priority at the upcoming 48th regular session of the UNHRC; calls on the Council, Commission and EEAS to strongly advocate for the adoption of such a resolution;

32. Calls on the EEAS and the Member States to ensure the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution for the renewal of the UN mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) which expires on 17 September 2021;

33. Expresses solidarity with women and girls in Afghanistan who are facing restrictions to their freedoms, rights and chances; stresses its view that all women and girls at risk should be able to leave Afghanistan; highlights the enormous work done by Afghan women in defending and promoting human rights, especially women’s rights, in the country and recognises their key role as agents of change; stresses that Afghan women and women’s rights cannot be traded away nor instrumentalised in any future process; emphasises the importance of hearing and working towards amplifying the voices of Afghan feminists and women; calls on the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to safeguard protections for women, girls and LGBTQ+ people in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries and ensure that their rights and freedoms are respected;

34. Calls on the Commission to extend education cooperation with Afghan partner universities under the Erasmus+ programme, if cooperation requirements are fulfilled; calls on the Member States to encourage their respective universities to extend their scholarship programmes to Afghan youths, notably those vulnerable to persecution from the Taliban regime;

35. Urges the Commission to swiftly launch an investigation pursuant to Article 19(1)(a) of the GSP Regulation with a view to suspending the trade preferences that Afghanistan has under the Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme;

36. Expresses its grave concerns over the likely unregulated circulation in the region of the small arms, light weapons and ammunition from NATO countries that were unaccounted for before the retreat of NATO forces or that were left in Afghanistan after the retreat, which pose a serious security risk to the Afghan population and its neighbouring countries;

37. Calls for a public inquiry by NATO into the insufficient coordination and consultation within NATO and with the Afghan army on the Doha Agreement and the implementation of the retreat of NATO forces;

38. Calls on the EEAS and the Commission to critically evaluate the process of withdrawal and evacuations from Afghanistan; believes that such an evaluation should include a critical reflection on the timing and management of the withdrawal, the process of evacuations and the lack of European coordination in these processes, despite the fact that Parliament had already called for visas and repatriation of local staff in its resolution of 10 June 2021; expects the EEAS and the Commission to present this critical evaluation to Parliament by the end of this year;

39. Emphasises the importance of good governance, the rule of law and the fight against corruption on which not enough progress had been achieved in Afghanistan in the context of the war on terror in the country; believes that for the success of nation building and the EU’s international human rights agenda, the EU needs to pursue an integrated approach of foreign, humanitarian, development, human rights, security, gender equality and trade policies in line with the objectives of its new Gender Action Plan III; strongly believes that the ability to act and make decisions at EU level should be strengthened regarding external policies in order to foster such an integrated approach, including through qualified majority voting on foreign affairs issues;

40. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Security Council and representatives of the Taliban.

1. Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0242. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. OJ L 303, 31.10.2012, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. OJ L 212, 7.8.2001, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)