



Plenary sitting

B9-0458/2021

13.9.2021

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
(2021/2877(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Afghanistan
(2021/2877(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to UN Security Council resolutions 2210 (2015), 2344 (2017), 2513 (2020) and 2593 (2021),
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief of 1981,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Afghanistan, in particular that of 13 March 2019 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of 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 part¹,
- having regard to the extraordinary meetings of EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 17 August 2021 and of EU Interior Ministers on 18 August 2021, and the meeting of EU Defence Ministers on 1 and 2 September 2021,
- 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, signed on 18 February 2017,
- having regard to the statement of the Chairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Development and the Delegation for relations with Afghanistan of 16 August 2021,
- having regard to the outcomes of the joint EU, NATO and G7 meeting on Afghanistan,
- having regard to the Joint Statement by the NATO Foreign Ministers on Afghanistan on 20 August and 8 September 2021,
- having regard to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its 51 contributing nations as well as NATO's Resolute Support Mission which made essential contributions to Afghanistan's security,
- having regard to the NATO Response Force and its Task Force Noble which assisted evacuation efforts in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the Joint Statement on Afghanistan Evacuation Travel Assurances by a

¹ OJ C 23, 21.1.2021, p. 270.

- large majority of countries on 29 August 2021,
- having regard to the remarks by President Biden on the Way Forward in Afghanistan of 14 April 2021,
 - having regard to the US’s activation of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) which greatly assisted Afghani evacuation efforts,
 - having regard to the statement by the 31st Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Afghanistan of 24 August 2021,
 - having regard to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas while under Taliban rule in the 1990s Afghanistan was the main safe haven and operational headquarters of international terrorist organisations, in particular al-Qaeda, responsible for numerous barbaric terrorist attacks targeting civilians in Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and America, and for the deadliest terrorist attack in human history on 11 September 2001 in the United States, in which almost 3 000 people of more than 90 nationalities were killed;
- B. whereas the barbaric attack on the United States 20 years ago triggered UN Security Council Resolution 1368 and led to the US-led intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, which led to the overthrow of the Taliban along with the dismantling and decline of al-Qaeda and other global jihadist organisations, a process which is now in grave peril;
- C. whereas after the 9/11 attacks, NATO invoked Article 5 of its founding treaty, the only time NATO has ever invoked its collective defence, with more than 40 countries contributing to the security of the country, and dozens of other states and organisations, including the EU, engaging in stabilisation of the country in line with subsequent UN resolutions;
- D. whereas not all of Afghanistan’s neighbours and regional powers shared the same goal as the US-led coalition, with allegations of supporting the Taliban by supplying weapons, money and safe haven to Taliban leaders;
- E. whereas Russia engaged in talks with Taliban leaders and even allegedly offered Afghan militants bounties to kill US troops;
- F. whereas on 14 April 2021, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced the unilateral withdrawal of 2 000 US troops from Afghanistan by 11 September 2021; whereas NATO’s last remaining non-combat contingent, Resolute Support Mission, withdrew its personnel by 1 May 2021;
- G. whereas since 2001, many EU Member States, NATO partners and allied countries have

contributed military and civilian resources to the stabilisation and development of Afghanistan, suffering heavy casualties and losses; whereas a stable and independent Afghanistan that can provide for itself and deny a safe haven to terrorist groups is still in the vital security interests of the EU, NATO and their Member States;

- H. whereas in return, the Taliban pledged to prevent territory under their control from being used by terrorist groups and to enter into negotiations with the Afghan government; whereas the emergence of the terrorist threat from the Da'esh-linked group known as Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) has contributed significantly to the further deterioration of the security situation;
- I. whereas on 26 August, a bomb attack claimed by the regional Islamic State affiliate, IS-KP, at the airport killed more than 180 people, including 13 US service members;
- J. whereas the director of UN Food Agency (World Food Programme) warned that Afghans are facing food shortages and an economic collapse due to drought, conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic; whereas these factors have been exacerbated by the chaotic withdrawal of security troops, the collapse of the Afghan government, the Biden administration's decision to freeze billions of dollars in Afghan reserves, depriving the Taliban of cash, and the suspension of economic aid by foreign countries and international financial institutions;
- K. whereas the Afghan economy still faces a number of challenges, such as corruption, low revenue collection, poor infrastructure and the anaemic pace of job creation;
- L. whereas there are 2.5 million registered refugees, and between 2 and 3 million undocumented Afghans in Iran and Pakistan; whereas there are more than 2 million internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, more than 300 000 of whom were displaced in 2018; whereas many of these people suffer from food insecurity, inadequate shelter, insufficient access to sanitation and health facilities, and a lack of protection; 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 neighbouring countries that have agreed to accommodate Afghan refugees, such as Tajikistan, will be unable to do so without international aid;
- M. whereas by early August, small and large Afghan cities and towns quickly began to fall under Taliban control; whereas on 15 August, the Taliban seized control of most of Kabul, except its airport, which was overwhelmed by people desperately seeking to flee the country;
- N. whereas military and commercial flights started to evacuate people from Kabul airport; whereas at the G7 leaders meeting on 24 August 2021 the President of the European Council stressed the importance of preventing the creation of a new market for smugglers and human traffickers, underlining the EU's determination to keep migratory flows under control and its borders protected; whereas more than 123 000 people have been evacuated through US facilitation, but many others remained and are at risk; whereas a large percentage of evacuees require additional security screening to determine whether they have links to the Taliban, terrorist organisations or are responsible for serious crimes committed in Afghanistan or elsewhere;

- O. whereas on 14 August 2021, during a call with then President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani, the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken emphasised the US's commitment to a strong diplomatic and security relationship with the government of Afghanistan and its continuing support for the Afghan people;
- P. whereas on 16 August 2021, US President Joe Biden stated during a national televised speech that he stands squarely behind his decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan, adding that American troops cannot and should not be fighting and dying in a war that Afghan forces are not willing to fight for themselves;
- Q. whereas the Taliban announced its all-male interim government on 7 September 2021, which consists of 33 mullahs and four individuals under US sanctions; whereas many of the appointed Taliban members are hard-line veterans from the 1990s regime and the 20-year battle against the US-led coalition; whereas the Taliban planned to hold their government inauguration ceremony on 11 September 2021, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of 9/11 attacks;
- R. whereas several of Afghanistan's most senior officials such as Prime Minister Mullah Akhund and Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Baradar were founders of the Taliban, while Sirajuddin Haqqani, head of the Haqqani Network, a US-designated terrorist organisation with close ties to al-Qaeda who is on the FBI's most wanted list for terrorism, and guilty of many terrorist attacks targeting civilians on Afghan soil is now the Interior Minister, making him responsible for all security within Afghanistan;
- S. whereas the ideological and political ties between the Taliban and global jihadist organisations such as al-Qaeda remain strong and are likely to be increasingly strengthened over time; whereas Ayman al Zawahiri, who succeeded Osama bin Laden after US special forces killed the al-Qaeda leader in a 2011 raid in Pakistan, is believed to be hiding out in Afghanistan or Pakistan; whereas five years ago, Zawahiri swore allegiance to the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, referring to him as the 'emir of the believers'; whereas a long time before, bin Laden had pledged allegiance to the Taliban's Mullah Mohammed Omar; whereas according to the UN report a significant part of al-Qaeda's leadership resides in the Afghanistan and Pakistan border region;
- T. whereas no EU Member States or NATO ally recognises the Taliban as the legitimate government, but is ready to engage with the new government if human rights and security conditions are respected;
- U. whereas the Taliban has done little to assure citizens that their treatment of Afghans will change from the extreme restrictions they brutally enforced in the 1990s; whereas a Taliban government poses serious threats and severe limitations to the rights of women, children, religious and ethnic minorities, and will drastically limit the freedom of expression; whereas women and girls continue to face threats, including barriers to accessing essential services, and attacks including domestic, sexual and gender-based violence;
- V. whereas previously religious minorities in Afghanistan were able to profess and practise their religions, albeit under harsh restrictions in a hostile environment;

- W. whereas the risks to religious minorities have significantly increased due to the Taliban takeover;
- X. whereas since 2001, the Christian community has grown and become consolidated, though this success is seriously jeopardised by Taliban rule;
- Y. whereas hundreds of Afghan women took to the streets throughout Afghanistan, mostly in Kabul, to demand equal rights and the ability to participate in government; whereas Taliban security forces reacted violently to these protests; whereas numerous journalists covering those protests have been arrested and beaten;
- Z. whereas the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD) reflected the principles and conditions on which the EU-Afghanistan future partnership must be based, including the essential elements clauses on human rights, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, justice and the rule of law, including the fight against organised crime, money laundering and counter-narcotics;
- AA. whereas since 2002, the European Union and its Member States have collectively been the largest international donor to Afghanistan and its people, providing EUR 17.2 billion in development and humanitarian aid;
- BB. whereas over 160 000 people have lost their lives in the war, including almost 50 000 civilians, 66 000 Afghan national military and police, 2 500 American service members and 3 900 US contractors, 1 150 allied service members from NATO Member States, 450 aid workers and 72 journalists;
- CC. whereas after initially tolerating the protests and promising a more tolerant rule and that they would work for ‘the peace and prosperity of the country’, the Taliban declared demonstrations illegal unless permission had been granted by the Justice Ministry; whereas Taliban militants violently broke up protests the next day;
- DD. whereas according to news reports, several Afghan journalists have been beaten or tortured by Taliban officials for covering protests in the country’s capital, in a nod to the Taliban’s brutal 1990s dictatorship;
- EE. whereas the potential re-establishment of training camps for foreign fighters under a Taliban government cannot be ruled out;
- FF. whereas a large and growing contingent of internationally recognised terrorist organisations are currently operating in Afghanistan, including al-Qaeda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Katibat Imam al-Bukhari, and the Turkestan Islamic Party, many of which are considered to be stepping up their recruitment of foreign fighters from the country;
- GG. whereas the Taliban’s takeover led to multiple prison escapes throughout the country, and led to several senior al-Qaeda members leaving prison and being now freely able to rebuild local infrastructure under al-Qaeda instructions;
- HH. whereas Interpol has issued over 4 200 alerts related to subjects with direct or indirect links to Afghanistan, as well as details of approx. 60 000 profiles of foreign terrorist

fighters who have been combatants in Afghanistan;

1. Takes note of the US and NATO allies' withdrawal by 31 August 2021 from Afghanistan; urges the immediate resumption, without pre-conditions, of substantive negotiations on the future of Afghanistan with the aim of developing and negotiating realistic compromise positions on power sharing that can lead to an inclusive and legitimate government and a just and durable settlement which will sustain and build on the economic, social, political and development gains achieved since 2001;
2. Expresses grave concern about the appointments in the all-male interim government consisting of 33 mullahs, with many under US and UN sanctions and wanted for terrorist activities; calls for stringent conditions to be imposed on the Taliban before agreeing to initiate any negotiations that may lead to the recognition of the interim Taliban government;
3. Condemns in the strongest terms terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and all terrorist acts;
4. Insists that the Taliban and the Government of the Islamic Republic must fulfil their counterterrorism commitments, including preventing al-Qaida, Da'esh or other terrorist groups and individuals from using Afghan soil to threaten or violate the security of any other country, including not hosting members of these groups, and preventing them from recruiting, training or fundraising;
5. Strongly condemns the continued violence in Afghanistan for which the Taliban is largely responsible, and demands that all parties take immediate and necessary steps to reduce violence, including against protestors, and to avoid civilian casualties;
6. Expresses solidarity with the women and human rights defenders protesting throughout Afghanistan against the Taliban takeover of the country and who want to live in a free, stable, peaceful and diverse society;
7. Expresses deep concern about reports of violence against women, protesters and journalists; reminds the Taliban that they must uphold human rights, including those of minorities, in particular Christians, the freedom of expression, association and assembly;
8. Condemns the growing number of reports of killings, harassment and intimidation of Christians and other minorities, and the fact that the Christian community is now dissolving due to persecution;
9. Calls on Afghanistan to cease and desist all attacks on a free and open press and to ensure journalists are offered a safe environment to conduct their reporting free from intimidation, harassment or the threat of violence in accordance with the International Convention on the Safety and Independence of Journalists and other Media Professionals; calls on the international community, NGOs and IT companies to develop special tools and outlets dedicated to Afghanistan that allow safe reporting and the receipt of information;
10. Calls on Afghanistan to immediately and unconditionally release all human rights

defenders, prisoners of conscience and journalists detained and sentenced merely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;

11. Emphasises its long-term support for credible, free, fair and transparent elections, in line with international standards, and expresses its support for election observation missions to the country;
12. Remains committed to the implementation of an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process leading to fair, comprehensive, lasting peace which is responsive to the needs and concerns of all Afghans; calls for an expanded role for the UN in contributing to the Afghanistan peace and reconciliation process, including by leveraging its considerable experience and expertise in supporting other peace processes;
13. Believes that in order to achieve national security, stability and prosperity, the Afghan government needs to represent and reflect the diverse ethnic and cultural background of the country; recalls that the long-term development of Afghanistan will depend on accountability, good governance, the sustainable provision of human security, including the reduction of poverty and the creation of job opportunities, access to social and health services, education, and the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights;
14. Recalls that Afghanistan is deeply influenced by neighbouring countries and regional powers, in particular China, Iran, India, Russia, Pakistan and Qatar; regrets that a stable and successful Afghanistan is not always the end goal for these regional actors, and underlines the crucial role not only of these countries, but also of Turkey and other actors willing to contribute to the stabilisation, peace process and further development of Afghanistan;
15. Considers the Taliban's public relations efforts to present itself as a moderate entity to be merely tactical and temporary, and urges Member States to remain vigilant in their efforts to deny the Taliban any legitimacy on the international stage;
16. Stresses that the proposed humanitarian corridors do not offer a viable solution to the plight of Afghans and encourages Member States to ensure efforts are made to sustain support for Afghan infrastructure and civilians, who desire to live in a free and peaceful homeland;
17. Encourages Member States to strengthen ties with and provide support to neighbouring countries hosting Afghan refugees in order to ensure the proper provision of resources, humane treatment and education;
18. Condemns the irreparable damage to the cultural sites caused by the Taliban and its affiliates, and continues to caution that instability will lead to an increase of international smuggling and theft of cultural heritage that could be used to finance enhanced activity by terror organisations in the region; urges the digitisation of Afghan cultural artefacts to be carried out in Europe in order to support the detection of smuggled goods, and calls for a comprehensive temporary ban on the import of cultural goods from Afghanistan be implemented so as to deprive the Taliban and its affiliates of the potential to profit from cultural smuggling;

19. Urges Member States to preserve and share whatever intelligence was gained through their military and law enforcement presence in Afghanistan, with a particular emphasis on the biometric data that is critical in assisting Member States and third countries in identifying any returning foreign fighters;
20. Calls on the international community, primarily the UN, the European Council, G7 and G20 to employ all diplomatic, political or other appropriate means, including targeted sanctions on the Taliban currently in positions of power, to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and other persons belonging to religious minorities;
21. Calls on the Commission to appoint a new Special Envoy for the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the EU without delay and to provide adequate staff and funding for the position;
22. Calls on the UN Human Rights Council to establish without delay a dedicated mechanism tasked with monitoring the human rights situation in Afghanistan, focusing particularly on the human rights of women and persons belonging to ethnic, religious and belief minorities;
23. Calls on the European External Action Service to engage in transparent and thorough monitoring of the human rights situation in Afghanistan;
24. Encourages enhanced security and intelligence cooperation with Afghanistan's neighbouring countries in Central Asia in order to ensure that the Taliban are denied the operational capability to recruit additional personnel or mount any offensive against Afghanistan's neighbours;
25. Encourages enhanced cooperation with Europol in support of Member States' national authorities by means of security checks on people travelling from Afghanistan, facilitation of intelligence sharing with third countries, deployment of guest officers, strengthening cooperation with neighbouring countries in Central Asia and monitoring of criminal content online related to Afghanistan through Europol's internet referral unit;
26. Underscores the fact that combating the terrorism financing is key to creating an environment conducive to security in Afghanistan; urges all relevant partners to step up their efforts to dismantle all terrorist financing networks, including ending the misuse of *hawala* networks and international donations for this purpose, in order to fight radicalisation, extremism and the recruitment tools that Afghan terrorist organisations continue to rely on; states its position that no EU money or support can be made available to the Taliban, and calls for the development of a special mechanism which delivers aid directly to Afghan citizens;
27. Urges the EU and Member States to increase efforts to cooperate with the US and NATO allies to combat drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorist financing and human smuggling in the region;
28. 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, and the Taliban interim government of Afghanistan.