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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0460/2021**

14.9.2021

## 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))

**Pedro Marques, Elena Yoncheva**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

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

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Afghanistan, notably that of 10 June 2021<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the joint statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Commissioner Lenarčič of 5 August 2021 on the escalation of violence in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the joint statement by the international community of 16 August 2021 on the latest developments in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union of 17 August 2021 on Afghanistan,
- having regard to the joint statement by international partners of 29 August 2021 on evacuation travel assurances in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the joint statement by the chairs of its Committee on Foreign Affairs, Committee on Development, and Delegation for Relations with Afghanistan of 16 August 2021 on the safe departure of EU, national and Afghan partners from Afghanistan,
- having regard to the statement by the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 31 August 2021 on the situation in Afghanistan,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 2593 of 30 August 2021 on the situation in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the statement by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court of 17 August 2021 on the escalating violence in the situation in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by Afghanistan in 2003,
- having regard to the Afghan Law on Protection of Child Rights, ratified on 5 March 2019,
- having regard to the Cooperation Agreement of 18 February 2017 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<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the 2020 Afghanistan Opium Survey published jointly by the

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0294.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 67, 14.3.2017, p. 3.

Afghanistan National Statistics and Information Authority and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in April 2021,

- having regard to the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, on Children and Armed Conflict, and on Human Rights Defenders,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
  - having regard to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in Geneva on 28 July 1951, and the 1967 Protocol thereto,
  - having regard to the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the UN Global Compact on Refugees, which followed the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly on 19 September 2016,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas NATO and allied countries have had a presence in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001; whereas in April 2021, following three years of negotiations with the Taliban, the United States announced a withdrawal of troops to be completed by 11 September 2021; whereas the withdrawal of NATO and allied troops was concluded in August 2021;
- B. whereas the Taliban subsequently rapidly advanced on government-controlled territory; whereas the Afghan army and security forces were unable to mount an effective defence and President Ashraf Ghani fled the country; whereas the Taliban established full control over the country and re-established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; whereas a new all-male government was appointed on 8 September 2021, which includes several members of the previous Taliban regime from 1996-2001, some of whom are wanted on terrorism charges, and heavily discriminates against the country's ethnic and religious minorities;
- C. whereas a chaotic US-led evacuation of 110 000 people from Afghanistan took place in August 2021 without coordination by the international community; whereas the international community including the European Union and its Member States airlifted, with impressive logistical input from the US, all diplomatic personnel from the country; whereas only a limited number of countries have maintained open embassies in Kabul, including China and Russia;
- D. whereas Kabul airport remains mostly closed and Afghanistan's land borders are heavily guarded with Taliban checkpoints; whereas millions of Afghans remain in the country, unable to leave;
- E. whereas the country remains extremely insecure; whereas the regional Islamic State group IS-Khorasan claimed responsibility for an airport bombing on 26 August 2021 which killed around 170 people;
- F. whereas the Taliban faces internal divisions and opposition from other extremist and hardline groups in Afghanistan; whereas the regime now also has access to military

equipment abandoned by Afghan forces including attack helicopters and planes, Humvees and rifles; whereas these weapons could easily wind up in the hands of other internationally recognised terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and their affiliates;

- G. whereas before the takeover of Kabul, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had already received credible reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses taking place in many areas effectively under Taliban control, including summary executions of civilians, restrictions on the rights of women, in particular their right to move around freely and the right of girls to attend school, the recruitment of child soldiers and the repression of protests and expressions of dissent;
- H. whereas the human rights situation is rapidly deteriorating; whereas the list of vulnerable and at-risk individuals covers most of the population including women, girls, the LGBTI community, ethnic and religious minorities notably Shia Hazaras, members of civil society, academics, journalists, lawyers, judges, artists, and politicians and civil servants from the previous Afghan Government; whereas during armed conflicts women have historically suffered from gender-based violence and sexual violence as a weapon of war;
- I. whereas the Taliban are reportedly targeting individuals for harassment, violence and retribution killings; whereas the majority of women have been prevented from returning to the workplace, universities and schools; whereas protests have erupted in the country in particular against the all-male government and its plans to curtail women's rights and exclude women from public life, including sporting activities; whereas the Taliban have violently repressed the demonstrations and the local resistance, notably in the Panjshir Valley;
- J. whereas the 1996-2001 Taliban regime was characterised by some of the most persistent, fundamental and violent oppression of women of any country in the world; whereas the improvements in the rights of women and girls including access to education, employment, healthcare and civic life was arguably the most successful achievement in Afghanistan of the past 20 years; whereas the Taliban announced in August 2021 that women would be permitted to pursue education 'within the framework of Islamic law and Afghan traditions', leading to sex-segregated education and therefore a de facto ban over time; whereas women's rights have been abruptly and severely curtailed; whereas the protection of women and girls from violence is not guaranteed, as women's shelters, safe houses and other support structures have been shut down; whereas several members of the new government also served in the previous Taliban regime, and distrust among the Afghan population is extremely high;
- K. whereas the country is facing an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe; whereas there are severe shortages of food, water and medicines; whereas 18.4 million Afghans need humanitarian support, including 14 million who were already food insecure; whereas the Commission has announced an increase of humanitarian aid to over EUR 200 million for those inside the country and those fleeing;
- L. whereas the disbursement of humanitarian aid is severely hampered by Taliban control; whereas the logistical and security situation is further hindered by the COVID-19

pandemic;

- M. whereas the UN estimates that up to half a million people could flee Afghanistan by the end of the year; whereas there is little impact on irregular migration into the EU; whereas due to highly limited routes out of the country, most migration remains internal, adding to the already 3.5 million internally displaced people in the country; whereas prior to the Taliban takeover there were at least 2.2 million Afghans in neighbouring countries including Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan, as well as the Gulf state of Qatar;
- N. whereas more than 300 unaccompanied and separated children were evacuated from Afghanistan amid chaotic conditions; whereas the number of separated children is expected to increase significantly; whereas according to UNICEF, these are ‘among the most vulnerable children in the world’;
1. Deplores the violent takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban and refuses to recognise its current government; emphasises that any future dialogue with the Afghan leadership should be based upon its willingness to uphold the achievements of recent decades and act by the norms and standards of international law;
  2. Expresses its profound and sincere solidarity with Afghans who have fled the country and those who remain; reiterates that this is first and foremost a humanitarian and human rights crisis in which the safety, security and rights of Afghans must be prioritised at all times;
  3. Considers that the safe, peaceful and democratic future of Afghanistan requires an inclusive negotiated political settlement; reiterates its continued commitment to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process and post-conflict reconstruction as the only credible path to inclusive, long-term peace, security and development; calls on the Taliban to immediately cease the use of force and ensure the freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, including as a means for people to voice their concerns and exercise their right to participate in public protests;
  4. Stresses the fundamental right of Afghans to seek safety; urges all steps to be taken to resume coordinated evacuations from the country under the auspices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), notably through the creation of safe corridors and the permanent reopening of Kabul airport and Afghanistan’s land borders; calls for specific support for women and girls wanting to leave the country, in order to ensure safe routes;
  5. Calls for humanitarian assistance to be stepped up and coordinated with UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the creation of humanitarian corridors for the provision of food aid, water, sanitation and medication;
  6. Recognises that communication with all parties is necessary to establish minimum conditions for the safe expansion of humanitarian aid and the resumption of development aid; stresses the need to establish mobile healthcare and educational services for those remaining in the country;
  7. Emphasises that minimum conditions must include the reopening of borders, safe access

for humanitarian aid workers and human rights defenders, and the protection of basic human rights; notes, in particular, that the safety and security of women working for NGOs on the ground requires additional protection and support; recalls that there must be coherence between the provision and conditions of EU and Member State bilateral aid;

8. Deeply regrets the fact that 20 years of progress in the rights of women and girls and gender equality is now under severe threat; reiterates its position that this progress must be carefully safeguarded and monitored; stresses that the right to education and employment, freedom from gender-based violence, the protection of fundamental rights, access to healthcare and full participation in decision-making in local and national political, public and civic life must be key demands of the international community in dialogue with the Taliban; underlines the importance of women's full participation in decision-making in the global response; recalls that Afghanistan remains bound by the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
9. Expresses concern at the alarming increase in violence, including terrorism and targeted killings; calls on all parties, notably the Taliban, to immediately cease attacks against civilians, in particular in the vicinity of airports and land crossings, and to fully respect international humanitarian law; reminds the Taliban of its responsibility to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for internationally recognised terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and their affiliates; reiterates the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan to ensure the territory of Afghanistan is not used to threaten or attack any country, and that no Afghan group or individual should support terrorists operating on the territory of any country; warns that the failure to crack down on these groups will lead to international sanctions and the isolation of the Taliban;
10. Strongly criticises the recent Council conclusions by home affairs ministers as unacceptable in both tone and content; urgently calls on the Commission and the Member States to pursue a humane asylum policy in which the EU shoulders its moral responsibility in reception and integration in full compliance with the 1951 Geneva Convention; urges the Member States to immediately make specific and new resettlement pledges for persons fleeing Afghanistan;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure a coordinated European effort, including establishing reception centres, and taking into account the specific needs of arrivals, including women and religious minorities, in the centres and during the processing stages; welcomes, in this regard, the efforts of the Spanish Government in establishing an EU reception centre for arrivals from Afghanistan; further calls on the Council to utilise available tools such as the Temporary Protection Directive<sup>3</sup> and Civil Protection Mechanism to maximise efforts across the EU to ensure immediate access to protection; urges the Member States to prepare to process Afghan arrivals through a binding mechanism for fair and proportional relocation;
12. Reiterates its call on the Commission to publish a legislative proposal for humanitarian

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<sup>3</sup> Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, OJ L 212, 7.8.2001, p. 12.

visas; recalls, meanwhile, that existing humanitarian visa provisions should be used by Member States to support those fleeing Afghanistan with safe and legal pathways; calls on the Member States to remove obstacles to family reunification for Afghan nationals; urges the Member States to reassess current and recent asylum applications, including rejected applications, in the light of recent developments; underlines that there must be no forced returns to Afghanistan under any circumstances;

13. Calls on the EU and its Member States to take into account the human rights situation in Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, which already host the majority of Afghan refugees, and to step up activities guaranteeing the protection of human rights for Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries in order to ensure that they are hosted in safety and dignity;
14. Notes that the EU should use its position as Chair of the Core Group of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to coordinate an international and multilateral approach; urges the Member States to ramp up domestic efforts and resources to facilitate the integration of Afghan refugees;
15. Recalls that financial, logistical and capacity-building support for the reception of Afghan refugees and migrants in neighbouring countries is not an alternative to a fully-fledged European asylum and migration policy; strongly underlines that the EU must not externalise migration policy; reiterates that aid to neighbouring countries must not be conditional on migration cooperation;
16. Stresses that any EU action taken in respect of Afghanistan must provide an integrated, holistic and gender-sensitive approach, taking into account the specific situation of women and girls, including in evacuation and resettlement policies, as women and girls are often not in the position to leave the country; highlights the need for quotas for women refugees, prioritising women whose lives are under specific threat due to their activities as lawyers, artists, journalists or activists; stresses the importance of a gender-sensitive approach when it comes to the provision of humanitarian support;
17. Emphasises the crucial importance of monitoring, documenting and protecting human rights in Afghanistan, including through support and protection for human rights defenders and civil society organisations; calls for the creation of a permanent human rights monitoring mechanism with a particular focus on women's rights;
18. Underlines that engagement with regional partners, notably Pakistan, Russia, China, Iran, India, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Qatar is needed to establish a regional strategy towards Afghanistan; urges the European External Action Service (EEAS) to take a leading role in the coordination of dialogue, including highlighting the importance of women's rights; notes that such regional engagement will enable the EU to have more leverage on the Taliban and address any emerging international terrorism threats;
19. Recalls that the terrorism challenges in Afghanistan are perpetrated by multiple actors; expresses its concern at the increased risks posed by terrorist organisations in Afghanistan and at the proliferation of extremist groups and violent attacks; notes that only a coordinated effort by the international community including with regional partners can address this threat; points to the possible internal and external security risks

posed by the Taliban's capture of lethal equipment left behind by the Afghan armed forces;

20. Recalls that the production and trade of opium is a significant source of income for the Taliban, the impact of which goes far beyond Afghan borders; expresses concern at the imminent risk that the instability in the country will increase the illicit drugs trade, as well as the flow of arms, money laundering and terrorist financing; urges the Commission and the EEAS to continue close cooperation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime; notes the importance for the European Parliament, in full cooperation with the EEAS, to have access to independent sources of information, including a fact-finding mission to the cultivation areas in Afghanistan to understand the extent to which insurgency and instability is fuelled by the Afghan opiate industry;
21. Notes that the resumption of an EU diplomatic presence on the ground, in full cooperation with the European Parliament and when security and political conditions permit, will be vital for strong engagement in the country to ensure informed and coordinated action, including aid disbursement, human rights monitoring and support, and to provide evidence-based information and assessment to stimulate a more effective EU political response;
22. Calls for the strengthening of cultural and educational links between Europe, the Afghan diaspora and those remaining in the country in order to maintain support and give visibility to women, girls, artists and cultural activists to safeguard the progress made in the country over the past 20 years;
23. Pledges to establish within the European Parliament a formal mechanism for the comprehensive assessment of EU policy towards Afghanistan since 2002; underlines that such an inquiry could draw valuable conclusions, notably on capacity-building and the provision of equipment to third countries' armed forces, which could be useful to present and future EU missions and operations, notably in the Sahel;
24. Notes that the situation in Afghanistan calls for wider considerations on EU strategic autonomy in foreign and defence policy; welcomes the recent reflections made by the High Representative in this regard, and reiterates its support for fundamental and comprehensive dialogue between EU institutions, EU Member States, national parliaments, European partners and civil society on the way forward;
25. 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 Affairs and Security Policy, and the EU Special Envoy to Afghanistan.