

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0100/02

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

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to the Council

Subject: Protection of witnesses and evidence on the alleged massacre in Afghanistan

Earlier this year reports brought to light the existence of a mass grave in the Mazar-i-Scharif region (Dasht-i-Leili) which might contain the remains of well over 3000 prisoners of war, killed after having surrendered on condition that their lives would be spared. Two eyewitnesses who appear in a documentary film by the British journalist Jamie Doran about the events in northern Afghanistan have recently been murdered after weeks of alleged torture. Others, who rightly or wrongly have been associated with the film production, are, according to reports, currently being arrested, detained and tortured.

Latest disturbing reports from Afghanistan indicate that there seem to be also attempts to remove physical evidence of the mass graves at Dasht-i-Leili.

Human Rights Watch additionally revealed in its report of 5 December the 'catalogue of missed opportunities' in Afghanistan one year after the Bonn agreement. The organisation states that the Afghan Transitional Administration is not powerful enough to confront the warlords on its own. A substantial expansion of the International Security Alliance (ISAF) is urgently needed, as are many more UN human rights monitors, and the assistance of external armed forces which are inside Afghanistan.

What is the reaction of the Council to the increasingly precarious security situation in Afghanistan, the 'catalogue of missed opportunities' and the urgent demands of the human rights organisations?

What is the position of the Council on the serious allegations of war crimes committed by Northern Alliance troops against disarmed and surrendered Taliban forces? What does the Council intend to do in order to help with the protection of possible eyewitnesses and the existing mass graves? How can the Council contribute to accelerating the formation of the UN-organised committee of inquiry, including a team of forensic experts in order to research the evidence?

Tabled: 10.12.2002

Forwarded: 12.12.2002

Deadline for reply: 16.01.2003