

## COVID-19 in Afghanistan: Pandemic might become unmanageable

- 996 people have officially tested positive for COVID-19 in Afghanistan
- Tens of thousands of refugees are returning to the country from Pakistan and Iran
- Risk of medical and social services becoming overwhelmed

**The Chair of the European Parliament's Afghanistan Delegation appeals to the EU to provide immediate assistance and urges all sides in Afghanistan to stop fighting at once.**

The Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Afghanistan [Petras Auštrevičius \(Renew Europe, LT\)](#) said:

"I ask the European Commission and the European External Action Service to support Afghanistan in a timely way by providing the country with life-saving and critical medical equipment. It seems the amount of €117 million will now be directed to fight COVID-19. Additional humanitarian funds are not foreseen. Considering the magnitude of the crisis and the state of the Afghan health system, I deem this amount insufficient. I therefore ask the European institutions and international donors to allocate additional funds to Afghanistan and to implement a joint strategy for Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Accordingly, I fully support the Afghan Government's official request to the European institutions for medical equipment, launched on 16 April.

Furthermore, I urge all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan to agree to an immediate, comprehensive and nation-wide humanitarian ceasefire. I also call on the divided camps led by Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah to put their differences aside and to agree on basic issues. Continuous fighting and intra-governmental disputes will make it impossible to defeat this deadly disease. The international community should remain engaged and continue to call for agreed objectives to be fulfilled.

The real figure of COVID-19 cases in Afghanistan may be much higher than officially reported. The number of Afghan migrants returning daily from neighbouring countries Pakistan and Iran has been in the thousands, despite persistent risks and insecurity in Afghanistan and well in excess of the testing ability of the health system. The risk of the pandemic becoming

unmanageable is now acute.”

## Background

Afghanistan has officially reported [996 cases](#) of COVID-19, with 33 deaths, as of 20 April 2020. After four decades of continuous war, the country’s medical capacity is fragile and it is already a struggle to cover people’s basic needs under normal conditions.

Last week, [the UNHCR warned](#) that the return of tens of thousands of refugees to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran may overwhelm the country’s limited medical and social services and cause the virus to spread further. The UN agency urges that greater international support to all three countries is needed to prevent a larger-scale outbreak of the disease.

Pakistan and Iran host around 2.4 million Afghan refugees.

## Further information

[Delegation for relations with Afghanistan](#)

[Press Release: Delegation of the European Union to Afghanistan \(16.04.2020\)](#)

[Press Release: Delegation of the European Union to Afghanistan \(11.04. 2020\)](#)

[Press Release: Delegation of the European Union to Afghanistan \(08.04.2020\)](#)

[Commission press release: Afghan refugees: €21 million in humanitarian aid for host communities and vulnerable populations in Pakistan and Iran](#)

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