



DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL

Diaspora
Programme

EUROPEAN 20 #DIASPORA
CONFERENCE 22 ACTION FOR
REPORT AFGHANISTAN
15-16 May 2022 | BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

PREFACE

This report provides an overview of the “European Conference #Diaspora Action for Afghanistan” organized by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) on May 15-16, 2022, in Brussels, Belgium. This conference built on the success of our 2019 European conference, “Diaspora Support to Durable Solutions: Afghans in Europe”.

It brought together 119 participants including 100 members of the Afghan diaspora from 19 European countries as well as Afghanistan, Australia, the United States, and Canada representing more than 70 diaspora organizations. The first day of the conference was internal and focused on “getting together”, building trust and improving coordination and collaboration. The second day was: “A call to action” and included dialogue with external European actors on the role of the diaspora in relation to the new political and operating environment in Afghanistan. On the second day we launched the conference declaration: Afghan Diaspora Call to Action, a series of recommendations towards EU and Members States, prepared with Afghan diaspora advocates and endorsed on the first day of the conference.

Mornings were reserved for keynotes and panel discussions on the following topics: the situation of Afghanistan and its impact on women and girls, the situation of Afghanistan and its impact on marginalized communities, and a mobilized diaspora advocating for Afghanistan. Afternoons allowed parallel discussions covering: building effective networks and alliances; integrating recently arrived Afghans into diaspora’s efforts; mechanisms for increased coordination and collaboration between the diaspora and civil society inside Afghanistan; diaspora’s role as an information provider to Afghans at risk; diaspora access to funding and capacity development; diaspora and development; treatment of Afghan asylum seekers and access to legal and safe pathways for Afghans in Europe; diaspora’s contribution to the humanitarian response.

On the margins of the conference, advocacy meetings were organized for 10 Afghan advocates to present the Call to Action (CtA) to Members of European Parliament (MEPs), as well as to representatives of European External Action Service (EEAS), European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), and the Department for International Partnerships (DG INTPA).

The conference was organized in collaboration with ADSP, DEMAC, ECRE, and VIDC and with the support of the Programme Migration & Diaspora (PMD), implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|---------------|---|
| ACCA | Afghans and Catalans Cultural Association | EEAS | European External Action Service |
| ACSFo | Afghanistan Civil Society Forum Organization | EGCSO | European-Global Civil Society Organization |
| ADAB | Afghan Diaspora Advisory Board | EU | European Union |
| ADEE | Afghan Diaspora Engagement in Europe | EUAA | The European Union Agency for Asylum |
| ADEPT | Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform | EUDif | European Union Global Diaspora Facility |
| ADO | Afghan Diaspora Organization | FRC | French Refugee Council |
| ADSP | Asia Displacement Solutions Platform | GCM | Global Compact for Migration |
| AFAF | Medical Association for Afghan Refugees | GDC | Global Diaspora Council |
| ALA | Afghan Lawyers Association | GIZ | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit |
| ANDEP | Afghan National Diaspora Engagement Policy | GRF | Greek Refugee Forum |
| APN | Afghan Professional Network | ICMPD | International Centre for Migration Policy Development |
| APRN | Asia Pacific Refugee Network | IRC | International Rescue Committee |
| AYEDI | Afghan Youth Engagement and Development Initiative | LGBTQ+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer |
| BMZ | German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development | MEP | Member of European Parliament |
| BRD | Bureau for Rights Based Development | NADOE | Network of Afghan Diaspora Organizations in Europe |
| CtA | Call to Action | PMD | Programme Migration & Diaspora |
| DAKDIF | Danish Afghan Women Diaspora Forum | SCI | Secular Refugee Relief |
| DEMAC | Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination | UN | United Nations |
| DG INTPA | Department for International Partnerships | USA | United States of America |
| DP | Diaspora Programme | VAFO | Union of Afghan Organizations in Germany |
| DRC | Danish Refugee Council | VAP | Voice of People of Afghanistan |
| ECHO | European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations | VIDC | Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation |
| ECRE | European Council on Refugees and Exiles | VWO | Voice of Women Organization |

WELCOME ADDRESSES

ADRIEN BORY, Project Coordinator in charge of the project “Afghan Diaspora Engagement in Europe”, Danish Refugee Council’s Diaspora Programme (DRC DP)

Adrien Bory began by welcoming participants coming from Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia, and Afghanistan. He highlighted that Afghanistan’s already dire humanitarian crisis has both worsened and existentially changed following the sudden takeover by the Taliban in August 2021. He touched upon the significance of diaspora engagement and support towards Afghanistan, stating that the situation would be even worse without the support of the diaspora. He underlined that DRC as an organization recognizes the crucial role that diaspora plays in the country of origin or heritage, for refugees and migrants in transit, and newly arrived refugees and migrants in countries of residence. Therefore, since 2010 DRC has directly engaged with the Afghan diaspora to support their constructive engagement in countries of origin (or heritage), transit, and residence. Specifically, Adrien mentioned that during the past year,

DRC worked on a project called Afghan Diaspora Engagement in Europe (ADEE) under the direction of an Afghan Diaspora Advisory Board (ADAB). The project, in collaboration with ADSP, DEMAC, ECRE, and VIDC conducted a series of online thematic workshops, advocacy events for Afghan diaspora women, a 3.5-day professional advocacy training for 25 Afghan advocates in Europe, on-line development training on development policy towards Afghanistan, and a Real Time Review of Afghan diaspora engagement, that showed how much diaspora did in particular to help with the evacuation of those at risk, and advocacy. After shedding light on the main objectives and structure of the conference, Adrien concluded by thanking the Migration & Diaspora team at the GIZ and the BMZ for supporting this second conference and wishing for productive discussions and a great conference.

DR. ASEF HOSSAINI, Director, Abad, on behalf of DRC Afghan Diaspora Advisory Board

Dr. Asef reflected on the changing situation of diaspora after the collapse of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021. Drawing on the recent situation in Afghanistan, he noted that the collapse of Afghanistan was not merely the failure of a political system but rather the failure of an international community to recover a war-torn country. This showed how external interventions without effective internal cooperation and determination were unable to establish a sustainable political structure. Dr. Asef Hossaini noted that a stabilized Afghanistan needs to build its pillars on mutual internal coherence as well as external cooperation. Following the collapse of Afghanistan, Asef Hossaini highlighted the unprecedented adverse consequences thereof. He mentioned that the civil society of Afghanistan suffered the most. Despite such an exodus, some activists stayed in the country to stop the destruction of the society and its social values which were difficultly achieved in the last decades. More

importantly, Afghan women, the pioneer social force, have been standing against the Taliban’s destructive policies and fighting for their principal rights and girls’ education. Despite the risk of abduction, death, and torture, hundreds of Afghan women have been consistently organizing outdoor and indoor demonstrations. In concert with demonstrations and activities inside Afghanistan, he mentioned that Afghan diaspora organizations in different countries have initiated active advocacy for human rights, humanitarian aid, and political stabilization. In the absence of a productive relationship between the Taliban de facto authorities and the world, the Afghan diaspora is playing an important role in filling this gap to facilitate the supply of humanitarian aid and secure the future of the country.

DR. SONGÜL KAYABASI, Adviser, Migration Governance & Programme Migration and Diaspora, GIZ

Drawing on the GIZ long-term development aid projects, Dr. Songül Kayabasi briefly touched upon GIZ's vision and mission. She mentioned that GIZ is committed to shaping a future worth living around the world. GIZ provides tailor-made, cost-efficient, and effective services for sustainable development. Due to the fact that supporting migration and diaspora is one of the key topics of the GIZ, the programme Migration & Diaspora (PMD) has been established, focusing on global diaspora affairs. Dr. Songül Kayabasi highlighted that the GIZ PMD assists the BMZ to realize the UN Global Compact for Migration (GCM)– which aims to better the conditions for diasporas in order to improve their contribution to sustainable development in their country of origin. She mentioned that through the migration governance component, GIZ collaborated with the former government of Afghanistan, notably with the Afghan Ministry of

Refugees and Repatriations (MRR) on supporting the Afghan diaspora. GIZ improved the capacities of the MRR and supported the Ministry in designing the Diaspora Policy – namely, the Afghan National Diaspora Engagement Policy (ANDEP). The policy was the first of its kind in the history of Afghanistan and was ready for adoption by the former Afghan cabinet. However, due to the take-over of the power by the Taliban, ANDEP could not be passed. Dr. Songül Kayabasi stressed that GIZ sees the Afghan diaspora in Germany and Europe as crucial players and stakeholders of Afghanistan. As people now do not enjoy freedom of speech anymore in Afghanistan, we value the voice of the Afghan diaspora on their behalf. Our support for this conference shows our deep sympathy with the Afghan diaspora in Europe.



Adrien Bory, Project Coordinator,
DRC Diaspora Programme



Dr. Asef Hossaini, Director, Abad,
DRC Afghan Diaspora Advisory Board

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 1: Responding to the needs of women in Afghanistan

Mahbouba Seraj, Afghan Women's Rights Activist and Journalist, Founder and Chairwoman, Afghan Women's Network

Mahbouba Seraj began by reflecting on the situation of Afghanistan and how she witnessed the everyday lives of Afghan women in Afghanistan after August 15, 2021. She mentioned that "when I returned back to Afghanistan in 2003, I started working with my daughters and sisters [fellow Afghan women] to be able to empower them in all spectrums of the country". However, on August 15, "I literally saw how the gains of 20 years, including the women's rights and democracy was smashed into pieces in just 24 hours [...] it was an absolute chaos". Mahbouba Seraj noted that since the Taliban are now controlling the country, there is a need to accommodate some of their rules, despite the fact that we don't support them. This can be

seen as an unpleasant statement by some in the diaspora, but when you live there you need to accommodate. She proposed that Afghans should sit together and reflect on what happened, what their shortcomings were, and what the shortcomings of the International Community were.

Mahbouba Seraj concluded by appealing to the participants saying that: "please stand side by side and do not forget your extremely deprived brothers and sisters in Afghanistan, they are in a very dire need of your support [...] stand behind them, support them and be united, otherwise we will disappear as a country and as people".

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 2: Diaspora Adapting to Taliban takeover of Afghanistan

Bashir Eskandari, President, European-Global Civil Society Organization (EGCSO) & Afghans and Catalans Cultural Association

Bashir Eskandari shared his experience of mobilization after the Taliban takeover with ACCA in Spain and EGCSO at the European level. Before the fall of the government, he took part in writing letters to the UN secretary-General to protect the achievements of two decades in the peace negotiations in Afghanistan and sent official letters to the relevant organizations regarding the problems of Afghan refugees in Greece and Turkey. However, after the collapse of the former Afghan government, "using our political relations with the Spanish government, we carried out large-scale activities for Afghans at risk in Afghanistan and Afghan asylum seekers". Like many diaspora organizations across Europe, his organization played

an important role in bringing vulnerable people to Spain – by submitting lists of vulnerable people to the central government and expressing the problems of the Afghans at risk – including with the Foreign Minister Mr. José Manuel Albares. His organization has also managed to provide university education scholarships to Afghan refugee students.

Bashir Eskandari concluded by stating that achieving true justice and social and economic progress will only be possible if the new generation of citizens and the Afghan diaspora see the richness of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity in society and distances themselves from the beliefs and ideas that promote ethnic hegemony.



Keynote Speaker 1: Mahbouba Seraj, Afghan Women's Rights Activist and Journalist, Founder and Chairwoman, Afghan Women's Network



Keynote Speaker 2: Bashir Eskandari, President, European-Global Civil Society Organization (EGCSO) & Afghans and Catalans Cultural Association

PANEL & DISCUSSION I: The situation in Afghanistan and its impact on women & girls

FACILITATOR: Mursal Sayas, Writer, journalist, human rights defender and women's rights activist, Afghanistan Human Rights Commission.

PANELISTS: Sajia Behgam, Working Committee Member, Afghan Exile University [Germany]; Spouzhmai Akberzai, Deputy head of women's commission, Voices over Violence [USA]; Tahmina Salik Chairperson, Danish Afghan Women Diaspora Forum (DAKDIF) [Denmark].

HIGHLIGHTS

- We the Afghan diaspora should take a pause, sit together, and work on a joint vision for Afghanistan and a strategy on how to move forward.
- We should call upon the International Community to stop talks with the Taliban that are leading to nowhere.
- We should use any platform to echo the voices of Afghan women and support them using our every leverage.
- We should not necessarily speak on behalf of Afghan women, rather be their voice and ask them what they want.
- The International community should support and listen to Afghan platforms that echo the voices and messages of Afghan women.
- As there is no direct representation of Afghanistan in the International Community, Afghan diaspora should lobby for the interest of Afghanistan.
- The Afghan diaspora should use their leverage in European countries and provide online and offline educational opportunities for Afghan women and girls.

Mursal Sayas opened the session by highlighting the barriers that Afghan women are facing in accessing their basic rights in Afghanistan, before asking Spouzhmai Akberzai to briefly update the audience on the situation of women and girls before and after the fall of Afghanistan. Spouzhmai Akberzai explained that prior to August 2021 “we had an Afghanistan that was moving forward in many areas, starting from adopting UN resolution 1325 to ratifying SIDA to having a seat in the commission on the status of women to 27% quota for women in our constitution [...] from no girl in school in 2001 to 39% girls in school in 2018 [...]”. Now when we see the situation, we think that we are in a different world. We have nothing now and starting from the basics, begging for our girls to be allowed to go to school and work. Women are sidelined, segregated, and suppressed. Sajia Behgam echoed this view, noting that today women and girls in Afghanistan are deprived of their very basic rights – namely, education and work. The number of female university students reached from none to 90,000 in 2018. In the last twenty years, 37% of schoolteachers and 15% of university

teachers were women. “In 2019 when I was working as a university teacher at Kabul University, 50% of students were girls, and took us 20 years to create that opportunity for women and girls, but unfortunately the tragedy of 15 August reversed everything back”. For the on the ground situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, Tahmina Salik shared the experience of her recent visit to Afghanistan. She underlined that the purpose of her visit was primarily to meet women activists in Afghanistan to find out how best to support them. “I experienced that the Taliban have not avoided torturing Afghan women imprisoning [...] the claim that the Taliban has changed is completely baseless” (Tahmina Salik). The last 8 months proved that they have become more brutal, especially towards women. “At the moment that we are talking now, women are being tortured, imprisoned and silenced in Afghanistan” (ibid.). Lastly, the moderator brought together key advocacy points, with at the center the need to work together with women in Afghanistan with a united voice to support them and echo their voices wherever possible.



PANEL & DISCUSSION II: The situation in Afghanistan and its impact on marginalized communities

FACILITATOR: Sana Safi, Journalist, BBC.

PANELISTS: Homira May Rezai, Chairperson, Hazara Committee in the UK [United Kingdom]; Artemis Akbary, Founder and Director, Afghan LGBTQ Organization [Czech Republic]; Jassi Singh Wadhwa, Afghan Sikh Community Representative [Sweden].

HIGHLIGHTS

- We are all equal. What is not equal is the level of discrimination we are facing. We need to stand for our voices.
- We need to build a conversation with institutions; minority voices need to be at the center of our message.
- We have to de-minoritize Hazara, Uzbeks, Sikhs, Hindus and other groups. Afghanistan is not a majority-minority country. In this regard it is also essential to acknowledge the Hazara genocide.
- Diaspora, working in media and in different spaces of society need to start talking and sharing information about what LGBTQ is.

This panel discussion, moderated by Sana Safi, was an opportunity to reflect on the situation in Afghanistan and its impact on marginalized communities. At the outset, Sana Safi highlighted that in Afghanistan there are many minority communities, not just Hazara and Pashtun, therefore this conversation is extremely relevant. Homira May Rezai began the discussion by outlining that Hazaras are one of the most persecuted communities in the world. All Afghans are victims of violence, but for Hazaras it is different: “the reason why [Hazara] are persecuted is related to their own ethnic, religious and value-system identity”. In the same

line of thought, Artemis Akbary underlined that LGBTQ+ people are being tortured and killed in Afghanistan on regular basis. They were threatened to violence and death even before the Taliban takeover, but now the situation deeply worsened. “Trans, women, gay and lesbians are badly beaten, violated and tortured”. Jassi Singh Wadhwa explained that during the last 4 decades the Sikhs were the target of many episodes of violence and killings, and most of them were killed or had to leave the country, with only approximately 200 Sikhs remaining, many trying to leave the country.



PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION III: Afghan Diaspora Call to Action

Ali Ahmad Safi, Afghan Diaspora Researcher

Ali Ahmad Safi introduced the session by acknowledging the importance of the efforts of diaspora and their contribution to the Call to Action (CtA) document. He reminded audience members that the document is a collection of key recommendations from a core-group of 12 Afghan diaspora advocates, the Afghan advisory board, advocates from leading diaspora organizations, as well as thematic Afghan experts. The drafting process started in February 2022 and went through several phases of drafting and reviewing until reaching the endorsement phase at the conference. The CtA is comprised of four main recommendations:

THE CALL TO ACTION INCLUDES FOUR MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Set up the EU's humanitarian and development support on the ground.
- Make women's rights one of the EU top priorities pushing back on unacceptable restrictions to access to education and freedom of movement.
- Engage strategically with de-facto authorities to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of the people of Afghanistan, including those of marginalized groups.
- Provide protection for Afghan asylum seekers in the EU and continue support for evacuations and increased safe and legal channels for protection and integration in the EU.

Ali Ahmad Safi mentioned that after the endorsement of the document, it will be presented to the representatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission by a group of 10 Afghan

diasporas. The document will also be available for advocacy efforts of diaspora organizations in Europe and beyond.



DISCUSSION I: Building Effective Networks and Alliances

FACILITATOR: Sajjad Askary, Vice Chair, Asia Pacific Refugee Network (APRN)

PANELISTS: Heela Najibullah, Ph.D. researcher, inter-generational narratives of the Afghans diaspora in Germany and Switzerland [Switzerland]; Mustafa Paaksima, Vice-chair AFGHAN e.V., Member of the Union of Afghan Organizations in Germany (VAFO) [Germany]; Shagofah Ghafari, Project Manager, Network of Afghan Diaspora Organizations in Europe (NADOE) [Belgium]; Dr. Khesrow Sangarwal, Chair, Afghan Professional Network (APN) / Board member, Global Diaspora Council (GDC) [United Kingdom].

HIGHLIGHTS

- We need space for voices to come out. Trust is needed and can be built with the creation of a safe space to share our common goals, pain, and collective suffering.
- For trust building, Afghans must deconstruct their anger to build trust. The point is our pain, not the other person's ethnic group.
- There is no such thing as un-useful networking. ADOs must network much more.
- We need to focus on commonalities. One thing that Afghans have in common, apart from the country itself, is that we are experiencing poverty, violence, and war. We are fighting amongst each other for things other people imposed on us.
- Alternatives must be discussed if we want a better Afghanistan. We need to connect to have a voice and express an alternative. This is our responsibility.
- There is a need for unified actions within the diaspora. Umbrella organizations can work on the ground to develop and channel joint policy recommendations.
- To establish an umbrella organization, start with a small but diverse group of actors and spend time agreeing on the structure together for strong ownership and a solid foundation.

Sajjad Askary presented the panelists and the topic of the discussion – namely, building effective networks & alliances. He highlighted that it is crucial to support the creation of platforms of interaction between Afghan and non-Afghan civil society in order to facilitate access to resources.

The panelists discussed how networking and co-operation can offer members of the diaspora the chance to strengthen their influence and visibility and facilitate access to resources. They highlighted different ways to get organized, reflect on past and ongoing efforts, and recommend ways to promote spaces for coordination, reflection on strategies, and joint actions. Heela Najibullah noted that “[...] we Afghans are deeply connected. We need space and connection to heal from the repeated cycle

of violence and conflicts that prevented justice to come along for Afghans”. Dr. Khesrow Sangarwal mentioned that networks are more relevant than making changes in individual lives – it has social implications. However, “the challenge is that diaspora focus on local issues while we should engage in bigger, more general issues such as refugees’ rights and refugees’ policies”. Mustafa Paaksima and Shagofah Ghafari shared lessons learned from their respective networks – namely, VAFO and NADOE – in bringing voices of several organizations in Germany and Europe together. It was clear that the diaspora will need to be more strategic in working together to achieve shared goals. Sajjad Askary summarized the discussion, stressing the importance of working together.



DISCUSSION II: Integrating recently arrived Afghans into diaspora's efforts

FACILITATOR: Najib Obaid Babakerkhail, Founding Director, French Refugee Council (FRC)

PANELISTS: Mohammad Musa Aziz, Project Coordinator and Board Member at Secular Refugee Relief (SCI) [Germany]; Manizha Isaar, Project Manager, Afghanistan Civil Society Forum organization - (ACSFo) [Germany]; Abdul Ali Forugh, Coordinator, Voice of People of Afghanistan (VAP) [Sweden]; Masomah Regl, Founder and member of Fivestones, Migration and Integration Advisor for the city of Graz [Austria].

HIGHLIGHTS

- A comparative overview of evacuation processes shows the diversity of approaches.
- The entire evacuation process was not genuine but a shopping process: some states were targeting and taking people they needed most – largely the elites.
- Diaspora community has not always been very welcoming towards recently arrived Afghans. There is a need for more legal support and information.
- Recently arrived Afghans have not reached out to existing diaspora organizations to seek synergies and should be encouraged to do so.

Najib Obaid Babakerkhail opened the panel discussion by reflecting on the role of diaspora to support newcomers in integrating into Europe and highlighting the need for the recently arrived Afghans to support diaspora relief efforts towards Afghanistan. Afterward, he opened the floor to the panelists to invite them each to reflect on their own experience with integration. Mohammad Musa Aziz opened the conversation by reflecting on his engagement with the evacuation process of Afghans by the German government after September 2021. He also touched upon the mental illness and increasing depression issues that the recently arrived Afghans are facing. “There exists a huge number of diaspora organizations focusing on different activities except the support to Afghans with their mental illness and trauma”. On the integration of Afghans in Europe, Masomah Regl noted that most of the Austrians think that Afghans are

difficult to be integrated. Largely because of their own negative actions. She proposed that “we have to work with Afghans and educate them that their actions have immediate impacts on the people in Afghanistan”. Manizha Isaar and Abdul Ali Forugh, coming from recently arrived perspectives, highlighted that diaspora has substantial resources and possibilities in Europe, which should be utilized. The main challenge is that Afghans are passive compared to other diasporas to utilize the existing opportunities. “We should stop blaming the situation, but focus on providing consultations in getting education, employment, and civil rights activities to Afghans” (Manizha Isaar). All highlighted the need to work together with a united voice to support the fair evacuation process and application of asylum procedures, as well as to advocate for improved access to services for recently arrived Afghans.



DISCUSSION III:

Mechanisms for increased coordination and collaboration between the diaspora and civil society inside Afghanistan.

FACILITATOR: Evan Jones, Manager, Asia Displacement Solutions Platform

PANELISTS: Zia Moballegh, Director, YAAR [Germany]; Mahbouba Seraj, Afghan women's rights activist and journalist, Founder & Chairwoman, Afghan Women's Network [Afghanistan]; Khan Agha Dawoodzai, Executive Director, Bureau for Rights Based Development (BRD) [Sweden].

HIGHLIGHTS

- We need to preserve the gains of civil society over the last 20 years. It is not optional to let this fall by the wayside.
- We need the diaspora to be the eyes and ears supporting civil society on the ground, and to be proactive, NOT reactive in support when engaging with civil society.
- We cannot use a 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to diaspora-civil society engagement. It can take many different forms including capacity building, technical capacity building, amplifying local voices, oversight and accountability.
- We need for the Diaspora to push for diaspora inclusion in key international fora.
- The diaspora must be „annexes and supplementary forces“ to colleagues and civil society in Afghanistan.
- The principle of do-no-harm must remain paramount in any engagement.

Evan Jones began by presenting the panelists and the topic of the discussion – namely, mechanisms for increased coordination and collaboration between the diaspora and civil society inside Afghanistan. This discussion brought together diaspora and civil society actors from Afghanistan to exchange how diaspora can support civil society efforts in Afghanistan. It looked at models for human rights monitoring, humanitarian response and coordinated advocacy and recommend pathways for increased coordination and collaboration moving forward. It was underlined that the diaspora must be representative of civil society outside Afghanistan. There is a need to sustain

the key values in civil society. Preserving the gain of civil society built over the past twenty years is crucial. However, without the support for women, there is a huge risk that all civil rights will be lost. “There is a generation of women growing in fear and trauma in Afghanistan. We are brothers and sisters, us Afghans. Get the details of the kind of help civil society in Afghanistan are asking you and engage with them” (Mahbouba Seraj). Participants agreed that the need for more engagement between diaspora and civil society in Afghanistan is there, but there is a lack of clear pathways and mechanisms for their effective engagement and collaboration.



DISCUSSION IV: Diaspora's role as an information provider to Afghans at risk

FACILITATOR: Maina Abbasi, Project Officer, DRC Diaspora Programme

PANELISTS: Abdullah Mohammadi, Regional Coordinator, Mixed Migration Centre Asia;
Zala Pamir, Chairwoman, Keihan Foundation [Netherlands];
Sarah Osman, Founder & CEO, Osman Advisory Services

HIGHLIGHTS

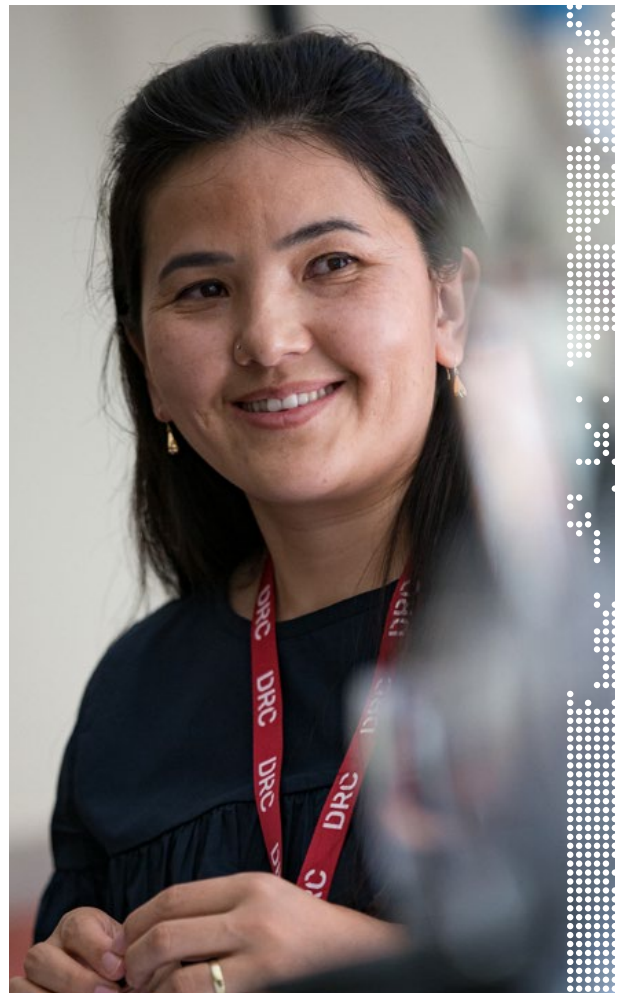
- Afghans engaging in or considering migrating often do not have a realistic and credible picture of the journey and the situation upon arrival.
- Afghans considering leaving the country or on the move, seek information from friends and family and the Afghan diaspora are perceived as most trusted sources of information about migration.
- The level of knowledge among migrants en-route and their rights as refugees or asylum seekers is low. At the start of their journey the majority do not think they will need to access services because their smuggler has promised a quick, safe trip.
- Most Afghan diaspora members think they have a role in terms of information-sharing. However, they also express concern that they may not be able to provide accurate and appropriate advice and information.

Maina Abbasi opened the panel discussion by highlighting the importance of research and accurate information and the Afghan diaspora's roles as an information provider to Afghans at risk. Abdullah Mohammadi reminded workshop participants that Afghans engage in migration due to a multiplicity of factors including war, security situation, violence, conflict, humanitarian crises and lack of rights. Given the limited regular migration pathways available, many Afghans leave Afghanistan via irregular means. Afghans engaging in or considering irregular migration may not always have a realistic and credible picture of the journey and the situation upon arrival. The journey involves risks of physical and sexual abuse, kidnapping, crime, and death. Migrants and refugees report trauma and ongoing psychological and physical distress resulting from their experiences.

It was clearly underlined that the Afghan diaspora is perceived as a trusted source for potential Afghan migrants. Research with the Afghan diaspora confirms that Afghans in Europe are frequently approached for information by others who intend to leave Afghanistan and the neighboring countries, including requests for information on migration

routes, countries of origin, asylum procedures, work opportunities and support available. Based on the learnings from the research reports, the trainings, including support from Sarah Osman, on social behaviour change communication, Afghan partners have designed and developed products on feminine hygiene, pregnancy, COVID-19 & pregnancy, and mental health during the migration journey, general legal information on asylum procedures for refugees and migrants in Europe, family reunification and integration for Afghans with focus on Germany, safe migration and COVID-19, common misconceptions about migration and provision of protection information, information on refugee rights, safe migration pre departure and information about requirements and risks connected to migration from Afghanistan.

Zala Pamir from KEIHAN Foundation explained how much they learnt about importance of segmenting target audience and tailoring specific messages to adopt safe behaviour change and thereby increase protection by applying Social Behaviour Change Communication and effective communication. They are now applying this methodology to all their communications.







CLOSE OF DAY ONE

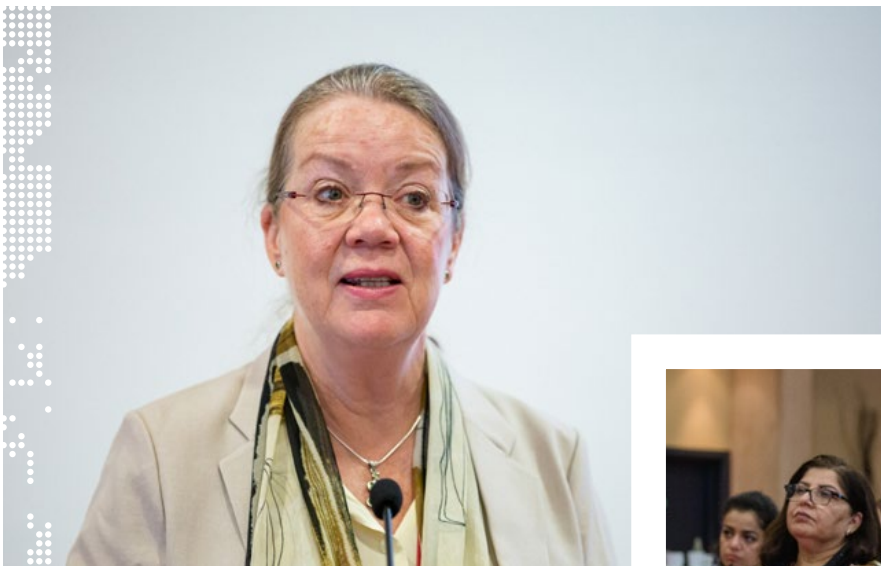
Day one of the conference was closed by final reflections by the panel moderators who encouraged further opportunities for ADO members to meet and discuss issues of joint importance, including continuing discussions about means to increase solidarity and coordination

DAY 2: A CALL TO ACTION

16 MAY 2022, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Day two of the conference was an opportunity to launch an Afghan Diaspora Call to Action document prepared by a group of Afghan advocates ahead of the conference and endorsed on the first day of the conference. The purpose was to assert the importance of the diaspora for the future of Afghanistan and explore opportunities for collaboration on the humanitarian and development response. It allowed the participants to voice key messages to EU institutions and member states related to humanitarian and development needs, access to protection, and respect of human rights

especially for women, girls, ethnic and religious minorities. The day began with welcoming notes from Birte Hald, Brussels Representative, from the DRC Brussels office, and Nils Warner, Deputy Head, Policy Issues of Displacement and Migration, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). They underlined DRC's and BMZ's commitments respectively toward Afghanistan in this dire situation. This was followed by two keynotes, a panel discussion in the plenary, and four group discussions in the breakout rooms.



Birte Hald, Brussels Representative, DRC



WELCOME ADDRESSES

BIRTE HALD, Brussels Representative, DRC

Birte Hald highlighted that DRC helped by supporting Afghanistan from inside and outside for many decades, initially through the consortium DACAAR, and since 2009 directly as DRC. “Afghanistan is one of our biggest operations in the world and DRC has a strong commitment to Afghanistan, our General Secretary Charlotte Slente visited Afghanistan just over a month ago, and I believe she was the only female CEO visiting the country after the Taliban takeover. She mentioned that the

day-two of the conference is primarily focused on the discussions between the Afghan diaspora and EU stakeholders. Which will be joined by some of EU stakeholders – namely, Tomas Niklasson, EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan, European External Action Service (EEAS), representatives from the EU Commission, and the European Parliament. Lastly, Birte Hald wished everyone a productive and constructive day and concluded by saying that: “Afghanistan needs our support more than ever”.

NILS WARNER, Deputy Head, Policy Issues of Displacement and Migration, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Drawing on BMZ long-term development cooperation, Nils Warner stated that the topic of diaspora is crucial for the German Development Cooperation and BMZ is fully committed to supporting diaspora engagement. Objective 19 of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) creates conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries. Diasporas are increasingly being recognized for their unique potential that can facilitate change to respond to emergencies and promote peace and development in their country of origin. He mentioned that diaspora as a group move beyond the boundaries of a nation-state and engage transnationally. They could create significant economic and social impacts. Examples of diasporas engagements are sending financial and social remittances, implementing humanitarian and development projects, as well as the transfer skills and knowledge. “Therefore, we at BMZ consider diaspora as highly valuable partners, mobilizing skills and capabilities for the benefit of their country of origin. We support the mobilization and engagement of

diaspora in the best possible way” (Nils Warner). He underlined that this conference builds on the success of the 2019 conference that was organized in Copenhagen, Denmark with the support of GIZ and BMZ. Moreover, GIZ with the support from BMZ helped the establishment of the Association of Afghan Organizations in Germany (VAFO) which is representing the interests of members of Afghan diaspora communities in Germany. Regrettably, the political situation in Afghanistan has changed dramatically after the Taliban takeover, and the humanitarian crisis has worsened further. Large parts of the population in Afghanistan are facing food insecurity, shelter, and protection. Fortunately, the Afghan diaspora has responded to this evolving crisis by broadening their engagement in advocacy efforts, raising awareness, and emergency fundraising. But it is still facing obstacles, including difficulties regarding money transfers and how to cope with the new situation in Afghanistan. Nils Warner concluded by thanking DRC for organizing a timely conference and wished everyone fruitful discussions.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 1: Women Rights in Afghanistan

Suraya Pakzad, Director, Voice of Women Organization (VWO), Germany

Suraya Pakzad began by reflecting upon the changing situation of Afghanistan after 15 August 2021. Drawing her personal experience, she mentioned that “I was hiding inside an apartment, with light shut down pretending it was empty, locked inside, before leaving it for going to the airport, with many risks. Now, I’m a stateless person, without belonging anywhere, but safe. The women of my country are not safe.” Suraya Pakzad added that countless human rights defenders and activists are in extreme danger in Afghanistan. The rights of women and girls are dismantled, and there is a huge humanitarian and economic crisis. “Afghan women and girls are facing the collapse of their rights, they live in fear, deprived of their country and their talents [...] there literally no support and protection for them” (mentioned Suraya Pakzad). Girls in Afghanistan are deprived of education and work, and on top of that, they are faced with dress code obligations. Drawing on her experience with

leading the VWO, Suraya Pakzad highlighted that working side by side with other women organizations in Afghanistan, “we saved hundreds of lives, providing legal and economic support to women in the country. We support advocacy efforts, but we cannot succeed alone” added Suraya Pakzad. She appealed for support of advocacy efforts for Afghan women, as they need support now more than ever. Advocacy needs to ensure that women’s rights are being promoted and protected, not just discussed, and talked about. Suraya Pakzad called upon the International Community to show sympathy towards Afghan women’s situation – “listen to them, follow them, use your platforms to elevate their priorities [...] use your power and pressure the de-facto government together with civil society organizations”. They are the transformative actors in the Afghan landscape. “Let’s work together to sustain the future”.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 2: EU Response towards Afghanistan

Tomas Niklasson, EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan, European External Action Service (EEAS)

“Thank you, Suraya, your speech reminded me of that same day, when you were struggling to leave Kabul, while I was struggling to get inside to help our delegation to leave, with many difficulties that I will never forget” (began Tomas Niklasson with his remarks).

Tomas Niklasson highlighted that Afghans living in the country face dramatic challenges. However, also for those who joined the diaspora out of choice, struggling to adapt to a new country as well as to get in touch with their families and friends in Afghanistan. He noted that the takeover of the country by the Taliban forced EU to adapt its policies towards Afghanistan. They defined the EU’s policy towards Afghanistan as: not recognizing the Taliban, suspending development aid through the state budget, supporting Afghan people including massive escapes through humanitarian assistance,

avoiding to isolate the county, and engaging with Taliban around five benchmarks. On the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation, Tomas Niklasson mentioned that the situation remains alarming. He stated that the EU stands with and will continue support the people of Afghanistan both in Afghanistan and also in the diaspora. EU committed 227 million Euro in 2021 for humanitarian assistance and will continue our support. In the pledging conference in March 2022, the EU and Member States pledged close to 600 million US dollars for Afghanistan and yet the needs are not met. The EU continues to assist Afghans to move from Kabul to member states. The EU dedicated 80 million Euro to address migration and displacement in the region and pledged 37.000 humanitarian admissions among the member states of which 73 percent have been fulfilled.



Keynote Speaker 1: Suraya Pakzad, Director, Voice of Women Organization (VWO), Germany

Keynote Speaker 2: Tomas Niklasson, EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan, European External Action Service (EEAS)

Tomas Niklasson condemned the systemic abuse of economic, social, political, human, and cultural rights, including through killings, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, physical abuse, and shrinking space for civil society. The deliberate targeting of Shia community and Hazara ethnic group is deplorable. He stated that “the EU also strongly condemns the violation of half the Afghan population – namely, women and girls with regards to their education and dress codes”. “In all my meetings I have held since August [...] I have been accompanied by at least one female colleague”.

While acknowledging the critical role of diaspora, Tomas Niklasson mentioned that the EU has so far received mixed and unrealistic messages from diaspora for an alternative approach. Diaspora activism can play a critical role in promoting



democracy and in improving the situation inside Afghanistan and in the diaspora. He noted that EU’s support will continue and will be intensified and the message from the Member States is clear: “continue the humanitarian engagements based on the benchmark”. Tomas Niklasson concluded by saying that “I welcome your commitments and efforts in keeping engaged to find solutions and I will be looking forward to listening to your assessments”.

Launch of the Diaspora **Call to Action**

Zohreh Yusna Faizi, Chairperson, Afghan Lawyers Association (ALA)

Zohreh Faizi started by thanking Tomas Niklasson and introduced the session. Before presenting the Diaspora Call to Action to Tomas Niklasson, she highlighted that “We’re all disappointed, drained, and tired, but we cannot be defeated. Collectively, we want to have hope and dreams. Our brothers and sisters cannot escape terror, and they are disappearing every day. We must take the momentum back.

We are here to share our joined Call to Action to the European institutions and Member States”. After highlighting the key four messages, Zohreh Faizi officially presented the CtA to Tomas Niklasson stating that “We commit to this endeavor. We pass the torch to you now, Mr. Niklasson.”



PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION III: A mobilized diaspora advocating for Afghanistan

FACILITATOR: Sana Safi, BBC Journalist

PANELISTS: Sitarah Muhammadi, Vice Chair, Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) - Action for Afghanistan Campaign [Australia];

Khalidha Nasiri, Executive Director, Afghan Youth Engagement and Development Initiative (AYEDI); Chair of AYEDI's Canadian Campaign for Afghan Peace [Canada];

Omar Haidary, Human Rights Advocate, Aseel app [Germany].

HIGHLIGHTS

- Despite our differences, we have a huge potential to work towards a common cause, through communication, sitting together and opening up to each other.
- The diaspora can influence many fields with the power of continued advocacy and campaigns.
- The use of social media, reaching out to those people with many followers, helps spread messages.
- Build your team, build a platform, and define the goals for your campaigns.
- Identifying allies and non-allies is crucial.
- Get endorsements from government and NGOs and use those endorsements to strengthen your leverage and increase your ability to push demands forwards.
- Now there's a media shift towards Ukraine, but we can care about both situations at the same time. We need to reach out to journalists and continue telling stories. We need to engage and pressure institutions and influence their policies.



Sana Safi opened the session by highlighting that the panel discussion aims to present strong examples of diaspora advocacy at the national level. She mentioned that it is important to find ways to do advocacy so we can keep Afghanistan high on the agenda and push stakeholders to do more to respond to needs on the ground. Sitarah Muhammadi touched upon her experience with the “Action for Afghanistan” Campaign after the takeover of the Taliban. She mentioned that we needed to respond to the emergency in Afghanistan but had little knowledge on how to go about it. For the first time, the Afghan Australian community mobilized and came together and obtained results. “We were born the first weeks after the collapse of Kabul. We were in lockdown in Sydney, but we started through Zoom. Our key asks to the Australian government were access for Afghans evacuees and the ease of family reunification pathways”. Omar Haidari noted that the use of social media was critical for his campaign. During the chaos at the Kabul airport, “I created brief and memorable infographics about what was happening in Afghanistan. It went viral, and within few months I got millions of followers reading these infographics and daily updates about what was happening in Afghanistan. I was contacted by hundreds of profes-

sionals wanting to help”. In addition, Omar Haidari took part in the development of the Aseel App that he uses for fundraising and donations to help Afghans with packages that include food and other basic items. “Since August 2021, we helped over 100,000 individuals” (Omar Haidary). Khalidha Nasiri highlighted key aspects of AYEDI’s Canadian Campaign for Afghan Peace and the success thereof. She mentioned that with the help of a dedicated intergenerational team they were able to have specific messages to the Trudeau government. “We used the election as an opportunity to put Afghanistan on the agenda. We successfully engaged with the media, and we were in the headlines and forced all the political parties to make a statement on Afghanistan. We received endorsement from two out of the five political parties within the first week of our campaign launching. Eventually, the Trudeau government put one of our demands on their campaign agenda, which was double the number of Afghan refugees from 20,000 to 40,000”. It was clear from the panelists’ remarks that the diaspora will need to be more united in order to have collective and impactful advocacy efforts. Lastly, Sana Safi thanked the panelists for inspiring the room with impressive advocacy efforts from different parts of the world.

DISCUSSION V: Diaspora access to funding and capacity development

FACILITATOR: Anders Helge Knudsen, Senior Advisor, DRC Diaspora Programme

PANELISTS: Aurelie Sgro, Senior Project Manager, International Centre for Migration Policy Development - European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) [Belgium];
Rahela Sidiqi, Founding Director, Rahela Trust & Omid International [United Kingdom];
Zoya Hassib, Project Coordinator, Yaar [Germany]

HIGHLIGHTS

- Diaspora capacity is largely underestimated, even if there is a recognition of the need for further capacity development.
- Establish trust with the donors during the years. Grow with other organizations in consortium with those who have good fundraising skills or a good international name/reputation. Grow and learn from those who are bigger.
- Diaspora organizations need to learn how to grow their capacities and their accountability.
- Diaspora organizations and humanitarian (professional) organizations are different as their motives are different: the latter seek business opportunities and monitor needs on the ground, while diaspora organizations are driven by their own passions as they are part of the target group.

Aurelie Sgro highlighted specific EUDiF capacity development support and opportunities to diaspora Europe. Following that, Rahela Sidiqi shared her experience developing a network of financial supporters primarily in the UK for Rahela Trust and Omid International to support education and safety for women in Afghanistan and support the capacity development of advocates in the UK. Zoya, then shared the experience of Yaar in developing a diverse project portfolio, stressing the difference of being the difference of the way diaspora and non-diaspora actors work and how the expertise and increased capacity of the diaspora to for instance help with the integration of newly arrived

Afghans are underestimated. It was clear from the panelists that diaspora organizations & networks make crucial contributions to both their country of origin/ancestry and of residence, many often operate in a context of low organizational capacity and financial insecurity, often constraining the full potential of their work. It was explicitly flagged in the panel that at a time when the Afghan diaspora is rapidly changing in reaction to the Taliban takeover and due to the arrival of more than 27.000 Afghans in Europe, it is more important than ever for the diaspora to receive support for this transformation process.



DISCUSSION VI: Diaspora and development

FACILITATOR: Michael Fanizadeh, Project Manager, Vienna Institute for Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC); Ali Ahmad Safi, Consultant, VIDC.

PANELISTS: Homa Abass, Deputy Chair, Afghanischer Frauenverein e.V. [Germany]; Ahmad Khalid Fahim, Senior Strategic Development Advisor, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan [Sweden]; Samla de Rosa, Executive Director – Operations, ADEPT - Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform [Belgium]

HIGHLIGHTS

- Development actors must understand communities to better contextualize their work.
- Changes are happening very fast in Afghanistan: working together is crucial in development projects and among the diasporas.
- Diaspora organizations have experience on how to reach rural areas, reaching those who are difficult to reach and minorities.
- There is fatigue within international communities to work in Afghanistan: we have to convince them.
- We should organize a dedicated meeting for organizations dealing with development and diaspora engagement, so we have more time to connect.
- We must lobby to lower costs for remittances & ease money transfer for projects as the current sanctions make it complicated for diaspora to support Afghanistan.
- Working with women, we need to help to reach out in Afghanistan, especially amongst the open-minded male population. Employment opportunities especially for women should be prioritized.
- Call ourselves for support: Afghans themselves can support diaspora for development in Afghanistan.
- In Pakistan and Iran, a priority should be to bring educational opportunities, especially for Afghan girls.
- Capacity building: ADEPT has a long experience. We have to convince the donors we can do it.
- Development and humanitarian response should come together and not be separated.

Michael Fanizadeh and Ali Ahmad Safi started the session by shedding light on opportunities and obstacles for Diaspora development engagement under de facto Taliban authorities in Afghanistan. Ali Ahmad Safi noted that people benefit from the diaspora, for example through remittances and philanthropy towards the country of origin. Homa Abbas pointed out that after August 15th, “we were able to prepare four mobile clinics for refugees in Afghanistan, providing initial and essential support [...] five more clinics and five schools are in the making and the families are the beneficiaries”. She mentioned that they were able to implement their projects based on the evaluations and monitoring in the area, identifying people in real need of help. Ahmad Khalid Fahim touched upon the importance of institutions for humanitarian engagements. He mentioned that “We have minis-

tries and service providers [that are important for humanitarian engagement], and the International Community has invested in those technical institutions. Now that capacity support has been stopped. I fear this situation will contribute to the collapse of these institutions.” Reflecting upon a successful example of diaspora engagement, Samla de Rosa highlighted key aspects of experience from ADEPT. She stated that ADEPT has 15 years of experience with development projects in more than 30 African countries. Funded by the EU via ICMPD and Swiss Development Agency, ADEPT’s activities include: capacity building, peer-to-peer learning, self-funding, consortium building, policy advocacy and partnership, and communication. Michael Fanizadeh summed up the discussion by underlining that it is not easy to work with diaspora in development. It needs close collaboration and pressure.

DISCUSSION VII: Treatment of Afghan asylum seekers and access to legal and safe pathways for Afghans in Europe

FACILITATOR: Reshad Jalali, Policy Officer, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

PANELISTS: Malin Björk, Member of European Parliament (MEP), The Left (Sweden) [Belgium]; Amaury Gillier, Operations Officer, The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) [Malta]; Olivia Sundberg, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, International Rescue Committee (IRC) [Belgium]; Yonous Muhammadi, President, Greek Refugee Forum (GRF) [Greece].

HIGHLIGHTS

- Safe and legal pathways and treatment of Afghans in Europe.
- The situation of Afghan asylum seekers in Greece.
- How the diaspora could be involved in lobbying and influencing policy making.
- Limited protections for Afghans at risk.
- Lack of transparency of member states around refugees' figures.
- Issue of pushbacks raised by participants and the use of externalization by some EU countries.
- Protection of migrants who don't meet the requirements for being recognized as refugees or asylum seekers.
- Discrimination of Afghans against Ukrainian refugees.

This discussion, moderated by Reshad Jalali, was an opportunity to look at the situation of Afghan asylum seekers in Europe, provide an analysis of European countries' recent policies concerning the treatment of Afghan asylum seekers in Europe and explore the existing safe and legal channels for protection in Europe.

After welcoming and thanking everyone, Reshad Jalali gave the floor to the panelists. Malin Björk started by highlighting the resettlement opportunities in Europe, particularly in Sweden. She mentioned that Afghan resettlements are under-scaled compared to the need. Many countries in Europe, like Sweden, decreased the possibility of extended asylum. Sweden undermined asylum processes, making it very difficult for Afghans to get international protection. It is EU's responsibility to act against discrimination. "We have the possibility to give the same amount of protection [as to Ukrainians]" (added Malin Björk). She also mentioned that they as the Left group at the Parliament will propose a hearing about EU member states asylum policies concerning Afghans. Echoing this, Amaury Gillier underlined that thousands of Afghans in Afghanistan and in neighboring countries are endangered. In this new phase

post-Ukraine, "we need to work towards keeping safe pathways open and facilitating discussions with the European institutions to keep the topic [of Afghans in need of protection] open and highly prioritized" (stated Amaury Gillier). Coming from IRC's perspective, Olivia Sundberg noted that Afghan refugees and asylum seekers are facing complicated bureaucratic processes, lack of transparency from the European countries, difficult eligibility assessment, and diminished levels of protection in the European countries. This made it very challenging for Afghans to seek protection.

On a similar note, Yonous Muhammadi mentioned that there is an extremely negative narrative around asylum seekers and refugees in Greece. "There is no integration policy in Greece, there is only violent pushback policy. Reception, integration, and asylum processes are somehow pushing people to leave. Now, people are required to fill in asylum applications at the border" (Yonous Muhammadi). Reshad Jalali summarized the discussion, including key takeaways and recommendations for the Treatment of Afghan asylum seekers and access to legal and safe pathways for Afghans in Europe.



DISCUSSION VIII: Diaspora's contribution to the humanitarian response

FACILITATOR: Sahar Nasiri, Policy Advisor, European Parliament

PANELISTS: Béatrice Mauconduit, Project Coordinator, Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination (DEMAC) [Denmark]; Dr. Med. Hamidullah Jubran, Project Manager and Board Member, Medical Association for Afghan Refugees (AFAF) [Germany]; Angela Barez, Chairwoman, Nawien Foundation [Netherlands].

HIGHLIGHTS

- Do not get isolated, rather create a network of diaspora organizations.
- Increase the diaspora humanitarian response and access to funding.
- Assert the role of diaspora humanitarian engagement with regard to remittances and philanthropic contributions.
- It is challenging to deal with de-facto authorities in reaching some more rural areas to provide emergency relief products.
- Sanctions on the Banking system affected the economy of the country and created numerous obstacles to providing humanitarian support.
- Capacity building of the diaspora providing funding on the ground is a key challenge.

This discussion, moderated by Sahar Nasiri, looked at the role of the diaspora humanitarian contribution through remittances and fundraising, emergency projects, and humanitarian advocacy. Before moving to the panellists, Sahar Nasiri stated that diaspora organizations are multi-sectoral, fast-responding actors who work transnationally. Drawing on the DEMAC's Real Time Review, Béatrice Mauconduit briefly underlined the existing challenges and recommendations for diaspora to engage in humanitarian response towards Afghanistan. She mentioned that the study shows that after the Taliban takeover, Diaspora organizations have mobilized rapidly to the crisis in Afghanistan with many adding to their current activities, advocacy, fundraising for support in Afghanistan, and support for the evacuation of Afghans at risk. Reflecting upon their experiences of engaging in

diasporic humanitarian response, both Dr. Med. Hamidullah Jubran and Angela Barez noted that having a connection with and understanding of their country of origin or heritage plays a vital role in humanitarian assistance where diaspora organizations often are part of the first response in the aftermath of a disaster. They added that supporting diaspora as a part of a broader humanitarian ecosystem is important as they play a key role in humanitarian responses and provide vital support to communities in countries of origin. This contributes to the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of humanitarian responses.

After giving a chance to the panelists to say some concluding remarks, Sahar Nasiri ended the session by summarizing key takeaways for reporting back in the plenary.





CONCLUSION

Sana Safi thanked all participants, moderators, and panelists for their engagement and dedication to supporting the Afghan diaspora in Europe. She reflected that the divisions that exist in the diaspora should be further discussed, but that future work needs to move toward focusing on things that unite the diaspora and other like-minded organizations. She also emphasized that, while meetings can be facilitated by DRC, ultimately the work will need to be done by the diaspora themselves. Finally, Adrien Bory concluded the session by thanking moderators and panelists, partners as well as GIZ and BMZ for a successful conference and pledged that the DRC Diaspora programme will do its utmost to follow up on the recommendations made during the conference to continue supporting the Afghan diaspora constructive role towards Afghanistan.





Danish Refugees Council’s Diaspora Programme

Since 2010, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has been working with diaspora groups as transnational civil society actors. Engagement with diaspora is based on a recognition of the significant role they play for people and communities in countries of origin (or heritage), for refugees and migrants in transit, and for newly arrived refugees and migrants in countries of residence, and, consequently, their potential for improving the situation for many of those affected by conflict and displacement. For more information please visit our website: www.drc.ngo/diaspora

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