

Joint Statement

Afghan and European civil society oppose EU engagement with the Taliban on deportations

June 2026

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, including Afghan diaspora organisations across Europe, are profoundly concerned, outraged, and deeply disappointed by [reports](#) that the European Union (EU) intends to host representatives of the Taliban in Brussels for discussions on deportations to Afghanistan.

Opening the doors to Taliban representatives to discuss deportations sends a dangerous and devastating signal when the people of Afghanistan continue to endure one of the world's gravest [human rights](#) and [humanitarian crises](#) under Taliban rule. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants against the Taliban leadership and many of the Taliban leaders are on the EU and United Nations sanctions lists. The proposed invitation undermines the EU's credibility, values and long-standing commitments to human rights, democracy, accountability and international law.

Since seizing power in August 2021, the Taliban have systematically dismantled constitutional protections, [erased](#) women and girls from public life, violently suppressed dissent, and much more, leading a regime of discrimination and fear. Multiple [UN experts](#) and [international human rights organisations](#) have described the Taliban's treatment of women and girls as amounting to a potential gender apartheid.

The EU's own [benchmarks](#), which explicitly condition any engagement with the Taliban on respect for human rights, the rule of law and Afghanistan's international obligations, should guide any engagement with the Taliban. Co-operating with the Taliban on deportations not only contradicts these benchmarks but also disregards the European Parliament's [repeated resolutions](#) and calls for a principled, rights-based approach towards Afghanistan. The Parliament's most recent [resolution](#) (May 2026) regretted the proposed invitation of Taliban representatives to Brussels and called on the European Commission and the European External Action Service for non-recognition and non-normalisation of the Taliban.

For millions of Afghans, particularly women and girls, human rights defenders, journalists, academics, judges, artists, former government employees, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQI+ people and people forced into exile, Brussels symbolises the defence of democratic values, human dignity, international protection, and principled support for human rights including in Afghanistan. The EU has played a critical role in consistently raising concerns over ongoing human rights violations in Afghanistan. It supports a number of initiatives, including the establishment of an independent [UN human rights monitoring mechanism](#). These efforts have been deeply valued and widely appreciated by Afghans and the international human rights community alike. The decision to host Taliban representatives in Brussels to discuss deportations undermines any trust built so far.

We are particularly alarmed that this initiative appears linked to discussions on deportations to Afghanistan. The current realities inside the country render such discussions deeply irresponsible. Afghanistan under Taliban control cannot be considered safe for deportations.

More than [90% of displaced Afghans](#) continue to be hosted by Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, particularly Iran and Pakistan. While Afghans remain among the largest national groups seeking asylum in [Europe](#), their number remains comparatively low compared with the displacement borne within the region. The number of Afghans arriving in Europe has also significantly decreased in recent years.

Although Afghan asylum applicants generally benefit from relatively [high recognition rates](#) (73.3% at the first instance in 2025 which also includes national forms of protection), they continue to face profoundly inconsistent and unequal treatment between EU member states. Recognition rates for Afghan applicants have ranged from [as high as 98%](#) in some member states [to below 5%](#) in others, without any credible explanation linked to the substance or profile of the cases concerned. Such extreme disparities strongly suggest that Afghans in need of protection are not being assessed according to uniform standards and safeguards across Europe.

[Serious concerns](#) regarding the safety and legality of deportations to Afghanistan were raised even prior to the Taliban's takeover. Today, the deteriorating human rights situation, the absence of effective legal protection,

the collapse of institutional safeguards and the ongoing risks of persecution and reprisals only make clearer that Afghanistan cannot be considered safe for return. Courts across Europe have [rightly intervened](#) to halt deportations in recognition of these realities. UN human rights bodies, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [have recently called on states](#) to halt involuntary returns to Afghanistan given the grave and ongoing human rights situation in the country.

UNHCR's official assessment of the situation is that [many Afghans](#) seeking asylum will have international protection needs. Where Afghans are found not to be in need of protection, European countries should prioritise rights-based and sustainable alternatives, including the granting of regular status, access to residence rights, and other measures that ensure dignity, stability, and protection for people who are unable to safely return.

Any attempt by the EU or its member states to advance deportation arrangements with the Taliban risks violating the principle of *non-refoulement*, a cornerstone of international refugee and human rights law prohibiting the transfer of individuals to situations where they face persecution, torture or other serious harm.

Afghan civil society, particularly Afghan women-led organisations and human rights defenders have repeatedly warned against policies that contribute to the political normalisation of the Taliban while excluding the voices of victims and those directly affected by Taliban rule (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Yet, those whose future and safety will be profoundly affected are marginalised from ongoing discussions. We cannot condone this.

We therefore call on the European Commission, the European External Action Service and EU member states to:

- Immediately reconsider and suspend any planned invitation or official hosting of Taliban representatives in Brussels;
- Ensure that any engagement related to Afghanistan remains strictly conditioned on measurable and verifiable improvements in human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls;
- Reject any co-operation arrangements that facilitate deportations to Afghanistan under current conditions;
- Fully uphold the principle of *non-refoulement* and the EU's obligations under international refugee and human rights law;
- Guarantee meaningful and structured consultation with Afghan civil society, women's rights defenders, refugee-led organisations and human rights experts in all policy discussions concerning Afghanistan;
- Expand safe protection pathways for Afghans at risk, including asylum access, family reunification, humanitarian visas, resettlement and relocation mechanisms;
- Continue supporting independent international accountability mechanisms documenting violations and possible international crimes committed in Afghanistan;
- Ensure that the EU's Afghanistan policy remains firmly grounded in human rights, democratic principles and accountability rather than migration deterrence objectives.

Signatories

1. Afghanistan and Central Asian Association
2. Afghanistan LGBTIQ+ Organisation
3. Afghans Empowered.org
4. Africa Solidarity Centre Ireland (ASCI)
5. AFRICAN MEDIA ASSOCIATION MALTA
6. ARENE (Afghan Refugees Experts Network in Europe)
7. ASB
8. Association for Integration and Migration (Simi)
9. asylkoordination austria
10. AWO Bundesverband e.V.
11. Center for Migration, Gender, and Justice
12. Centre for Peace Studies
13. Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)
14. Ciré
15. Deutsch-Afghanische Freundschaftsgesellschaft Baaham e.V.
16. Diakonie Deutschland
17. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
18. Dutch Council for Refugees
19. Emmaus Europe
20. Empowerment For Her
21. Estonian Refugee Council
22. European Network of Migrant Women
23. European Network on Statelessness
24. European Women's Lobby
25. European-Global Civil Society Organization (EGCSO)
26. FARR, the Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups
27. Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy
28. Female Fellows e.V
29. Fenix Humanitarian Legal Aid
30. Finnish Refugee Advice Centre
31. Forum réfugiés
32. France terre d'asile
33. Fundacja Ocalenie

34. Gender Persecution in Afghanistan Accountability Working Group (GPWG)
35. Generation Outside Afghanistan.org
36. Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)
37. Greek Forum of Refugees
38. HIAS Greece
39. International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) Europe
40. Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe
41. KEIHAN Foundation
42. Melissa Network
43. Migrant Women Hungary Association/ She4She
44. NANSEN (The Belgian Refugee Council)
45. Network of Afghanistan Diaspora Organisations in Europe (NADOE)
46. NOAS Foundation
47. Passerell
48. PIC – Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment
49. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants – PICUM
50. Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR)
51. PRO ASYL
52. Rainbow Afghanistan
53. Red Acoge
54. Refugee Advisory Board
55. Refugee Support Aegean (RSA)
56. Renovar Mouraria
57. Safe Passage International
58. Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe (Swiss Refugee Council)
59. SOLIDAR
60. Symbiosis-Council of Europe School of Political Studies in Greece
61. UNIRE-APS
62. Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen