

H.E. Antony John Blinken
US Secretary of State

Open Letter About Recent Meeting of US Delegation with the Taliban

August 2, 2023

Your Excellency,

We the undersigned coalitions and networks, advocating and defending human rights of women in Afghanistan through this letter express our deep concern about latest meeting of the US Officials in Qatar with the Taliban.

While the Taliban promised during peace negotiations to respect and uphold the rights of women and be part of a legitimate government, today they banned girls and women from education and work and prevent them from travelling without a male guardian. As a result of their different edicts, more than 200,000 women who were the breadwinners of their families have lost their jobs. Families are forcing their girls into early marriages and domestic violence against women has increased unprecedentedly. Many girls are committing suicide as they see no prospects for their future anymore.

We are dismayed that the US government is totally ignoring the demand of women and people of Afghanistan which is immediate prevention of war crimes and atrocities, forming a legitimate and inclusive government and respecting and upholding human rights, particularly of women and protection of vulnerable communities in Afghanistan. Like the Doha Peace Deal which failed all of us, today the US government again is meeting with the Taliban and discussing areas of confidence building without engaging with Afghan women, civil society, media, and other political groups and being accountable to people of Afghanistan.

According to the UN Special Rapporteur, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House and other Human Rights Organizations' reports, Taliban is committing the crime of gender apartheid in Afghanistan. These organizations have interviewed thousands of men and women on the ground who have shared their live experience under current regime. Furthermore, there is countless evidence surfacing on social media demonstrating Taliban's grave crime: humiliating, torturing and killing former security forces, extrajudicial detention of anyone resisting their policies and abduction of the young girls protesting for their basic rights.

We believe for sustainable political pathway for Afghanistan, the US and all other actors should be transparent and accountable to people of Afghanistan and should not fabricate and instrumentalize our demand.

We, therefore, demand the US government to answer our following questions about the latest statement issued by State Department:

1. US officials identified areas for confidence building in support of the Afghan people. ***What are these areas?***
2. US officials urged the Taliban to reverse policies responsible for the deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly for women, girls and vulnerable communities. ***What was Taliban's response?***
3. The US delegation met with representatives of the Afghan Central Bank and Afghan Ministry of Finance to discuss the state of the Afghan economy and the challenges that the banking sectors faces. ***Who were in this meeting and what was decided?***
4. US officials took note of the Taliban's continuing commitment to not allow the territory of Afghanistan to be used by anyone to threaten the United States and its allies and the two sides discussed Taliban's efforts to fulfill security commitments. ***What about all the reports from UNSC and others highlighting expansion of Al Qaeda and ISIS operation in Afghanistan? Aren't the women and people of Afghanistan who have sacrificed thousands of lives in your fight against terrorism your allies?***
5. The American delegation acknowledged that there has been a decrease in large-scale terrorist attacks against Afghan civilians. ***Those who were attacking the civilians, have taken control of Afghanistan by force. Small scale attacks against the civilians are happening every day. Just few days back the Taliban attacked Hazara civilians injuring many and killing some civilians including children who were commemorating 10th of Muharram. Does the US expect the Taliban to still continue large-scale attacks against the civilians within the territory that they control now?***
6. US officials pressed for the immediate and unconditional release of detained US citizens, noting that these detentions were a significant obstacle to positive engagement. ***What about the 17 million women of Afghanistan who are imprisoned at their homes?***
7. The US took note of report indicating that the Taliban's ban on opium poppy cultivation resulted in a significant decrease in cultivation during the most recent growing season. ***By banning opium poppy cultivation, the Taliban are trying to demonstrate their authority over Afghanistan. Our question is what alternatives they have created for the farmers and what is the guarantee that it will not increase once the Taliban regime is recognized?***

We would like to remind the US and all other flag bearers of women's right and democracy that Afghanistan has changed. Today's Afghan women and youth do not allow anyone to make assumptions of their aspirations and impose their political agenda on people of Afghanistan against our will. We will continue to raise our voice and hold everyone who is dealing with Afghanistan affairs to account.

