

Open Letter to the Members of the International Community Calling for the Release of Matiullah Wesa



Dear Excellencies,

We, the members of the civil society, media, human rights defenders, academia, business community from Afghanistan and around the world, express deep concern and outrage over the unlawful arrest and arbitrary detention of education activist Mr. Matiullah Wesa. He has been detained illegally for five months by the Taliban de-facto authorities.

Since Taliban taken control of Afghanistan in August 2021, they have unlawfully arrested 100s of Human Rights Defenders, Civil Society Activists, journalists, and peaceful women protesters who were allegedly tortured, raped, ill-treated while some others were assassinated or disappeared with impunity. The fundamental human rights of people of Afghanistan including women and girls are at risk more than any other time. Taliban systematically violate and persecute Human Rights and Women Human Rights Defenders, civil society activists, journalists and women protesters who call for protection of the fundamental human rights including rights to education, employment, political participation. Systematic persecution and collective punishment of women and girls by the Taliban is nothing short of Gender Apartheid.

Mr. Wesa is a prominent Afghan education activist who was peacefully working and advocating for the right to education for boys and girls in Afghanistan for years. on 27th March 2023, he was unlawfully arrested by personnel of the Taliban General Director of Intelligence (GDI). On 29th March, the Taliban spokesperson confirmed his arrest and accused him of “illegal activities”.

We are all seriously concerned about Mr. Wesa’s prolonged unlawful detention and his well-being as there are serious allegation of torture and ill-treatment against him by Taliban authorities. We call on world leaders and influential figures to stand up for the rights of people of Afghanistan, particularly the rights to education, employment, freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

We are calling on you to commit to the following:

- 1-** Suspend all your diplomatic engagement and impose preconditions to any engagement even at the lowest diplomatic level to the unconditional and immediate and unconditional release of all Human Rights Defenders, civil society activists, journalists and women protesters including release of Mr. Wesa.
- 2-** Ensure that Taliban guarantee in word and ACTION that human rights/ civil society activists and journalists are not arrested for peacefully performing their jobs.
- 3-** If Taliban fail to abide, ensure they face serious consequences for their actions including ceasing diplomatic engagement, imposing travel ban on all officials including Foreign Minister Mutaqi, and suspending their political office in Doha.
- 4-** Provide technical and political support to the office of Richard Bennett to independently investigate all the allegations of torture, ill-treatment, rape among other violations committed against the Human Rights, Women Human Rights defenders, journalists, and women protesters by the de-facto authorities.

The people of Afghanistan including Human Rights Defenders, civil society activists and journalists should be able to do their jobs without the fear of arrest, detention, or violent attack by Taliban and other armed or political groups in Afghanistan.

No one should be arrested, detained, tortured, killed, or disappeared for peacefully practicing their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

To:

1. H.E António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations.
2. H.E Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah bin Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
3. H.E His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of United Arab Emirates.
4. H.E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Prime Minister of Qatar.
5. H.E Antony Blinken, Secretary of State.
6. H.E Hakan Fidan, Foreign Minister of Turkey.
7. H.E Ursula von der Leyen, President of European Commission.

8. H.E Roberta Metsola, President of European Parliament.
9. H.E Hissein Brahim Taha, President of Organization for Islamic Cooperation.
10. H.E Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of United Kingdom.
11. H.E Hadja Lahbib, Foreign Minister of Belgium.
12. H.E Annalena Baerbock, Foreign Minister of Germany.
13. H.E Catherine Colonna, Foreign Minister of France.
14. H.E Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.
15. H.E Anniken Huitfeldt, Foreign Minister of Norway.
16. H.E Alexander Schallenberg, Foreign Minister of Australia.
17. H.E Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi, Foreign Minister of Indonesia.
18. H.E Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.
19. H.E Md Jashim Uddin, President of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
20. H.E Václav Bálek, President of Human Rights Council.
21. Volker Turk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
22. Rina Amiri, U.S. Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights.
23. Richard Bennett, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan.
24. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.
25. Thomas Nicholson, EU Special Representative for Afghanistan.
26. Thomas West, US Special Representative for Afghanistan.
27. Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on protection Human Rights Defenders.
28. Farida Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Education.
29. Gordon Brown, United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education.
30. Talgat Kaliyev, Kazakhstan Ambassador.
31. Avazbek Abdurazakov, Kyrgyzstan Ambassador.
32. Abdul Hadi Awang, Malaysia Special Envoy for the Middle East and other countries, including Afghanistan.
33. Tariq Ali Bakheet, OIC Ambassador and Special Envoy on Afghanistan.
34. Asif Durrani, Pakistan Ambassador and Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan.
35. Dr. Mutlaq bin Majed Al Qahtani, Qatar Envoy for Counterterrorism and Mediation in Conflict Resolution.
36. Sarvar Bakhti, head of Tajikistan, Foreign Ministry Middle East, and Africa Department.
37. Cihad Erginay, Turkey Ambassador for Afghanistan.
38. Hoja Ovezov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan for Afghanistan.
39. Eisa Salem Mohammed Salem AlDhaheeri, UAE Ambassador for Afghanistan.
40. Ismatulla Irgashev, Special Representative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan.
41. Yodgorkhodja Shadmanov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Afghanistan.
42. Kjell-Gunnar Eriksen, Norway Special Representative for Afghanistan.

Individual Endorsements:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adela Mohseni, Women Human Rights Defender, and Religious Scholar 2. Shukria Barekzai, Former Ambassador of Norway, and women rights activist 3. Abdullah Ahmadi, Director of Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organization 4. Atefa Tayeb, Former Deputy Minister at Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs 5. Najib Paikan, Journalist and Human Rights Defender 6. Tuba Lutfi, Social Rights Activist 7. Horia Mosadiq, Director of Conflict Analysis Network (CAN) 8. Sediqa Kazi, Women entrepreneur and Director of Sedqiq Tailoring 9. Sami Darayi, Human Rights activist 10. Gulsoom Starzai, Executive Director of Afghan Women Service & Educational Organization 11. Dr. Mohiba Robehan, Medical Doctor and human rights activist | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Nargis Nehan, women rights activist and former Minister of Mines and Petroleum 13. Liah Jawad, human rights activist 14. Masiha Fayez, Lawyer and women rights activist 15. Mohammad Ashraf Bakhyari, human rights activist 16. Mohammad Tawab Fayyazi, Director of Families of victims and survivors of war 17. Fariha Essar, human rights activist 18. Cllr Peymana Assad - Labour Councillor, London Borough of Harrow 19. Nilofar Ayubi, women rights activist 20. Julia Lopez, Student from Mexico 21. Sima Noori, Women's Affairs Committee of the World Hazara Council and 22. Vice President of the World Organization of Civil Society in Europe 23. Mina Rafiq, Director of Against Illiteracy and Poverty 24. Marzia Azad, Journalist 25. Nazifa Jalali, Religious Scholar and director of Community Relief and Care organization |
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26. Tamana Paryani Zaryabi, women rights activist
27. Parwana Ibrahimkhail Nijrabi, women rights activist
28. Nazifa Haqpal, Former Diplomat, and women rights activist
29. Parisa Mobarez, Founder of Takhar Women's Movement
30. Zohra Wahedi, Leader of Save Us movement.
31. Mohammad Reza Rafat, Director of Afghanistan Governance Forum
32. Najla Rahel, Deputy Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association
33. Dr. Manizha Naweed, women rights activist
34. Fariha Easar, Human Rights Defender, and social activist
35. Nilab Pazhwak, writer and human rights activist
36. Maria Raheen, Professor of Balkh university
37. Salamat Azimi, former Minister of Counter Narcotics
38. Shafiqah Khpolwak, poet and writer
39. Shahla Farid, Professor of Kabul university
40. Najla Ayubi, Founding member of Women Regional Network
41. Nooria Safi, human rights activist
42. Sharifa Zurmati Wardak, journalist and former member of Parliament
43. Qazi Marzia Babakarkhail, Judge and politician
44. Roshan Sirran, Director of Training Human Rights Association
45. Zarqa Yaftali, lawyer and women rights activist
46. Roshan Mashal, women rights activist
47. Massoma Khawari, women rights activist
48. Quhramana Kakar, Peace activist
49. Wazhma Frogh, women rights and peace activist
50. Jamila Afghani, Vice president of Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
51. Robina Hamdard, women rights activist
52. Dr. Halima Kazem, Professor in Sandford University
53. Humaira Rasuli, Human Rights Lawyer
54. Freshta Farah, Former member of Olympic Committee and journalist
55. Ahmad Fahim Kohdamani, former diplomat and journalist
56. Razia Barekzai, women rights activist and protester leader
57. Fatema Hashimi, Beautician
58. Farzana Ayubi, women protester
59. Shahnaz Saeedi, women protester
60. Dr. Anqa Amin, Physician and peace activist
61. Metra Mehra, Human Rights Defender
62. Mohammad Mohsen Usyan, civil society activist
63. Sanqa Sediqi, women rights activist
64. Rahim Jami, Founder and Managing Partner of Education Defender Network (EDN)
65. Fahimeh Robiolle club France Afghanistan
66. Syed Hussain Anosh, Director of Civil Society and Human Rights Network (SCHRN)
67. Kamila Sidiqi, Former Minister of Commerce, and director of Kaweyan International
68. Khan Wali Adel, civil society activist
69. Fawzia Yaftali, Former member of Kunduz Provincial Council
70. Mohammad Sediq Noori
71. Naqiba Barekzai, Journalist and Director of Women Journalists
72. Abdul Hamid Safwat, Coordinator of Balkh Civil Society Organizations
73. Bella Guru, Germany
74. Parasto Yari, women rights activist
75. Abdullah Rasouli, civil society activist
76. Maliha Malikpour, women activist
77. Parwana Paikan Minister Counselor, Embassy of Afghanistan- France
78. Husna Rahimi, Journalist and TV presenter
79. Farshad Fatahi, Independent Journalist
80. Nigara Mirdad, diplomat, Political Counsellor Afghanistan Embassy in Poland
81. Hashmatullah Eshaqzada, Civil society activist
82. Sahar Ehsan, Women Leaders Movement of Afghanistan
83. Members of Women Rights First in Canada
84. Mary Akrami, Director of Afghan Women Network (AWN)
85. Dr. Suraya Sobhrang, former Human Rights Commissioner of Afghanistan
86. Dr. Sorkhroodi
87. Rahela Sediqi, Director of Omid International
88. Yalda Royan, Founding member of Afghan Women Coalition for Change
89. Sahar Faqiri, Civil Society activist
90. Together Stronger Coalition of Women
91. Palwasha Hasan, women rights activist
92. Khalil Raufi, civil society activist

Organisational Endorsements:

