



Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada  
Item: 31<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the Human Rights Council  
Date: 24 August 2021  
Speaker: Catherine Morris

### **Serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan: Oral Statement to the 31st Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, the International Bar Association, and The Law Society, NGOs in Special Consultative Status**

Mme President;

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, the International Bar Association, and The Law Society of England and Wales call for an end to decades of impunity for grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by Afghan and foreign actors in Afghanistan.

We deplore the unlawful takeover of the country by force. Alarming reports<sup>1</sup> of grave violations include massacres of civilians,<sup>2</sup> assassinations of defenders, arbitrary detentions, unlawful restrictions on rights of women and girls,<sup>3</sup> and violent dispersal of peaceful protests.<sup>4</sup>

Women, children, minorities, journalists, judges, lawyers, and defenders are at particular risk.

We ask the Council to urge foreign governments, particularly those who have been engaged in the 20-year armed conflict, to take urgent and effective actions for the protection of civilians, including speedy and accessible processes to ensure safe passage and asylum for all those likely to be targeted because of their work upholding human rights and the rule of law. We urge the immediate establishment of humanitarian corridors for safe evacuation. There must be no deportations to Afghanistan; the principle of non-refoulement must be respected.

We urge the Council to establish an international fact-finding mechanism adequately resourced and staffed for sustained monitoring of human rights and humanitarian law violations and to collect, preserve, and prepare evidence of violations for use in fair and independent prosecutions.

Thank you.

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## References

<sup>1</sup> Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council on Afghanistan [as delivered], available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-afghanistan-delivered>.

<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men – new investigation, Amnesty international, 19 August 2021, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/afghanistan-taliban-responsible-for-brutal-massacre-of-hazara-men-new-investigation/>.

<sup>3</sup> Afghanistan: UN experts urge swift global action to protect human rights and prevent ‘civilian slaughter’, OHCHR, 17 August 2021, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27384&LangID=E>

<sup>4</sup> Two reported killed as Taliban fire on crowds protesting takeover, Aljazeera, 19 August 2021, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/19/afghan-protests-spread-to-kabul-in-early-challenge-to-taliban>