



In the name of Allah, most Gracious, most Compassionate

NATIONAL PEACE GATHERING

Urgent Demand for Inclusion in the “Accelerated Afghan Peace Talks”

Kabul, 29 March 2021

Afghan society including civil society organisations, community leaders, religious scholars, youth, women activists and networks, victims, professional organisations, religious scholars, Tribal/Community leaders, scholars, experts, men and more, have in this historic National Peace Gathering, brought together over 1350 Afghan society representatives from every District and Province in Afghanistan and many more Afghan Diaspora have participated via a Facebook livestream.

This is the largest gathering of Afghan civil society in recent history. The National Peace Gathering, facilitated by the Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace (AMIP), was called for in order to urgently address the key issue of Inclusion in the Afghan Peace Process, including the “Accelerated Peace Talks” to take place in Istanbul, Turkey.

Afghan society feels that there is a real opportunity to work towards peace today, and Afghan society does not want to squander that opportunity. We as Afghan society demands that our leaders do not throw away this opportunity of coming to some agreement!

Nonetheless, Afghan Society wants to explicitly make it clear to all sides to the conflict (including the International Community), that best practice conflict resolution experience from around the world, strongly demonstrates that the more inclusive peace negotiations are, the more sustainable the peace is likely to be. Thus, it would be a fatal mistake to exclude the independent voices of civil society from the peace talks.

The National Peace Gathering acknowledges and appreciates the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban Political Commissions efforts to engage in dialogue to end the conflict. We now demand that they demonstrate their commitment to the peace process and genuinely enter into negotiations on substantive issues immediately.

It also welcomes and acknowledges the pivotal role external partners such as the United States and Qatar have played with regards to hosting the recent peace talks. The support of the Contact Group, the United Nations, the European Union, Turkey and all others involved in the peace process. Afghan society is thankful for their efforts and grateful to have such partners. We further ask that you endorse and support a more inclusive peace process that brings in the independent voices of Afghan society.

The National Peace Gathering, agreed on four specific demands from Afghan Society to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Taliban Political Commission and the International Community:

Inclusion:

Recognising that peace talks are sensitive; that conducting them outside Afghanistan increases concerns about inclusivity, transparency and accountability; and that peace talks need the buy-in of the Afghan people.

Recognising that Afghan society as a whole **needs to be included**, but that not everyone can be at the table, and that specific constituencies such as women, victims, minorities, youth and others may also need specific measures to facilitate their inclusion.

- We Demand an inclusive process and an inclusive outcome. Inclusive means involving all segments of society, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups, young people, women, victims, and representatives of all ethnic and religious communities. The people, and not only the political elites, represent Afghan society.

- We demand that an independent civil society mechanism is integrated into the formal peace architecture to provide for the systematic inclusion of Afghan society, and to ensure the inclusivity and sustainability of the peace process.
- Want direct access to the table via the Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace (AMIP).
- Afghans voices should be collected from all the districts, provinces and regions, and transferred to the negotiations table, and feedback provided to the Afghan population.
- We call on the peace national peace structures (HCNR and SMP) to work with and support civil society.
- We call for the United Nations to work with civil society and its mechanisms to ensure inclusivity in the peace process.

Ceasefire:

Recognising that the ongoing violence and targeted civilian casualties in Afghanistan is totally unacceptable; that people on all sides suffer from this violence; that a safer and secure environment is needed for Afghan society to rebuilt their lives.

- We demand a comprehensive cease-fire from both sides: peace is not possible without one!
- Cease-fire should be the main agenda point in the negotiations and negotiations on this point should start immediately.
- We demand improved personal security, and the free and safe movement of people, in order to restore and strengthen inter-communal relationships.
- Civilian areas should not be targeted as a political negotiation strategy by any sides.
- Ceasefire negotiations should include the perspective of victims, women and all ordinary Afghans.
- Afghan society should have a neutral role in the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism of any Ceasefire.

Governance:

Recognising that the continued development of Afghanistan requires a stable government that is committed to national unity, upholding the rule of law, and the protection of fundamental rights as well as strong economic development policies.

- Islamic values should be maintained as the basis for governance in Afghanistan.
- Negotiations on the constitution and future governance structures must include the perspective and expertise of Afghan society.
- Ethnic and religious discrimination as well as moral and institutional corruption should be eliminated.
- A Commission to compensate victims and ensure Justice should be established during the peace negotiations.
- The future government must provide security, employment, education and preserve the rights of women and minority groups.
- The future government should ensure fair and balanced development throughout the country.
- We want a united Afghanistan with a decentralised system.

International Community:

Recognising the positive and supportive role the International Community has played in Afghanistan, and the need for continued and responsible engagement in the future of Afghanistan.

- We call upon the withdrawal of all foreign troops and foreign fighters from Afghan soil. However, this must be done in a **responsible, conditioned and structured manner**, that prioritises the **safety and security** of all Afghan people.
- We request that regional countries support our call for a comprehensive and immediate ceasefire.
- We ask for the continued financial and political support of the international community for peace process.
- We ask the UN to partner with the independent Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace (AMIP) to facilitate the submissions and the transfer of inputs and concerns of Afghan society to the negotiating table.

This ***Urgent Demand for Inclusion in the “Accelerated Afghan Peace Talks”*** has been signed by the participants of the National Peace Gathering and should be seen as the will of the people of Afghanistan being clearly expressed to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Taliban Political Commission and the International Community.

