



Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo Norway, Denmark and Iceland



Dear readers,

Events of this month, August 2021, have led the country to one of the most difficult periods in the nation's history. Scenes from Kabul international Airport have broken hearts, disturbed emotions and led to questions of how, why and what now by all Afghans, inside the country and abroad. The images have been extremely painful to any human eye and difficult for any conscience to comprehend. Following these events, on August 26th a terrorist attack took place Kabul International Airport, which sent another message of brutality to the people of Afghanistan and the international community at large. The events of August have led to uncertainties for all Afghans, a sentiment shared by many around the world.

At this most difficult juncture, the international community role in address two key imperatives: meeting the grave humanitarian needs of the people and helping stabilize the political situation through a comprehensive political settlement that meets the needs, expectations and aspirations of the people is of vital importance. From a humanitarian standpoint, the international community needs to scale and better coordinate assistance for the people who are in need of "emergency assistance," including the very basics such as food, water, shelter and health services. The safety, security and well-being of the people should be an urgent priority for the international community. Likewise, the people of Afghanistan also demand a broad-based political settlement that is based on the Afghanistan's historic national values, as well as the principles of right to self-determination, inclusivity, harmony, respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens and above all - national unity. Such a national consensus should lead to the formation of a broad-based effective government, composed of all ethnicities of Afghanistan and segments of society, including Afghan women, who comprise half the country's population. In this respect, the important role of Afghanistan's many international partners in helping reach the desired outcome cannot be overstated, and we look forward to continued cooperation with international partners in the way forward. Anything short of such a national consensus and agreement runs the serious risk of continued and further conflict with more suffering for the people.

What has unfolded in Afghanistan by no means reflects the identity of the nation. Throughout our history, the people of Afghanistan have contributed to the advancement of human civilization. The sons and daughters of Afghanistan have made important contributions with their work as poets, thinkers, artists and scholars, etc. The people's determination will once again enable the country to get beyond this difficult chapter in the country's history through unity and a shared effort to save and preserve Afghanistan's identity, rich culture and traditions and to get back on the path of progress and stability.

Sincerely,
Ambassador Youssof Ghafoorzai

Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo Held an Event on International Solidarity and Support for Afghanistan



On the 20th of August, the Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo held an Event “Ensuring a Better Future for Afghanistan Through Solidarity and Support.” The event was attended by Ambassador Yousof Ghafoorzai, Mr. Andre Mundal, Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security at the Norwegian Foreign Ministry; Mr. Kai Eide, former UN Special Representative for Afghanistan and friends and partners of Afghanistan; Mr. Adam Combs, Regional Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council; representative of the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee; Ms. Karolina Olofson, Executive Director of the Oslo Center; Ms. Laila Bokhari, former State Secretary of Norwegian Foreign Ministry and current member of the Nordic Mediators Network. The event was aimed at galvanizing solidarity and support for the people of Afghanistan and to improve the situation in the country, at a time when Afghanistan and its people are undergoing a difficult time.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Ghafoorzai thanked participants for joining the event, which came “at a very challenging time for the people of Afghanistan – who find themselves in the midst of a very difficult situation.” He stated that scenes from Kabul International airport had “shocked millions of Afghan inside and outside Afghanistan as well the international community”, and that the images were reflective of what the people of Afghanistan were confronting from a humanitarian standpoint, but also in other aspects as well. More than 18 million Afghans are in dire need of urgent humanitarian assistance, with over 500,000 thousands people having been displaced in the past three months alone. Urgent assistance was now required including “the very basic: food, water, shelter and health-services” and that what was now needed was “equal attention with respect to provision of urgent assistance by the international community.”

He stated that the current situation did not define Afghanistan’s identity and that “Afghanistan is a country with a rich history and culture – a nation of sons and daughters that have contributed to the betterment of human civilization – poets, thinkers, scholars and physicians. The Ambassador underscored that the people of Afghanistan have sacrificed to advance the cause of human civilization and have been in the forefront of this effort over the past four decades.

“The people of Afghanistan await and expect the international community to stand beside them in support and solidarity.” In that respect, he added that “the decisions now made by the international community will be reflected and judged in history.”

He conveyed gratitude for Norway’s historic solidarity and friendship with Afghanistan, which spanned more than four decades.



He hailed Norway's important contributions in the country during the past two decades, which were an important part of the many gains made over this period of time. He also highlighted the important work of Norwegian NGOs. In the way forward, addressing the current situation required adjustments in various aspects. He highlighted the importance of host countries accepting a greater number of Afghans who "need to leave." He also called for extensions on avoiding "involuntary returns to Afghanistan from various countries." A humanitarian corridor for evacuations and timely and efficient access to emergency humanitarian aid was also urgently needed. On the issue of protection, he stated that the safety and security of the people was urgently needed, and that ensuring such protection "should not wait until a prospective political agreement is reached." On the political front, he highlighted the importance of a comprehensive political agreement that would lead to a "dignified and lasting peace," preserve the gains of the past two decades and meet the expectations and aspirations of the people. Discussions and dialogue continued between the Republic and the Taliban to reach an agreement that leads to a "broad-based and fully inclusive government, composed of all ethnic groups and acceptable to all sides, most importantly, the people of Afghanistan."



Also addressing the event were the Special Representative of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry for Women, Peace and Security, Mr. Kai Eide, Laila Bokhari, Dr. Curt Rice and Karolina Olofson. Participants expressed concern over the current situation in Afghanistan, reaffirmed their solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and highlighted the importance of international support to address the various challenges facing the people of Afghanistan and achieve peace, stability and prosperity in the country. The event was also attended by several Norwegian media outlets, including NRK, Aftenposten and Dagbladet.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai Met with Defense Minister Bakke-Jensen

On August 10th, Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with Norwegian Defense Minister Frank Bakke-Jensen. The Ambassador gave an overview of recent developments in Afghanistan, including the overall security situation, which had become more complex as a result of continued violence and attacks, which had a profound negative impact on the civilians who tragically had borne the brunt of the violence and instability.

He emphasized that the role of the international community was needed to help bring about a change in the situation and to achieve progress on the political front towards a durable outcome to peace talks leading to a comprehensive settlement, based on the will of the people of Afghanistan.

The Ambassador addressed the exacerbated humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and highlighted urgent assistance is needed for vulnerable groups, including - at the time - over 350, 000 newly displaced people since mid-April. He conveyed Afghanistan's gratitude for Norway's continued commitments to Afghanistan, as also reaffirmed at the NATO Summit in June. Norway's renewed commitments included the continued operation of the field hospital at Kabul International Airport, participation in the out-of-country training of Afghan security forces and continued funding and assistance for ANDSF.

The Defense Minister expressed concern about the security situation and reiterated Norway's continued commitments. The people and government of Afghanistan highly value Norway's contributions in various fields, including financial and military support in the areas of security and defense, both within the previous NATO-ISAF and Resolute Support Missions (RSM). One of Norway's key achievements in the security sector has been the development of the CRU-222 special force in the Afghan Ministry of Interior. Norway's continued engagement, support, and collaboration in different sectors will remain imperative to help consolidate past gains and achieve the shared goal of a peaceful, stable and self-reliant Afghanistan.



Pre-Planned Photo Exhibition in Partnership with Oslo Metropolitan University and the Afghan Photographers Association



On August 25th, the opening of the exhibition “Where there is war, there is life: the Afghanistan we need to Save,” was held at Oslo Metropolitan University, presenting 46 photos from 27 Afghan photographers that illustrated examples of life in Afghanistan over the past twenty years. The exhibition was the result of a joint effort of OsloMet University, the Afghanistan Photographers Association (APA) and the Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo.

The opening of the exhibit heard remarks by Prof. Elisabeth Eide, Prof. of Journalism Studies at OsloMet, who was one of the main organizers of the event; State Secretary at the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, Jens Frølich Holte, Ambassador Youssouf Ghafoorzai, Mrs. Nina Waalar, Rector of OsloMet University and Director of the Free Expression Foundation, Mr. Knut Olav Amas. The event was also attended by Ambassadors and other representatives based in Oslo, activists, including members of the Afghan diaspora and other friends of Afghanistan. In his opening remarks, H.E. Ambassador Ghafoorzai mentioned that the exhibition, which was initially planned months back, was being held in a situation different from what was initially expected. He stated “today’s exhibition highlights several important issues, which have significance beyond just the important work, courage, talent of Afghan photographers.” The exhibition also “helps convey a very important message to the outside world at an extremely critical time in Afghanistan.”

The exhibition also helped convey a strong political message of “what’s now at stake with respect to having to ensure that the historic gains of the past must not be allowed to be jeopardized in efforts to stabilize the political situation through a comprehensive political agreement that has the support of the absolute majority and which should lead to the formation of a broad-based, inclusive and fully representative government, comprised of all ethnic groups and segments of society.” He also stated that the photos also “symbolized the important gains of the past – the emergence of a new generation of youth as journalists, innovators, activists, civil servants, artists and athletes, representing a fundamentally transformed society.” Moreover, Ambassador Ghafoorzai stressed that “upholding human rights, fundamental freedoms and enabling the people to determine their political destiny and to have equal opportunities, especially women, are now among the main demands of the people”, and that in this respect, the important role of Afghanistan’s many international partners in helping reach the desired outcome cannot be overstated.

Professor Elisabeth Eide at OsloMet hailed the close collaboration between OsloMet University, APA and Afghan Embassy in Oslo in making the event possible and stressed that the exhibition was a powerful message signaling what was now at stake if “a peace-based and rights-based solution is not found.” She added that “far too often the images from Afghanistan have been of war and violence, the women suffering, and of foreign troops and helpers. Afghanistan is a proud nation with a strong history of independence.” Referring to Afghanistan’s dynamic civil society, she stated that civil society activists have worked to safeguard the constitution and the rights of different vulnerable groups and that many Afghan women have been in the forefront of this effort.

State Secretary Jens Frølich Holte expressed gratitude to the APA for collecting and presenting this collection of photographs. “These powerful images of daily life in Afghanistan remind us of what we have been working for and what we must keep working for.”

State Secretary Holte added that the exhibition was also testament of the “vibrant journalistic and photojournalistic activity that has been taking place in Afghanistan over the past 20 years. This important work, including by many female journalists and photojournalists, has contributed to a more open and democratic society, and has provided important information on the life of ordinary Afghans”. Moreover, he highlighted Norway’s efforts in the UN Security Council in working for “the restoration of security and civil order and for urgent talks to ensure a peaceful settlement to the current crisis.”



Photo: Marte Vike Arnesen / Journalisten

Mrs. Nina Waaler, Rector of Oslo Metropolitan University thanked all participants for attending the event and highlighted the signing of the MoU between the University and Kabul University earlier in the year. She also expressed concern about the security of academics and researchers in Universities in Afghanistan, as well as about the future of students and scholars in the country. Also addressing the event was the Director of the Free Expression Foundation, Mr. Knut Olav Amas who spoke about the importance of ensuring the security of human rights and defenders of human rights and freedom of expression who now feared for their life.

The exhibition was also set to take place at Darul Aman Palace in Kabul, but was canceled due to the current situation. The photos on display were chosen by a jury of professional photographers from Afghanistan, Norway, and other countries. The exhibition “Where there is war, there is life” will also be on display at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo and the United Nations Headquarters in New York in the fall.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with H.E. Ole Andreas Lindeman, Norwegian Ambassador to Afghanistan



On the 25th of August, H.E. Ambassador Ghafoorzai met with H.E. Ole Andreas Lindeman, Norwegian Ambassador to Afghanistan. The two Ambassadors spoke in detail about recent developments in the country, including the security, political and humanitarian situation which required urgent international attention. They also discussed the evacuation of Norwegian staff and Afghan nationals who had arrived in Norway based on humanitarian grounds and in light of the difficult situation on the ground. In that regard, more than 750 Afghan nationals had arrived in Norway as part of the Norwegian evacuation effort which was conducted over a period of several weeks.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai expressed gratitude for the solidarity and humanitarian support of the Norwegian government at another difficult moment for Afghanistan. He expressed appreciation for the commitment of Norwegian authorities to help ensure the well-being of all who had arrived in Norway, especially unattended minors. He highlighted the importance of close collaboration between the Embassy and relevant Norwegian authorities for the well-being of the children and unification of those children that had arrived without their parents.

Moreover, the two spoke about the grave humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and Norway’s contributions. Ambassador Ghafoorzai expressed concern of the humanitarian situation which requires a scaling up of assistance from international partners and organizations. He hailed Norway’s work so far, and emphasized the importance of the international community in order to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. Ambassador Ghafoorzai stressed that, at this juncture, stabilizing the political situation through a broad-based, representative and inclusive government which reflects the national character and diversity of Afghan society and helps preserve democratic and other past gains is a precondition for national consensus and progress towards unity and social and political stability.

The Afghan Embassy in Oslo & the NRC held a Joint Meeting with the Minister of Refugees & Repatriation of Afghanistan on the Humanitarian Situation & Support for IDPs



EMBASSY OF THE
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF
Afghanistan
OSLO NORWAY



NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

On August 10th, the Afghan Embassy in Oslo, held a joint meeting with Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation on the humanitarian situation and support for IDPs in Afghanistan. Ambassador Ghafoorzai, Mr. Noor Rahaman Akhlaqi, Minister of Refugee & Repatriation of Afghanistan, Jan Egeland, Secretary-General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Mr. Sher Alam Amlawal, Deputy Minister for Refugees & Repatriation Afghanistan, Astrid Sletten, NRC Country Director in Afghanistan, & Mr. Kai Eide, Former UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan attended the meeting.

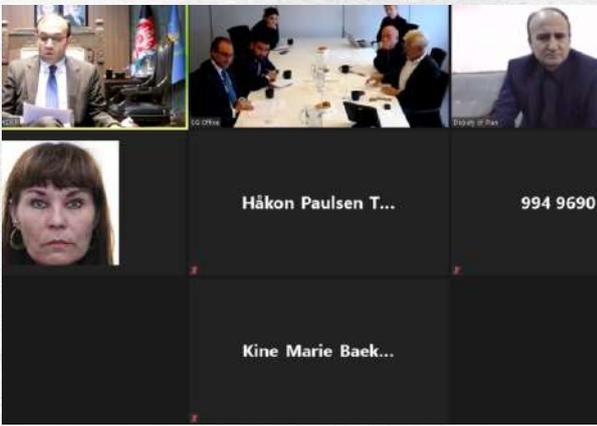
Opening the meeting, Ambassador Ghafoorzai recognized the historic contribution of NRC in Afghanistan. He underscored that the discussion is important because of the security and humanitarian situation in the country. The unprecedented level of violence and insecurity has placed millions of Afghans in a very difficult humanitarian situation. In that regard, he referred to over two-thousand civilians killed in the past two months alone; a 50% increase in civilian casualties since last year; 350,000 people being displaced since mid April, of which 80% were comprised of children. Moreover, the total number of displaced persons was approaching five million and more than 18 million people were in need of emergency humanitarian assistance throughout the country. He stated that the exacerbated situation had come amidst an already challenging situation, characterized by conflict, severe drought and covid-pandemic. What was urgently needed was for the international community to help end the ongoing conflict and scale up humanitarian assistance to meet the urgent and immediate needs of the people who were facing a catastrophic humanitarian situation.



Mr. Noor Rahman Akhlaqi, Minister for Refugees & Repatriation of Afghanistan gave a very detail account of the humanitarian situation, including the grave human right violations committed by the Taliban, the deteriorating humanitarian situation of IDPs, the activities of the government, particularly the Ministry for Refugees & Repatriation, to the urgent priority needs in relation to IDPs. He stressed that the number of refugees and IDPS are staggering, and a collective international response is necessary to meet the needs of the people and to prevent the situation from worsening further.

Mr. Jan Egeland, Secretary-General of the NRC & Ms. Astrid Sletten, NRC Country Director in Afghanistan, gave an overview of the historic and current work that the NRC does in Afghanistan. The NRC's activities in Afghanistan range from focus on IDPs and refugees; education; livelihoods, food security, water, sanitation & hygiene to gender protection; camp management and legal assistance. Mr. Egeland reinforced that the NRC not only will stay, but remained committed to scale up its assistance programs in Afghanistan.

Mr. Sher Alam Amlawal, Deputy Minister for Refugees & Repatriation Afghanistan, spoke in detail about the technical aspects of the cooperation between the Ministry and the NRC. The minister also said that, at this crucial juncture, the people of Afghanistan should not be forgotten by its international partners. The Minister hailed the important cooperation between the Ministry and NRC and underscored the importance of the continuation of this collaboration.



Mr. Kai Eide, former UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan spoke about the importance of a unified international position to improve the current situation, which enquires a political settlement. In that respect, he highlighted the important role of the UN to achieve this objective. He stated that the upcoming renewal of the UNAMA mandate by the UN Security Council can be an opportunity to bring necessary adjustments in the UN activities in order to better respond to the current challenges in Afghanistan.

Ambassador Ghafoorzai ended the joint discussion by thanking all participants for their important contributions. He stated that the meeting was useful in exchanging views on the important work of the NRC and on the collaboration between NRC and the Ministry. He expressed confidence that the meeting would help build on close cooperation between the NRC and MoRRA and hopefully lead to greater alignment of assistance programs with urgent needs of the ground.

Urgent Humanitarian Support Required for the People of Afghanistan

Recent developments in Afghanistan have created greater anxiety and uncertainty for the Afghan people, who have been the prime victims of the conflict. Meeting the humanitarian needs of the people is an urgent priority. Eighteen million Afghans are in acute need of emergency assistance. The number of IDPs is now reaching close to five million, a figure exacerbated by the rise in violence over the past several weeks. One third of the Afghan population is in need of life-saving assistance. Images from Kabul International Airport this week have led to shock and grief among all but also people around the world, and reflect the difficult situation facing the Afghan population.



A joint and united international response is needed to meet the humanitarian needs and ensure the protection of Afghan men, women and children. Global concern about recent developments, including the humanitarian situation, has reached new levels, which was also highlighted in this week's UN Security Council emergency meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. However, the UN humanitarian appeal for \$850 million to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter and water, is less than half-funded. More pledges of assistance by governmental and non-governmental partners as well as improved mechanisms for delivery is an urgent need. We are grateful for the solidarity and friendship of our Norwegian friends and partners who have always stood beside Afghanistan during the most difficult of periods, extending back to the 1980's. In the past two decades, Norway's contributions covered various areas, including development, healthcare, education, democratization and women's empowerment. At this difficult point in time, various partners inside and outside the Norwegian government have displayed their generosity and support for Afghanistan, including the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and other non-governmental organizations. We are working closely with our Norwegian friends and partners on this and other urgent issues.

In any conflict setting, improving the humanitarian plight of the people is best achieved by ending the conflict. At the moment, overcoming the difficult situation that has come about in light of recent developments and reaching certainty in ensuring a safe, secure and prosperous future for all Afghans is a moral imperative for the global community. It is also what the people of Afghanistan expect. A peaceful, united and democratic future for all Afghans, in which the national values are embedded, can only be reached through a comprehensive political agreement, leading to the formation of a broad based and fully representative government acceptable to all sides, and most importantly, the people of Afghanistan.

Highlights of the Embassy's Engagements with the Norwegian Media

In order to help shed light on developments in Afghanistan and the challenging situation on the ground, Ambassador Ghafoorzai engaged with various Norwegian media outlets on the evolving situation in the country. A media breakfast was held on the 9th of August. On the occasion, Ambassador Ghafoorzai gave an overview of the situation in Afghanistan. He stressed to journalists the need for a more coordinated global humanitarian assistance, as more than eighteen million people are in need of emergency humanitarian assistance and over five hundred thousand people have been displaced during the past three months, with the number of IDPs now approaching five million.



Following the media-breakfast the Ambassador had several one-on-one interviews with major news outlets at the embassy the last weeks of the month, with Aftenposten, VG and NRK being amongst them. Some of them also attended the Embassy's event "Ensuring a Better Future for Afghanistan Through Solidarity and Support," which also included participation from several influential Norwegian personalities and partner organizations and institutions that have been engaged in Afghanistan. The main focus of the engagements with media outlets was to provide a position where the Ambassador was able to highlight the many humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan and the need for increased and unified international response, in light of the gravity of the situation in the country. The engagements also shed light on the way in which the safety, security and well-being of the people had come under direct threat as a result of continued attacks and violence.



Photo: Helge Mikalsen / VG



Photo: Helge Mikalsen / VG

He also stressed on the need for a verifiable end to the decades long conflict which was only possible with the support of the international community and a comprehensive political settlement that led to the formation of a broad-based government that could represent all of Afghanistan's ethnic groups and different segments of society. Only such a form of inclusive and fully representative administration would be able to help meet the aspirations and expectations of the people. Beyond the nature and composition of the administration alone, the national values of the country which were also embedded with the democratic and other foundational gains of the past two decades would have to be defended and advanced by any future administration that could have the support and endorsement of the people of Afghanistan.

The sustainability of peace in the country was dependent on several factors, especially the degree and extent of the peoples support to the future administration. The safety, protection and well-being of Afghans, including former government officials, members of the national security forces, civil society, women and youth groups, journalists and other advocates was an urgent need that had to be fulfilled and ensured.

The media engagements also included a focus in conveying the message that Afghanistan was a proud and resilient nation with a rich culture and history and which has always been able to overcome the most difficult of challenges throughout its history. The current challenges facing the people demanded the urgent and increased attention and support of the international community. The people of Afghanistan would overcome this difficult phase as they have done so on several occasions throughout history.



The Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Oslo
Accredited to Norway, Denmark and Iceland

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Add. Embassy of Afghanistan, Oslo, Gange - Rolves gate 5
0273 OSLO

Website: www.afghanistanembassy.no
Email: info@afghanistanembassy.no
Tel. + 47 22 12 35 76