Afghanistan: Peace talks should prioritise justice for war victims

(Bangkok/Kathmandu/Kabul, 09 June 2020) – The upcoming intra-Afghan peace talks with the Taliban must seek to bring an end to conflict and impunity in the country.

Following the Afghan government’s announcement on the upcoming intra-Afghan talks,\(^1\) the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and its member organisation the Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN) said that the peace talks should seek justice for war victims, led by the Government of Afghanistan.

‘The conflict between the Afghan government and the Taliban following the U.S. invasion in 2001 has caused a catastrophic human rights crisis in the country. Civilians have lost their lives, grappled with violence and unemployment, and leaving the most vulnerable and marginalised suffering the most,’ the organisations said.

The announcement came after a power-sharing deal was signed between President Ashraf Ghani and political rival Abdullah Abdullah on 17 May, ending the country’s political impasse and raising the prospect for a peace process in the war-torn country.

The High Council for National Reconciliation, chaired by Abdullah, is tasked to lead the negotiations with the Taliban. In the past month, the government announced a ceasefire and the release of Taliban prisoners to pave way for negotiations.

Since 2001, more than 43,000 civilians have been killed in the conflict.\(^2\) In May alone, at least 155 civilians were killed.\(^3\)

The recent attacks against civilians in May that killed 24 women, children and babies in a hospital in Kabul, as well as a suicide bombing which claimed 32 lives in a funeral in Nangarhar province, were among daily occurrences of violence and atrocities.

Also in May, the Taliban announced a three-day ceasefire with the Afghan government during Eid al-Fitr festival, with each side agreeing to respect the terms of the truce. However, the reduction in violence lasted only a few days. Deadly clashes resumed after the Eid ceasefire.

FORUM-ASIA and CSHRN condemn any attack against civilians and urge the Government of Afghanistan to fulfil its responsibility to protect its people and bring perpetrators to justice.

While acknowledging the release of Taliban prisoners as an attempt to pave the way for peace talks, FORUM-ASIA and CSHRN call on the government to ensure that accountability is not compromised in the peace process.

\(^2\) [https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan)
\(^3\) [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-may-2020.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-may-2020.html)

**The Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CShRN)** is a nationwide network of 82 civil society organizations representing broad segments of the Afghan society in Kabul and in four provinces. Our members work in a variety of areas such as women’s rights, transitional justice, radio- and TV production, printed media, but we are all bound together by our common commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and our common determination to promote human rights and to consistently apply rights-based approaches to what we do. [https://cshrn.af/](https://cshrn.af/)

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