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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

### **Written statement\* submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 February 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.

## **REQUESTING THAT THE U.N. RECOGNISE THE ATROCITIES BEING CARRIED OUT AGAINST CHRISTIANS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN AFGHANISTAN AND TAKE ACTION TO END THE VIOLENCE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan, Christians and other religious minorities are at an extreme risk of being killed because of their religious beliefs. The Taliban has a demonstrated history of violence and human rights abuses against Christians and women. According to the U.N. High Commissioner on Human Rights, “Afghanistan’s diverse ethnic and religious minorities are also at risk of violence and repression, given previous patterns of serious violations under Taliban rule and reports of killings and targeted attacks in recent months”(1).

### **2. BACKGROUND**

The situation for Christians has become so dangerous under Taliban rule that in its 2022 World Watch List, Open Doors listed Afghanistan as the worst place for Christians to live in the entire world(2). This is the first time in years that another nation has exceeded North Korea’s persecution level on this list – not because of any improvement in the human rights plight in North Korea, but because the level of religious persecution in Afghanistan has drastically increased in brutality under Taliban rule. Now that the Taliban is back in control, they have promised that their strict punishment and executions will return(3). One of the founders of the Taliban stated that, “Everyone criticized us for the punishments in the stadium . . . No one will tell us what our laws should be. We will follow Islam and we will make our laws on the Quran”(4). Unfortunately, for the Taliban this means brutally murdering religious and ethnic minorities.

In addition to the Taliban, ISIS affiliated groups within Afghanistan also pose a significant threat for Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities. ISIS is also engaged in armed conflict with the Taliban for control and in addition to the atrocities ISIS carries out against civilians, this armed conflict will lead to further loss of innocent lives and contribute to the massive humanitarian crisis(5).

### **3. VIOLATIONS**

In July 2021, the Taliban brutally murdered nine ethnic Hazara men(6). According to an eyewitness six of the men were shot while the other three were tortured to death including one man who was strangled with a scarf and the muscles on his arm sliced off(7). This is a tragic example of the type of atrocities the Taliban is capable of carrying out against religious and ethnic minorities.

On 30 August 2021, Taliban forces killed 13 ethnic Hazaras, nine of who were members of the Afghan National Defence Security Force (ANDSF) and a 17-year-old girl(8). The nine men who were members of the ANDSF surrendered to the Taliban but were promptly taken to a nearby river basin where they were executed(9). This attack directly contradicts the Taliban’s claim that they would not take retaliatory measures against members of the former regime.

The Taliban also targets the general population, especially those who are suspected of aiding US forces or the previous Afghan government(10). These individuals live in constant fear that the Taliban could raid their home, killing them and their family(11). During one manhunt, in which the Taliban went door to door to find individuals who helped the US or the previous Afghan administration, 16 family members hid in their bathroom and covered

the mouths of their children to keep quiet. One family member stated, “My family is in fear. Every second they see a car pass up the road, they run to the washroom”(12).

It has also been reported that Christians are being targeted simply for having the Bible on their phone(13). Pastors have even been sent messages from the Taliban and were told to stop holding religious gatherings in their homes(14).

In another case, an uncle who was related to a Christian family was brutally killed by the Taliban(15). According to a report, when the Christian family refused to renounce their Christian faith, the Taliban took their uncle and proceeded to skin him alive before hanging him on a pole to die.

As previously stated, ISIS affiliated groups also pose a significant threat in Afghanistan. While they are locked in conflict with the Taliban over control of Afghanistan, they remain committed to carrying out mass atrocities. In May of 2020, an ISIS affiliate carried out an attack at a maternity ward which resulted in the death of 24 people including infants and mothers(16). According to one woman who survived the attack, “They all entered and started shooting. It was horrific. The windows were shattered. Everyone was running, and I was able to get out with my baby”(17). According to a U.S. official, ISIS “has demonstrated a pattern for favoring these types of heinous attacks against civilians and is a threat to the Afghan people and to the world”(18).

In September 2021, ISIS killed four Christian men as they were traveling to escape the country(19). According to reports, “ISIS asked them, ‘we have tape about you that you are no longer Muslims. So is it true that you are not Muslim?’ They said, ‘Yes, we are not Muslims anymore. We are Christians.’ So the men of this family were killed at the spot. The children and women, they let them go”(20).

There are also troubling reports of families being forced to sell their daughters just to be able to survive(21). According to one report, a man was forced to sell his 9-year-old daughter to a 55-year-old man for the equivalent of roughly \$2,200(22). This is a result of the Taliban takeover which has created a massive humanitarian crisis leaving many without food and basic necessities(23). According to a human rights activist, “Day by day, the numbers are increasing of families selling their children . . . Lack of food, lack of work, the families feel they have to do this”(24).

Our contact, Victor Marx of All Things Possible Ministries, whose network has directly participated in the rescue of 5,000 people out of Afghanistan, including rescuing an at-risk Christian family of eight(25), confirms that “men, women and children are subjugated, beaten, and executed for their beliefs that differ from the tyrannical Taliban”.

#### 4. REQUEST

Clearly, horrific acts of aggression are violating the peaceful lives of Afghan civilians including Christians and religious minorities. In order to prevent further loss of life, to end religious motivated violence, and to address the massive humanitarian crisis that will ensue, we must act now. The international community must not turn a blind eye to these atrocities, or worse yet, partner with the Taliban as it continues its rampage of violence and human rights violations. We urge world leaders to demand access to Afghanistan and report on what is truly happening on the ground. The international community must also work to provide security, shelter, aid, and ensure that the most basic of human rights are secured for beleaguered communities, especially religious minorities.

We have seen in Iraq and Syria what happens when the U.N. fails to take preventative measures when it is clear that mass atrocities are being carried out against a particular group of people. In keeping with the very basic mandates of the U.N. charter, the world must not allow a full-scale genocide to perpetuate. This is only the beginning, if meaningful action is not taken now, the problem in Afghanistan will only worsen.

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