

From:	(b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>
To:	George, Suzy <(b)(6)> S_SpecialAssistants <S_SpecialAssistants@state.gov>
CC:	(b)(6) <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject:	Re: NGO Letter in Support of a U.S. Peacebuilding Strategy for Afghanistan
Date:	Sun, 1 Aug 2021 13:10:36 +0000

Copy, will do. Thanks!

From: George, Suzy <(b)(6)>
Sent: Sunday, August 1, 2021 8:59:40 AM
To: S_SpecialAssistants <S_SpecialAssistants@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)
Subject: FW: NGO Letter in Support of a U.S. Peacebuilding Strategy for Afghanistan

Not sure if others at State received this so sharing in case useful to pass along. TY.

From: Megan Corrado <(b)(6)>
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2021 2:25 PM
To: Megan Corrado <(b)(6)>
Subject: NGO Letter in Support of a U.S. Peacebuilding Strategy for Afghanistan

Dear Secretary Blinken and Administrator Power,

The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP)—the leading nonpartisan global network of 150+ member organizations working in 181 countries to end violent conflict and build sustainable peace—and the 37 undersigned organizations urge the U.S. Department of State and USAID to immediately articulate a comprehensive diplomatic, development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian strategy for Afghanistan. Attached and below please find a letter outlining recommendations for a long-term strategic vision to prevent the increasingly deteriorating security situation from further devolving into intractable violent conflict.

This withdrawal comes at a precarious moment in Afghanistan—one that requires consideration of its implications on the stalled peace process, protection of the tremendous gains of Afghan women, girls, and minorities, and potential humanitarian and refugee crises leading to regional destabilization. We urge you to support efforts to transform the intra-Afghan peace talks from a conversation on shifting the balance of power to a people-focused dialogue on creating durable peace; advance the Women, Peace, and Security and atrocities prevention agendas; protect the lives and livelihoods of Afghan women and girls, youth, minorities, and U.S. partners; provide flexible funding for peacebuilding assistance that complements humanitarian and development efforts; and spearhead efforts to reconfigure the international refugee framework to assist Afghans fleeing violence.

As the clock runs out on the U.S. security presence in Afghanistan, the time is now for the U.S. to articulate a long-term strategy that identifies how sustained U.S. engagement will protect

against protracted violent conflict, a refugee crisis, and regional destabilization, while promoting national security and strategic interests.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss further recommendations to save lives, reduce violence, and promote U.S. interests through our engagement in Afghanistan. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kindly,
Megan



Megan E. Corrado

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Secretary of State Antony Blinken

U.S. Department of State

2201 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20520

Administrator Samantha Power

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Blinken and Administrator Power,

The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP)—the leading nonpartisan global network of 140+ member organizations working in 181 countries to end violent conflict and build sustainable peace—and the 37 undersigned organizations urge the United States (U.S.) Department of State and USAID to immediately articulate a comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan given the Biden Administration's announcement of an unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. The strategy must ensure robust and sustainable peacebuilding, development, and diplomatic engagement in Afghanistan to prevent the security situation already under threat from the Taliban from further devolving into intractable violent conflict.

This withdrawal comes at a precarious moment in Afghanistan—one that requires consideration of its implications on the stalled peace process, protection of the tremendous gains of Afghan women, girls, and minorities over the last 20 years, and potential humanitarian and refugee crises leading to regional destabilization. As the number of U.S. troops decreases, violence is significantly increasing. The Taliban attacked and surrounded numerous provincial capitals and seized at least 150 districts. Intelligence reports predict Kabul will fall within six months. If the Taliban controls Afghanistan, they will likely return it to the conditions that originally led to the U.S. intervention. Concurrently, persecuted groups, who lack government protection, are forming militias as the Taliban continues to gain territory.

The end of U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan must honor the enormous sacrifice of blood and treasure made by the U.S. and its international and Afghan partners. However, the U.S. reduced critical leverage by accelerating the troop departure and releasing 5,000 Taliban prisoners into Afghan communities without any vetting or tracking process amid the absence of a ceasefire and a stalled peace process. Yet, options exist for the U.S. to (1) refocus people over power in an inclusive peace process; (2) protect and champion Afghan women and girls; (3) provide humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding assistance to local Afghan civil society; and (4) advance an international protection framework to address the potential refugee crisis. Without immediate action, a return to Taliban rule will have catastrophic consequences for the people of Afghanistan, the region, and the world.

The State Department and USAID must—in coordination with international partners—transform the current intra-Afghan peace talks from a conversation on shifting the balance of power to a people-focused dialogue on creating durable peace. The U.S. and its partners must utilize all available levers of influence to advance the process, but also hold the Taliban to account. The U.S. legitimized the Taliban when it started direct negotiations with them, and it must be

prepared to delegitimize the Taliban if they refuse to commit to a long-term ceasefire and participate in good faith talks. **The U.S. can accomplish this by:**

- Encouraging a multi-stakeholder process through the UN, or other neutral institution, with buy-in from NATO allies, regional neighbors, and other key interested parties.
- Appointing a neutral mediator to prioritize key issues other than power-sharing, such as disarmament, demilitarization, and reintegration and transitional justice.
- Continuing to support the internationally-recognized and constitutionally-elected Afghan government and utilizing all available resources to give it the best negotiating position.
- Working with Afghan and international partners to ensure a long-term ceasefire and violence de-escalation, as well as advancing confidence-building measures, such as a [joint de-escalation committee](#) to investigate violence on the ground.
- Pressuring the Qataris to close their local office, should the Doha process continue, if the Taliban refuses to institute a long-term ceasefire and continues to target Afghan civilians.
- Stopping efforts at the UN to de-list Taliban members from the UN Terror List or relax sanctions, adding additional Taliban members to sanctions lists, refusing to release Taliban prisoners, withholding aid, and ensuring the Taliban's international pariah status.

The return of Taliban rule gravely threatens Afghan civilians, especially women and girls. The State Department and USAID must ensure women's meaningful and equal participation in Afghan society and the peace process as required by the [Women, Peace, and Security \(WPS\) Act](#) of 2017, the 2019 [WPS Strategy](#), and its agency [implementation plans](#). Over the last 20 years, women and girls in Afghanistan have made extraordinary progress after life under the harsh Taliban regime. They are crucial agents of change—as parliamentarians, lawyers, government officials, engineers, teachers, entrepreneurs, and peacebuilders. An entire generation has grown up with rights, but the current situation in Afghanistan now threatens this hard-earned progress. Recent violence, particularly [targeting](#) women and girls, led to Afghanistan's identification as the [second most likely country](#) to experience atrocities. These circumstances could lead to [mass femicide](#) of Afghanistan's women and girls. The return of Taliban rule gravely threatens Afghan women and girls, as well as youth, civil society, and minorities such as the [Hazaras](#).

The [Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#) and the [WPS Act](#), as well as President Biden's commitment to a [foreign policy centered on the defense of democracy and protection of human rights](#) will face a profound test after the withdrawal. **The U.S. must demonstrate its commitment to the WPS and atrocities prevention agendas and the lives and livelihoods of Afghan women and girls by:**

- Using all available levers of diplomatic and development influence to facilitate women's substantive engagement and the realization of WPS principles and establish an interagency action plan that includes specific, time-bound steps to mitigate rising violence against women and girls, ensure meaningful inclusion in the peace process, and protect, monitor, and preserve the rights of women and girls moving forward.
- Cooperating with international stakeholders, deploy inclusive teams with women and gender specialists, including Afghan women, in their delegations and as envoys to center

women's perspectives in peacebuilding initiatives. Employ a senior gender official in the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, which holds the rank of Special Envoy or Deputy Assistant Secretary and reports directly to the Secretary of State or White House and provides bi-annual briefings to Congress.

- Working with the UN to provide a neutral oversight mechanism of the peace process with a gender-inclusive team that includes women from the region that speak local languages and understand Afghan culture.
- Pushing all available diplomatic pressure points through multilateral fora and direct engagement to ensure a multi-stakeholder peacebuilding and political process that meaningfully includes local, women-led organizations.
- Ensuring all strategies for U.S. engagement, particularly on the peace process, include a participatory gender analysis, conducted in consultation with Afghan women and girls.
- Calling on the Atrocity Early Warning Task Force to coordinate efforts to prevent atrocities against women, girls, and minorities and seek the release of emergency aid.

The State Department and USAID must ensure assistance and flexible funding for peacebuilding that goes hand-in-hand with humanitarian and development work in Afghanistan. The U.S. should learn from the lessons of the past, maintain strategic support to its Afghan security partners beyond the days of U.S. boots on the ground, and strive for sustainable assistance from international partners. The needs of the Afghan people will only increase as conflict, drought, and COVID-19 exacerbate challenges accessing basic needs and services. The Administration pledged \$300 million in development assistance for Afghanistan, but it remains unclear as to how these funds will be used. The U.S. must ensure that programming and activities are tailored to the local context. Afghan civil society, particularly women- and youth-led organizations, must receive direct, robust funds, and take part in regular dialogue with the U.S. on their short- and long-term development and humanitarian priorities. **The U.S. can accomplish this by:**

- Seeking at least \$1 billion in development, governance, infrastructure, and economic assistance from Congress and \$5 billion for security assistance to fulfill U.S. obligations of its bilateral security agreement with Afghanistan through 2024 and to enable a successful transition, democratic governance, rule of law, a free press, and human rights.
- Creating a long-term framework for investment in direct local peacebuilding and development through the deployment of agile funding streams that require local partnership in the design, implementation, and monitoring processes.
- Ensuring that assistance and funding gets into the hands of local civil society, peacebuilders, and humanitarian workers, especially considering the significant spike in COVID-19 cases amidst the recent uptick in violence in Afghanistan.
- Ensuring that if any U.S. funding to Afghanistan is conditioned on human rights, women's rights, drug or human trafficking, or terrorism allegations, this does not affect funding to or for Afghan civil society, women and girls, religious and ethnic minorities, and peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts.
- Promoting burden-sharing and multilateralism through a new "Friends of Afghanistan" process and by working closely with the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, foreign governments, philanthropic foundations, and other partners to create a multi-year peace dividend package to stimulate Afghanistan's economy, reduce poverty and unemployment, and create disincentives towards violence and radicalization.

The State Department and USAID must work to prevent a refugee crisis—precipitated by the withdrawal and correlated uptick in violence—that has the potential to exacerbate regional destabilization. Approximately 200,000 civilians in Afghanistan have been displaced internally in 2021, and a spillover of refugees into neighboring Iran and Pakistan is likely to extend to Turkey and the EU. An influx of Afghan refugees across the region may exacerbate the spread of COVID-19 and create a combined migrant and health crisis, in turn undermining the institutions of the EU and its members and strengthening right-wing populism. **The U.S. must reassert “U.S. moral leadership on refugee issues” and spearhead efforts to reconfigure the international framework that deals with Afghan refugees to prevent such a crisis by:**

- Helping to form a global, comprehensive plan to help resettle Afghan refugees, modeling the 1989 Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees, and following refugee burden-sharing principles enshrined in the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees.
- Supporting regional host countries of Afghan refugees to ensure better conditions.
- Encouraging European states to reassess their policies towards Afghan refugees, suspend deportations, respect their human rights, and provide basic services.
- Pressing Turkey to provide Afghans the same rights as Syrian refugees.
- Increasing the number of available Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Afghans, ensuring that Afghans who worked with the U.S. military, government, contractors, and those who received U.S. funds through grants and cooperative agreements, are eligible.
- Creating a fast-track visa and parole program for Afghans facing heightened vulnerability, Afghan women human rights defenders, women leaders with high levels of visibility, and persecuted ethnic minorities.

Failing to accompany the military withdrawal with the aforementioned engagement will not only undo the hard-fought gains made in Afghanistan during the last 20 years, but will also create newfound costs through a security vacuum, the country’s return to an extremist safe haven, a new refugee crisis, and widespread regional and global instability. U.S. disengagement will create space for great power competition with China and Russia and interference by Iran to exert nefarious influence in the region and undermine U.S. strategic and security interests. Preventing these outcomes is more than a moral goal; it will actively promote U.S. national and international security. As the clock runs out on the U.S. security presence in Afghanistan, the time is now for the U.S. to articulate a long-term strategy that identifies how sustained U.S. engagement will protect against protracted violent conflict, a refugee crisis, and regional destabilization, while promoting national security and strategic interests.

Sincerely,

The Alliance for Peacebuilding

The Alliance in Support of the Afghan People (ASAP)

Ayenda Foundation

The Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP)

Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University

Center on Conscience & War

Citizens for Global Solutions

Civilian Peace Service Canada

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

EIHR: The Educators' Institute for Human Rights

Emerita New York University

FHI 360

ForgottenSong

The Fund for Peace

Gender Equality Initiative in International Affairs, Elliott School of International Affairs, GWU

Generations For Peace

Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

Grace Initiative Global

Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women

Institute of World Affairs

International Alert

International Center for Religion & Diplomacy

International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)

The Lamia Afghan Foundation

MENA YPS Coalition

Mina's List

Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc.

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding

Parallel Networks

PartnersGlobal

Pax Christi USA

PRBB Foundation

Romanian Peace Institute — PATRIR

ShelterBox USA

United Nations Association of the National Capital Area

Women's Action for New Directions

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