

UPF Geneva, Switzerland: Politicians and Activists Seek Afghanistan's Way Forward

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June 20, 2024



Geneva, Switzerland – Political figures and NGO representatives met at the United Nations Office in Geneva on June 20, 2024, to address current challenges faced by Afghanistan. UPF-Europe and the Middle East partnered with the Afghan Peace Dialogue movement to host the conference on the theme "Challenges and Perspectives for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan."

Forty-five people attended the event. In the given time, it was not possible to comprehensively evaluate the situation in Afghanistan, let alone offer suggestions for change. But participants expressed the willingness to meet with the current government to discuss issues of leadership and human rights. The citizens of Afghanistan long for real peace, a social life, economic development and good education for their children.



Ms. Carolyn Handschin, president of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women at the United Nations in Geneva and director of the Office of UN Relations of Women's Federation for World Peace

International, moderated the conference.

The introductory presentation was delivered by **Mr. Reza Jafari**, president of the Afghan Peace Dialogue movement. He gave an overview of the current situation in Afghanistan, and proposed solutions for peace, stability and inclusive governance. He also addressed the rise of terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, and the globalization of terrorism.



This was followed by six speakers:

Ms. Shah Gul Rezai, former member of the Afghan Parliament and participant in the Doha peace negotiations, delivered a speech on the importance of women in Afghan governance and highlighted lessons learned from peace negotiations.

Mr. Mohammad Alam Izdyar, former vice president of the Afghan Senate, spoke on "Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights Protection in Afghanistan," stressing the importance of both these factors.

Ms. Shukria Barakzai, former Afghan MP and ambassador to Norway, addressed the topic of "Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan," denouncing gender-based segregation.

General Sami Sadat, former commander of the Afghan National Army Special Operations Corps and president of the United Afghanistan Front, delivered a speech entitled "Youth as Agents of Change for Peace," in which he emphasized the role of youth in shaping the future. He spoke of the abuse of children in madrasas under the Taliban regime and the consequences, not only for these children, but also for Afghan society.

Dr. Rahela Kaveer, representative of the Afghan Peace Dialogue movement, spoke on "The Role of Women in Diplomacy, Education, and Women's Rights for Peace in Afghanistan."

Mr. Musa Arefi, former acting head of the Afghan Embassy in China and representative of the Hazara Society Policy Center, evaluated the transition from Taliban ideology to Taliban governance, explaining how it has transformed Afghanistan.

The conference touched on many challenges facing the people of Afghanistan, including the repression of women (gender apartheid), children's rights, the rise of ISIS and Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, the peace process, and the creation of an inclusive government. The Afghan Peace Dialogue movement strives to give voice to local activists in the country, prioritizing internal perspectives over external prescriptions and recommendations. By presenting a detailed roadmap to the United Nations, the movement emphasizes the importance of implementing fundamental and sustainable solutions to address Afghanistan's current challenges.

In conclusion, Ms. Carolyn Handschin and Mr. Reza Jafari proposed that a full-day event be held this autumn in the same venue, the United Nations Office in Geneva. Participants from all sectors of Afghan society would be invited to discuss solutions for peace, the creation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan, and how to implement a roadmap for the country.

By Reza Jafari, President, Afghan Peace Dialogue and Patrick Jouan, Vice President, UPF-France