

Kabul, 26 January 2018

PRESS RELEASE: NGO-community Afghanistan calls for action to ensure the protection of aid workers following the attack on Non-Governmental Organizations in Jalalabad

We, the 67 undersigned National and International Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), members of Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), condemn in the strongest terms the atrocious attack on NGO offices in Jalalabad (Nangarhar) on Wednesday 24 January. It has been reported that there is a loss of at least 7 lives, more than 31 people injured, including five children. We would like to pass our condolences to the families of the victims of this atrocious attack.

NGOs in Afghanistan are often the first line of response for those in need. In 2017, through the support of NGOs alongside other humanitarian actors, well over 3.4 million people across Afghanistan received food, water, shelter and other life-saving assistance to meet their most basic needs¹.

“It is of the utmost importance that NGOs are able to act in circumstances of extreme humanitarian need, including in situations of armed conflict, with the assurance that their personnel, their property, and their activities will not be directly or indirectly attacked”, states Fiona Gall, director of ACBAR.

Such an atrocious attack is a clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. We therefore demand a rapid, independent and transparent investigation into how and why this incident occurred.

This is not an isolated incident. Attacks on humanitarian workers are a common occurrence in Afghanistan. Over the last year, there have been 156 attacks on aid workers committed by actors involved in the current conflict. This includes 17 aid workers who have been killed as they attempted to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance including food, safe drinking water and healthcare to those most in need.

Attacks on humanitarian actors are attacks on the people we are trying to serve. Ultimately, any attack, intimidation, violence or threat against aid workers will result in delays in aid implementation or even the withdrawal of aid altogether - negatively impacting the welfare of the most vulnerable people of Afghanistan.

The provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance is a neutral act, protected under International Humanitarian Law. We call on all parties to the Afghan conflict to respect the neutrality of NGOs, their staff and their facilities, as well as to respect International Humanitarian Law, which provides protection to aid workers and civilians.

“Across the world, the number of violent attacks against aid workers is increasing. It is taking place in a context of “normalization” of the use of violence against civilians and aid workers in conflicts settings. It is an overall erosion of respect humanity and humanitarian work”, says Kinga Komorowska (Country Director, Action Against Hunger).

Despite the United Nations Security Resolution 2175 (2014) condemning all attacks on aid workers, a culture of impunity continues to exist. Following discussions at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, as NGOs operating in Afghanistan, we re-emphasise the need for all actors to respect International Humanitarian Law and to condemn all attacks on aid workers and civilians. As a concrete commitment to the protection of all aid workers, we call upon the international system to explore legal and judicial mechanisms to ensure protection of our staff from violence, as well as accountability after violence has been perpetrated, with the introduction of a Special Representative for Strengthening the Protection of Aid Workers.

Concrete action is needed to ensure protection of all aid-workers as we, the NGO-community in Afghanistan continue in our work to support those most in need in Afghanistan

¹ OCHA HRP 2017 3rd quarter review

Signatories:

AAA	Action Aid Afghanistan
AABRAR	Afghan Amputee Bicyclists For Rehabilitation And Recreation
AADRO	Afghan Australian Development and Rehabilitation Organization
ACF	Action Against Hunger
ACKU	Afghanistan Center at Kabul University
ACTED	Agence d'aide a la Cooperation Technique et au Development
ADA	Afghanistan Development Association
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency International
AfghanAid	Afghanaid
AFRANE	Amitie Franco-Afghane
AHDAA	Agency For Humanitarian and Development Assistance For Afghanistan
AHDS	Afghan Health and Development Services
AOAD	Accessibility Organization For Afghan Disable
ASAARO	Afghan Social And Agriculture Affairs Rehabilitation Organization
AWRC	Afghan Women's Resource Center
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CARITAS GERMANY	Caritas Germany
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
CoAR	Coordination of Afghan Relief
Cordaid	Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid
CWW	Concern World Wide
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DAO	Development and Ability Organization
DCA	Dutch Committee for Afghanistan
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FRDO	Female Rehabilitation And Development Organization
GERES	Group for the Environment, Renewable Energy and Solidarity
GNI	Good Neighbours International
GWO	Green Way Organization
HI	Handicap International
HIHAO	Hand In Hand Afghanistan Organization
HTAC	Help The Afghan Children
IMC	International Medical Corps
INTERSOS	Intersos
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JUH	The Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe
JVC	Japan International Volunteer Center
LC	La Chaine de Espoir
MADERA	Mission d' Aid au Development des Economies Rurales Programme Afghanistan
ME	Mission East
MCA	Mercy Corps Afghanistan

MEDAIR	MEDAIR
NAC	Norwegian Afghanistan Committee
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OPM	Operation Mercy
OXFAM	Oxfam
PARSA	Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation and Support for Afghanistan
PIN	People In Need
PU-AMI	Première Urgence - Aide Medicale Internationale
RI	Relief International
RRAA	Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SCI	Save the Children
SDO	Sanayee Development Organization
SERVE	Serving Emergency Relief and Vocational Enterprises
SI	Solidarity International
SVA	Shanti Volunteer Association
TACT	Today's Afghanistan Conciliation Trust
TCOW	The Children Of War
TdH	Terre Des Hommes
TEO	Tashabos Educational Organization
THRA	Training Human Rights Association for Afghan Women
THT	The HALO Trust
WCC	War Child Canada
WF	Womanity Foundation
WHH	Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V.
ZOA	Zoa Refugee Care