



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

Mr. Naseer Ahmad FAIQ

**Chargé d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of
Afghanistan to the United Nations**

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At the outset, I would like to thank India for convening us today and for the excellent stewardship of the Council for the Month of December.

I would like to thank the briefers, Ms. Roza Otunbayev, Special Representative of Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Coordinator for their briefings as well as Ms. Mahbouba Seraj for her candid and frank remarks on behalf of Afghan women. I also want to thank the UN Secretary-General for his report. Allow me to express my appreciation to outgoing members of the Council-India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway for their constant and persistent support and solidarity to the People of Afghanistan, particularly Norway as penholder of Afghanistan file. Taking this opportunity, I also want to support and welcome in advance the expression of interest by UAE and Japan for taking over co-penholdership of Afghanistan pen.

I also express my condolences to and prayers with victims and families of who lost their lives in yesterday's incident at Salang Tunnel. The cause of incident and the number of fatalities is not confirmed yet due to restrictions of media.

I regret to begin my remarks with the very unfortunate news about the Taliban's directive – just announced – banning all women from attending universities throughout Afghanistan.

As if the situation wasn't dire enough, this announcement now marks a new low - in violation of the most fundamental and universal human rights for all of humanity.

Madam President,

Once again, we are meeting in this Chamber to assess the situation in Afghanistan and yet after 16 months forced takeover of power by the Taliban, there is no hope for a positive change and progress in the overall social, economic, security and political situation in Afghanistan. This is largely due to the Taliban's failure to address the current crisis, break the impasse and engage constructively to respond to national and international calls for fair, responsible, inclusive system of governance, policies that respect human rights and dignity, rightful inclusion of women in all aspects of society and counter-terrorism efforts—all things that they promised to the world and to the people of Afghanistan.

Instead, the de facto authorities have returned to draconian, cruel and inhumane practices of their past rule. Last month, they ordered Afghan judges to enforce their hardline interpretation of Sharia law, including whipping, amputation, and public executions. Last week, the Taliban publicly flogged more than a dozen men and women they deemed guilty of "moral crimes" in Parwan and Farah provinces. One such crime involved a woman going shopping alone, without a male chaperone. In Farah province, the de facto authorities recently carried out the execution of an alleged murderer in front of hundreds of spectators. Yet, there is no transparency in the judicial system to support the rights of individual accused of such crimes. The judicial and legal system that was reformed and improved since 2003 are no longer functional. The Taliban speak about making amendments to various laws of the country, but they have not been able to publish any official gazette introducing new laws.

They also continue to suppress freedom of speech and media through arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly targeting women protesting against hardline oppressive measures and their critics. By the same token, credible reports inform the detention and torture of thousands of people, particularly from former security forces and specific ethnic groups under accusations of having connections with armed groups and Northern Resistance Front(NRF). There have been also reports about collective punishment and forced displacement of people from their houses and farms in some provinces such as Sare Pol, Baghlan, Badakhshan and Panjshir.

Above all, despite repeated assurances over the last sixteen months, girls across Afghanistan remain barred from receiving their secondary school education, and women are refused their fundamental rights to employment and political participation. Respecting the foundational elements of human rights and embracing the political, social and civil rights of all Afghans including participation of women and girls in all facets of society should be a non-negotiable prerequisite for any engagement; Let me reiterate that oppression of people including women is not embedded in Afghan culture, nor is it a tenet of Islam. It is a component of the Taliban's extremist ideology, and it must not be allowed to continue.

The Taliban is also re-designing school curriculums removing cultural and modern arts and instead increasing religious studies with radical ideologies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is seriously concerning as this will shape the behaviors and beliefs of future generations and will lead to radicalization and extremism. In addition, this is an attempt to systematically eliminate historic, social and cultural values.

In a recent public statement, the acting minister of higher education of Taliban stated that the academic degree of Taliban should be graded based upon number of explosive and mines one engaged.

Furthermore, in the current system of governance, there is no inclusivity in political or technical positions. Taliban are not willing to hire people with professional and technical backgrounds in the government positions. Almost all of the very technical positions are distributed among the members of Taliban who only have knowledge of religion and share the same ideologies as Taliban. Young, educated people, including former civil servants and professionals, are either dismissed or unemployed. The Taliban's policies are forcing human capital to leave the country.

Meanwhile, the security situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. Concerns that Afghanistan will become a safe haven for violent extremists have not been addressed, and the frequency and sophistication of attacks by terrorist groups such as ISKP are rising. Diplomatic staff and premises, public and worship places such as, educational centers are subject to targeted terrorist attacks and religious and ethnic minorities including Hazaras, Siks, Hindus as well as foreign nationals are not safe. Just last week, several unidentified gunmen attacked a Kabul hotel whose guests are mostly foreigners, including Chinese nationals. The crime rates including kidnaping, targeted and mysterious killings of former security forces have risen in the big cities. Many of these incidents are not reported due to censorship and restrictions on media. The culture of impunity must be ended and the perpetrators of these heinous human rights crimes must be held accountable. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the UNAMA have a responsibility to monitor and report to the Council.

Madam President,

The humanitarian and economic situation is still concerning and far from recovery. Despite the alleged increase of domestic revenue and some good economic activities mainly by the private sector, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance will increase from 24 to 28 million people next year as reflected in the Secretary-General's report. The poverty rate is increasing and the influx of refugees and migrants continues. There are reports of young people committing suicide due to poverty and economic problems.

While the donors continue to cover the costs of essential services and provide humanitarian aid, Taliban are consolidating their rulings by collecting national revenue. There is no accountability and transparency in place with regard to the use of these domestic incomes and revenues. There are reports in some provinces about the poor quality of the humanitarian aid distributed to the people and that the Taliban is using its influence to divert aid to particular provinces on their own whims. This can and should be avoided through strict monitoring and reporting mechanisms by donors and the UN country team.

Humanitarian assistance is more important than ever in this winter season, and we must ensure both the quality of the aid being provided and that the aid is being distributed to the most vulnerable groups equally and without any hinderance across the country.

We are grateful to the donor countries and other international partners' diligent and continued efforts to provide funding and humanitarian support to the people of Afghanistan, including the recent Security Council resolutions allowing for the continuation of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and the exemption of humanitarian aid from sanctions. We also welcome the transfer of \$3.5 billion in frozen assets to the newly established Fund for the Afghan People and we hope that these funds, the national reserves of Afghanistan, will be used by a legitimate government with strict, transparent monitoring for the long-term benefit of the Afghan people, not for humanitarian aid. While aid is a critical necessity and a priority in the short term, it is merely a bandage on a bullet wound—it is not a sustainable solution to the problems that the people of Afghanistan face. We must commit ourselves to finding a long-term solution that will reduce the need for aid in the future through an accountable and legitimate system of governance. However, I would like to reiterate that any types of development cooperation require a legitimate and representative system in Afghanistan, one that embraces the will and ownership of the people and ensures transparency and effectiveness on all aspects of national development planning and budget execution.

Madam President,

Against this backdrop, the current status quo and the uncertainty about the future has frustrated the Afghan people, the region and the international community. It is time that the international community, regional countries, international donors and Afghans inside and abroad come together to resume political settlement talks. This dialogue should aim for political stability, national unity and a permanent peace in a stable and democratic Afghanistan. We must have a

renewed focus on the political component of the crisis - in addition to efforts being rendered on the humanitarian situation and issue of human rights.

Lessons learned from the Doha process should help us create the blue print of a new process for Afghan talks and the main goal should be to place Afghan peoples' interest at the front and center. We must remember that Afghans are only welcoming engagement of those political figures who are not among the corrupt and criminal members of the former governments of Afghanistan. These talks should include the Afghan figures who are politically active, credible and well-known for their clean backgrounds. We have a mandate as members of the UN to make sure that we are not strengthening a system that is taking Afghanistan backward.

Moreover, we call on this Council to display the unity and consensus that is needed in the way forward for the restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan. I also would like to call on the UN Secretary General to take immediate action on addressing the situation in Afghanistan. One proposal for consideration might be the appointment of a high-level panel of Eminent Persons or a group of Eminent Persons to come up with a holistic, comprehensive and sustainable solution to address the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that only a genuine national dialogue that embraces the will and aspirations of the people can lead us toward a truly representative and inclusive future. The UN must take the lead on facilitating and generating this dialogue, and the support and consensus of the international community, and this Council in particular, is vital to achieving this objective.

I thank you.