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To: All Sections
Regional teams
Crisis Response and Campaign Coordinators in all sections
Ran Coordinators
From: Crisis Response team

22/12-01

Date: 9 November 2001

Human Rights Agenda for Afghanistan

Summary

Human rights have been ignored by those in power and those seeking power in Afghanistan for far too long. Human rights abuses both current and past underscore the need to remedy this situation in any future peace process. Human rights should not just be on the political agenda for Afghanistan – human rights must become *the* agenda.

Over the past two decades, the people of Afghanistan have been subjected to grave human rights abuses perpetrated by their own governments, foreign forces and armed groups supported by foreign states, and other political organizations.

It is essential that an agenda for human rights and social justice for all Afghans is developed on the basis of broad consultation and participation by the widest possible cross section of Afghan society. The UN has a substantive part to play in facilitating this process.

This circular outlines AI's campaigning strategy on making Human Rights the Agenda in Afghanistan. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the main report on Afghanistan - *Afghanistan: Making Human Rights the Agenda*; ASA 11/023/2001, (hereafter called *The Report*)

This circular contains a summary of the detailed recommendations contained in *Afghanistan: Making Human Rights the Agenda* (ASA 11/023/2001) which we have compacted into a shorter list of recommendations which can be used in lobbying, publicity and letter writing by Sections and members. The text of *The Agenda* (asa 11/028/2001) is attached in two formats. A brief list of materials on Afghanistan available from the IS or the 11 September Crisis Response database is also attached. *The Agenda* is part of our Crisis Response Strategy on Afghanistan.

Keywords

CRISIS RESPONSE ACTIONS / HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS / RECOMMENDED ACTIONS / OUTREACH /

GOALS

This action has been prepared in the context of Crisis Response, it is however designed for long term work on Afghanistan

✓The goal of this action is first and foremost to push for Human Rights to be at the core of any post-conflict Afghanistan and in order to help achieve this that Amnesty International's ***Human Rights Agenda for Afghanistan*** is promoted and discussed.

✓Although we have no means of knowing when the current armed conflict in Afghanistan will end, ***The Agenda*** is seen as a way of ensuring that the future is looked at now and human rights are at the centre of that future

The Agenda

The Agenda is primarily a lobbying and promotional tool to be used in conjunction with ***The Report*** and to be used for outreach, education and forming links.

☆Copies of the Ten Point ***Human Rights Agenda for Afghanistan*** are attached at the end of this Action circular. ***The Agenda*** is an external document and should be detached from this main Action Circular and distributed as widely as possible. It can be copied and duplicated.

Recommended Actions

✓Where there is an Afghanistan Coordinator or Co-group please liaise with them before embarking on outreach work as they may have special expertise and contacts that are of use.

Outreach and Promotion

☆ ***The Agenda*** and ***Report*** should be seen as a tool to move forward the debate and discussion on Afghanistan and to ensure that human rights at the forefront of any such discussion.

☆It is essential that ***The Agenda*** is promoted and distributed as widely as possible. Use it to publicise AI's messages as well as a way of reaching out to other NGOs.

☆ Those with a particular interest in ***The Report*** may include media, politicians, opinion makers, human rights, women's and development organizations, schools, colleges,

academics, and others. **The Agenda** should be seen as a summary of a work in progress to which we welcome comments and suggestions.

☆ **The Agenda** and the accompanying **Report** covers a number of groups in Afghanistan including women who have faced severe systematic discrimination. For this reason you may want to approach women's groups with copies of **The Agenda** and **The Report**. A dialogue could be started with such groups and their concerns and ideas could be then fed back into the IS.

☆ Where relevant, draw the attention of the public to the web site actions on Afghanistan and invite them to join Amnesty or to visit the website and take action there.

☆ For particular audiences you may want to draw upon the more detailed recommendations in **The Report** and in other AI documents as they are produced.

Community Outreach

☆ Use **The Agenda** and **The Report** as a way of building links in your country with NGOs, community groups and other groups that are actively interested in the situation in Afghanistan. Groups may include women's groups, refugee groups, children's groups, anti-mine groups and others.

Links may have already been forged between your section or structure and local NGOs. (You might have already given them copies of **The Report** or cooperated in actions or events.) **The Agenda** is a good way of developing those links and following up your previous contacts and could be used as a basis for common understanding.

It may be used to further the debate on Afghanistan and move discussions on towards a discussion of a post - conflict Afghanistan.

It may also serve as a basis for discussion with NGOs who have taken a different line to AI regarding the legitimacy of military action. It serves to develop a non-partisan and impartial argument on the need for human rights to be at the core of any post conflict Afghanistan.

☆ **The Agenda** may be something that other NGOS are able to work on or promote amongst their own contacts.

Outreach to the Afghan Diaspora

☆ AI is particularly interested in consulting with and engaging the Afghan diaspora community, including Afghan women's organizations, in a discussion about **The Agenda**. We would like feedback from them about what they think about the points summarised in **The Agenda** and what they feel should be the key priorities. Efforts by sections in this regard will parallel work being done by our mission in the region, and by the IS more broadly.

☆ It will be important to send feedback on such consultation to the Crisis team or the Afghanistan team at the I.S (see page 8)

☆The first step is to distribute ***The Agenda*** to organizations and groups within the Afghan community in your country, along with a cover letter.

☆Following this, please try to set up meetings with Afghan organizations. In these meetings, please ask the organizations for their input on each of the recommendations in ***The Agenda***.

Try to ask questions about how the organizations see the practical implementation of relevant points, for example, how does one ensure the full participation of women and what does this mean; what should be the nature of the involvement of the international community in rebuilding Afghanistan; and what type of mechanisms would be appropriate for combatting impunity and what do they see as the time-frame for this.

☆Once you have established contacts and knowledge about the Afghan diaspora in your country, it may be possible to organize or co-sponsor a public event in which ***The Agenda***, and the human rights situation in Afghanistan are discussed.

☆In your outreach efforts, please note the political nature of many Afghan groups. Please be aware that there are sometimes political differences and splits between the various groups within a country. This may make a public meeting involving different groups difficult.

Please also make sure that you clarify the limits of AI's mandate and that, although we want to engage the organizations in a dialogue, we may not be able to support all their points.

Outreach to Muslim and other groups

☆If possible use ***The Agenda*** as well as other crisis publications as a tool for outreach to Muslim and other groups in your country. We are preparing a document which will give some ideas for outreach and work with such groups. This document should be out in the next few weeks. Once it is published please refer to it for specific advice.

Letter writing to home governments and lobbying

*We want governments to hear the messages within ***The Agenda*** as loudly as possible.*

☆ ***The Report*** states that the international community and the United Nations have a responsibility to assist in the re-building of Afghanistan. ***The Report*** and ***The Agenda*** may be used to lobby and influence member states plans for Afghanistan's future.

You should use ***The Agenda*** as well as ***The Report*** to lobby your governments. Distribute copies of ***The Agenda*** and ***The Report*** to your governments and contacts within your governments. Send copies of ***The Report*** to governments but use ***The Agenda*** to develop mass appeals to government officials and others emphasising key points.

☆ Please write, to the offices of your government and encourage others to appeal to them to ensure human rights are at the centre of any post conflict Afghanistan. In your letters draw upon the points in ***The Agenda*** as well as - where possible - the more detailed recommendations made in ***The Report***. In your letters, urge them to do the following;

- raise the key points in ***The Agenda*** in any international fora they are involved in
- publicly state that human rights must be at the heart of any discussion on the future of Afghanistan
- ensure that the principles in ***The Agenda*** are adhered to in their international relations and diplomacy, including in relation to arms transfers and humanitarian aid, and assisting refugees
- take action to ensure that human rights are central to any peace negotiations and any settlement on a post-conflict Afghanistan
- remember that respect for human rights will be crucial if a long term settlement is to work.

You may write to

- Local Members of Parliament or Members of Congress or similar elected/appointed representatives
- The Prime Minister / President / Head of State
- Foreign Office / Foreign Affairs Committee or similar bodies

Second Government Lobbying

☆ If your country has Embassies of those states engaged in the armed conflict such as the United States of America or the United Kingdom, then you should distribute copies of ***The Agenda*** to the Embassies.

☆ You may also send copies of ***The Agenda*** to Embassies of those states currently in the United Nations Security Council (United States of America, China, France, United Kingdom, Russian Federation are the five permanent members and currently there are ten additional two year members: Bangladesh, Mali, Ukraine, Jamaica, Tunisia, Colombia, Mauritius, Ireland, Norway, Singapore).

☆ Copies can also be sent to Embassies of member states of the "six plus two" group which is a special grouping of the six neighbouring states of Afghanistan plus the United States and The Russian Federation (the neighbouring states are: Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, China, Iran)

☆ You may raise the following points in your approaches to the relevant Embassies - which may involve letters or visits;

- raise the key points in ***The Agenda*** in any international fora they are involved in
- publicly state that human rights must be at the heart of any discussion on the future of Afghanistan
- ensure that the principles in ***The Agenda*** are adhered to in their international relations and diplomacy, including in relation to arms transfers and humanitarian aid, and assisting refugees.

- take action to ensure that human rights are central to any peace negotiations and any settlement on a post-conflict Afghanistan
- remember that respect for human rights will be crucial if a long term settlement is to work.

☆ Monitor and use statements issued by those states in your letters and approaches.

Media Work and Publicity

☆ Use ***The Agenda*** as a way of publicising Amnesty's concerns by adapting it into a poster, or reducing it into a small sheet which could be included in mailings or distributed in relevant places such as community halls, appropriate places of worship, libraries etc

Web Actions

☆ Log onto your home governments web sites if available and monitor their statements. Some governments have specific sections on the current conflict and "war against terrorism". Many such web sites have email addresses for comments or chat rooms. You could use these sites to raise the points in ***The Agenda*** and using the language of the government's own statements ask them to remember to address human rights in all aspects of their work on the conflict. You might even be able to post the text of ***The Agenda*** onto such a site.

☆ A public form of the Action Circular will be made available on the web at www.amnesty.org. Downloadable copies of ***The Agenda*** will also be on the Website.

Actions and Events

☆ Use ***The Agenda*** as a basis for group level letter writing activities or a petition

☆ Link into national and international holidays or days of significance and highlight the need for human rights to be at the heart of any settlement in Afghanistan

Remember you can join in marches and demonstrations calling for Peace as long as your presence there is to highlight Amnesty's message of the importance of putting human rights first and ensure that it is clear that Amnesty International is not calling for an end to the war.

Further Action on Afghanistan

☆ As mentioned above, ***The Agenda*** should be seen as forming the basis of long term campaigning work by the global membership on Afghanistan.

Current Situation in Afghanistan

Although the situation in Afghanistan remains one of conflict, it is important to begin to focus on the long term future of Afghanistan. ***The Agenda*** is designed to start doing this. In the meantime you may be asked about certain aspects of the armed conflict. Below are some key points which have appeared in external AI materials such as press releases and which you may find useful in discussing the current situation or pointing out AI's concerns;

Amnesty International does not judge whether recourse to force by anyone is justified and therefore takes no position on the legal or moral basis for the military action undertaken by the USA and its allies in Afghanistan, or on the armed conflict that preceded US-led involvement in the conflict.

- * civilians must not be directly targeted by military action;
- * military actions which do not distinguish between civilians and military targets or risk disproportionate civilian casualties should be stopped;
- * all military attacks which result in civilian deaths should be urgently investigated;
- * all parties to the conflict must facilitate the passage of essential relief supplies for the civilian population;
- * all governments must share responsibility for the protection and assistance of Afghan refugees;
- * military commanders must take effective action to prevent serious abuses including unlawful killings, rape and arbitrary detention;
- * weapons or training must not be provided to those who have been responsible for human rights abuses nor those likely to commit such abuses;
- * cluster bombs and anti-personnel mines should not be used;
- * all parties to the conflict must ensure that they do not recruit or deploy anyone under 18 years of age, existing child soldiers should be demobilized and supported in reintegrating with civilian life.
- * those alleged to be responsible for war crimes should be brought to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards.

Selected materials

"Afghanistan: Making Human Rights the Agenda (1 November 2001, AI index: ASA 11/023/01).

"MSP action circular" (15 October 2001, AI Index: ACT 30/034/2001)

"Amnesty International's position on arms transfers and military aid to Afghanistan" (12 October 2001, AI index: ACT 30/033/2001)

"Afghanistan: Protect Afghan civilians and refugees" (SARAN 06/01, 10 October 2001, AI index 11/017/2001)

"Afghanistan: Protect Afghan civilians and refugees" (October 2001, AI index 11/012/2001)

For further documents on Afghanistan issued in connection with the 11 September crisis, please refer to the 11 September crisis response database, *Justice Not Revenge*.

Details of digital images available

☆ We have a selection of images available on Afghanistan. Some images may be external copyright but we also hope to have some from the field which can be used freely. Please contact the crisis response team for more details.

Background Information

☆ Copyright free map available on <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/afghanistan.html> and is attached at the end of this Circular (*hard copy only*)

Languages Available

☆ ***The Agenda*** text will be available in the following languages from the IS and on the web site

Pushtu, Dari, English, Spanish, French and Arabic

☆ Some funds are available for translating into non-core languages. Contact the crisis response team for more details.

Feedback

✓ Please send feedback to this report in your country to the Crisis Response team at the IS (Virginia Segal, vsegal@amnesty.org; Dominique Muller, dmuller@amnesty.org) or to the Afghanistan team; Signe Poulsen, spoulsen@amnesty.org)

Attached is *The Agenda* in two formats which are to be detached from the main Circular and distributed as widely as possible

Also attached in hard copy is a map of Afghanistan

HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA FOR AFGHANISTAN

Human rights must be central to the negotiation of any settlement to the conflict

The national reconstruction of Afghanistan must include the development of institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. Any political settlement must be based on broad consultation and participation by the widest possible cross section of Afghan society, and must ensure the full protection and meaningful participation of women and all religious and ethnic groups.

Stop human rights abuses

◆ Explicit guarantees must be given for an immediate end to serious abuses such as unlawful killings, including reprisal killings based on ethnic identity, arbitrary detentions, rape, torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

End discrimination against women

◆ Systematic discrimination and violence against women must stop and measures must be taken to ensure full respect for women's fundamental human rights.

Deploy human rights monitors

◆ Effective protection and verification of human rights should be incorporated in any settlement of the conflict. International human rights field monitors should be deployed throughout Afghanistan as soon as possible.

Provide food aid and other humanitarian assistance

◆ All parties should ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

Don't arm human rights abusers

◆ Governments must ensure that transfers of weapons and other military assistance are not used to commit human rights abuses. Disarmament and demining must be important components of any settlement, and must be adequately supported by the international community.

Stop the use of child soldiers

◆ All child soldiers should be demobilized at once. They should be safely returned to their families and communities and fully reintegrated into civilian life.

Protect refugees

◆ Neighbouring countries should keep their borders open to Afghan refugees. The international community should provide full support, in keeping with the principles of solidarity and responsibility-sharing. Groups with special protection needs such as children, the elderly and women should be given particular attention. The voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons is an important part of the process of national reconstruction, but voluntary repatriation must be in accordance with principles of international law.

End impunity

◆ In a post-conflict Afghanistan, there must be a genuine commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights for all by those in positions of leadership. No amnesties, pardons or similar measures should be granted that would prevent the emergence of the truth. Perpetrators of human rights abuses should be brought to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards, and without recourse to the death penalty.

Rebuild the criminal justice system

◆ An independent and impartial expert commission with sufficient resources and specific expertise in women's rights should be established to examine and advise on rebuilding the criminal justice system in Afghanistan in line with international human rights standards.

Provide international support

◆ The UN and the international community must make a serious and long-term commitment to support institution-building and reconstruction in Afghanistan and to ensure that human rights protection and verification have a central place in the process.



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Afghanistan

International boundary
Province boundary
National capital
Province capital
Railroad
Road

0 100 200 Kilometers
0 100 200 Miles
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, SP 12N/28W

