

EU Benchmarks on Engagement with Afghanistan under the Taliban Control

(Where We Stand and the Way Forward-I)

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## Abstract

One month after the collapse of Afghanistan's republic state, the EU in Sep 2021 conditioned its future engagement with the country through five benchmarks on anti-terrorism, human rights and freedom of speech, inclusive and representative government, access to humanitarian aid, and safe passage to those who wished to leave the country. Taking these benchmarks as reference, this paper provides a snapshot of the current socio-political situation of Afghanistan since the regime change on 15 August 2021, and reflects important recommendations, concerns, and demands of Afghan civil society and scholars with respect to the future engagement of the EU with de facto authorities in Kabul.

The paper argues that contrary to the Taliban's claims that they have delivered their promises regarding all these benchmarks, there seems to be zero progress regarding inclusive government and human rights; whilst limited progress regarding the humanitarian aid and safe passage for people whom wish to leave the country. 15 months after the takeover of power by Taliban, Afghanistan is experiencing a totalitarian regime, dominated by one, out of many ethnic groups of the country. A regime that continues to deepen gender apartheid and exclude, discriminate, and suppress other social and political groups. Furthermore, the developments of the past 15 months suggest that the Taliban are neither willing nor capable of fighting terrorism. Afghanistan, under the Taliban's rule, is on the way to become, once again, the most fertile land in the region for the growth and expansion of terrorism, radicalism, and extremism.

Concluding that the current benchmarks require a thorough revision, the paper recommends that the EU adapts a more independent policy-and-decision-making approach and translates the revised benchmarks into clear roadmaps with detailed contingency plans. The paper ends with highlighting some important concerns and demands of the Afghan Diaspora from international community.

*Keywords:* Afghanistan, EU benchmarks, Human Rights, Engagement, Taliban

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## Preamble

More than a year ago in September 2021, the European Union set a series of benchmarks to define the scope of its engagement with the de facto authority of Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>. These were,

- *Afghanistan's soil would not be served as a base for the export of terrorism to other countries;*
- *The respect for human rights, in particular, women's rights, the rule of law, and freedom of the media;*
- *The establishment of an inclusive and representative transitional government through negotiations among political forces in Afghanistan;*
- *Free access for humanitarian aid, respecting EU procedures and conditions for its delivery;*
- *Fulfillment of the Taliban's commitment about the departure of foreign nationals and Afghans at risk, who wish to leave the country.*

The circumstances under which these benchmarks were set were critical. On the one hand, there was an inevitable need for the EU to have some sort of engagement with the Taliban, mainly to be able to evacuate its remaining nationals and local partners from Afghanistan. On the other hand, the international community, including the EU, was under increasing public pressure to avoid any cooperation with a regime that had seized the power through nondemocratic means. Thus, to address both, the EU framed its relations with Afghanistan as an “operational engagement”<sup>2</sup> and set the above-mentioned benchmarks.

Now, almost one and half years after the Taliban takeover of power, we are standing at a critical juncture, where both local and international actors have digested the collapse, learned more or less about Taliban’s actions and policies, and have partly clarified their stance on many critical issues. Thus, taking the benchmarks as a reference point, this paper aims not only at providing a snapshot of the current socio-political situation of Afghanistan, but also at reflecting the views, suggestions, and demands of the country’s civil society’s activists and scholars, mostly in exile, about the scope of EU’s future engagement with the Taliban.

The importance of the topic is that only one year after the Taliban’s takeover of power, almost all civil and political rights of Afghanistan citizens have been either taken away or

unprecedentedly restricted. Surely, actions have been taken<sup>i</sup>; but obviously, they have not been strong and coordinated enough to stop the Taliban, and safeguard at least some of the basic rights and developments that costed the country and the international community thousands of lives and billions of euros over a long period of 20 years.

Taking the above-mentioned EU benchmarks as reference, the paper first provides a summary of the political dynamics in Afghanistan since the Taliban's takeover of power (benchmark no. 3). It then, reviews the major policies and actions of de facto authority regarding the civil society, socio-political rights of Afghanistan citizens—including women rights—and assesses the situation of media and freedom of speech (benchmark no. 2). Next, the paper discusses the situation regarding terrorism and radicalization—defined as the first benchmark of the EU for engagement with Afghanistan under the Taliban control. Moreover, although it is beyond the purpose of the paper, it briefly reflects on the last two benchmarks, i.e. access to humanitarian aid and facilitating the withdrawal of foreign nationals as well as vulnerable Afghans. Finally, following a few recommendations towards the EU and German government regarding future engagement with the Taliban, the paper concludes with highlighting the relevant concerns and demands of the Afghan Diaspora.

The primary data for the paper has been collected, through 10 in-depth interviews conducted during summer 2022, and some follow-ups in Sep-Oct 2022. The interviewees have been civil society actors, academics, and politicians mainly in exile. Furthermore, review of reports from media and observatory organizations, as well as documents—such as orders and statements of the Taliban, statements and decisions of various stakeholders including the UN organizations—since August 2021, has been used as complementary method of data collection.

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<sup>i</sup> e.g., not a single country has politically recognized the Taliban government; the UN sanctions on 135 Taliban members including many of their ministers continue; the Taliban's access to Afghanistan's assets abroad has been blocked; and the development aid to Afghanistan has been halted.

## Political dynamics and Inclusive Government

*[Referring to the Taliban government] it is a single-ethnic government. It doesn't end there. Even from Pashtun ethnicity, their technocrats are not involved. So, a big part of Pashtuns and the whole of other ethnicities are fully excluded. However, Taliban continue to say that they have already formed an inclusive government. But bringing one Uzbek and one Tajik to the cabinet, and having not a single women is nothing but a symbolic representation, and a clear sign of gender apartheid!*

– Int01, Founder and CEO of an Afghan Civil Society Organization, July 2022

The collapse of the state on August 15, 2021, and the consequent takeover of power by the Taliban is marked as a turning point in Afghanistan's political history. After 20 years of international engagement, it was expected that, no matter what, the country's progressive move towards rule of law, democratic governance, and representative state was inevitable. Indeed, paving the way for an "*inclusive and representative government*" was an essential part of both the US-Taliban agreement<sup>3</sup> and the resolution 2513 of the UN Security Council in 2020<sup>4</sup>.

However, because of President Ghani's sudden departure and the collapse of the republic state, the Taliban got much more than what they were bargaining for; and even sooner than they expected. Thus, they saw no reason to take a single step towards power sharing. Yet, both the Afghan citizens and the international actors expected the Taliban keep their promises and, as stated by the EU's third benchmark, take concrete actions towards "*the establishment of an inclusive and representative transitional government through negotiations among political forces in Afghanistan*". Yet, contrary to these expectations, the Taliban continue to stress that their—Pashtun dominated, all men—cabinet is already inclusive<sup>5</sup>, and the issue of representation and inclusivity are solved. Therefore, considering the actions and stance of the Taliban during the past one and half years, the hopes in this regard are dashed. Taliban have refused to initiate or get involved in any meaningful negotiation with other political factions, and Afghanistan faces an authoritarian and lawless regime, which reacts cruelly with its political and ideological opponents. Moreover, the interim fragile government is incapable of building a functioning state and it is certainly far from any form of representative and legitimate governance.

*I am Pashtun; but I am not happy with Taliban. My family and my relatives are not happy with Taliban. If there is a ballot box to choose between Taliban and non-Taliban, people will definitely elect whatever non-Taliban even in South and East of Afghanistan. Taliban are something that is imposed by force and people had to arrange their lives accordingly.*

– Int10, Afghan Youth Activist, August 2022

In the course of the past 15 months, the constitution was suspended. All elected bodies including the country's national assembly and the provincial councils, as well as entities essential for a democratic and representative state, such as the electoral commissions (IEC and IECC), the Independent Commission for Overseeing the Implementation of the Constitution (ICOIC), the State Ministry for Parliamentarian Affairs, the State Ministry for Peace Affairs, the Ministry for Women Affairs, and the Independent Commission for Human Rights, were either shut down or permanently disbanded<sup>6</sup>. Operation of political parties was, thus, put on hold and their existence was deemed “*unnecessary*”<sup>7</sup>.

Experiencing a totalitarian regime, Afghanistan is currently run by a so-called caretaker government, without any indication whatsoever on when and how a transition would take place. Furthermore, as mentioned by most of the interviewees of this paper, the Taliban not only have formed a single ethnic (Pashtun) government in an ethnically diverse country, but also have set exclusion, discrimination, and suppression of other ethnic and political groups, women, young leaders, and educated elites on the top of their political agenda. Contrary to their statements that their government was already inclusive, the announced 30-member cabinet of the Taliban in September 2021 had only three non-Pashtun members, included not a single woman even as deputy, and had no one outside of their own group. All these points bring us to the conclusion that contrary to the expectations of the EU benchmark, an inclusive and representative government stands far away from the current reality on the ground.



## **Civil Society and Freedom of Speech under Taliban's Rule**

*Afghans were fighting for their civil rights. But most of them had to leave the country. Those who have remained can talk or do something only if it is in line with the Taliban policies and interests. Most of the civil society voices have been either silenced or become conservative...close to 300 media are closed and the rest are under extreme censorship and surveillance. We have cases that Taliban come to the media studios and sit there just to give the signal that they are closely watching.*

– Int08, Former Manager of an Afghan Media Outlet, July 2022

Although the EU, in its second benchmark, explicitly requires the guarantee of human rights, women's rights, the rule of law and freedom of expression, at present these are hardly guaranteed. The following is an account of the developments regarding the aforementioned rights.

Talking about Afghan Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), one should not forget that contrary to many other countries, even before the collapse of the republic, the Afghan CSOs owed their existence and development largely to the political and financial support of the international community. As mentioned by almost all interviewees of this paper, following the Taliban's takeover of power in August 2021, all of a sudden, these supports were cut, which in addition to the restrictions imposed by the country's new rulers, led the closure of most of the CSOs and media outlets.

Furthermore, it is extremely important to acknowledge that today's CSOs not only suffer from a lack of financial and political support, but also from insecurity, fear, intimidation, and censorship by the Taliban. Taliban, while benefiting from the humanitarian disaster in the country, pay extra attention to facilitating the operations of the international organizations and those Afghan NGOs accepting to provide their humanitarian services according to the Taliban's mostly verbal Dos and Don'ts. Meanwhile, as Taliban continue to impose strict surveillance on activists as well as CSOs focusing on social, political, and advocacy issues, day by day the situation for this category of civil society is getting worse. These issues, in addition to a general lack of trust—due to a general belief of Afghan citizens that the CSOs neither have the required independency nor

the capability to represent the citizens and their interests—have led to an unprecedented low level of citizens participation in the activities of the remaining local CSOs.

15 months after the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, the country’s civil society is on the brink of collapse. Not only is this due to the Taliban shrinking the civilian space, but also due to the lack of trust of Afghan citizens in the civil society, the absence of motivation, as well as the lack of political and financial support from the international community.

Likewise, freedom of speech and media are tightened severely by the de facto authority. To understand the matter better, one has to acknowledge the Taliban’s system of governance and its perspective toward the citizens. Taliban, overall, believe in the absolute rule of God and that of Islamic Sharia in society. According to their radical and strict interpretation of Islam—which is partly manifested in the “Emirate and the States” book written by the Taliban’s chief Justice and endorsed by their supreme leader—the only and pure system of governance is the Islamic Emirate, in which the *Amir Al-Mu’minin*, translated as the *Ruler of the Faithful*, is the one to whom all have to swear allegiance, and the citizens are his “subjects” who are supposed to only follow and obey; not to criticize; and certainly not to object. Within such a framework, opposition to the Amir may lead to the death sentence. Thus, under a Talibani system of governance as such, the faith of freedom of speech is clear. Taliban, since August 2021, have proved this by showing no tolerance towards any criticism of their social, political, or religious policies.

The crackdown of peaceful protests<sup>8</sup>; forbidding journalists from coverage of demonstrations; arresting, beating, and torturing of journalists<sup>9,10</sup> who have not abided by the rules, or the academics and experts who dared to criticize the Taliban in media; closure of more than 200 media outlets—from around 500 before the Taliban’s takeover of power<sup>11</sup>; stopping of almost all non-governmental print media; suspension of the internet domains of several media organizations<sup>12</sup>; and finally the Taliban leader’s decree warning against “*accusing and criticizing*” the Taliban and their affiliates<sup>13</sup>, which in turn can be used by members of the Taliban to suppress all critical voices, are examples that demonstrate how bad the current situation of media and freedom of speech in Afghanistan is.

## Taliban and Expansion of Terrorism and Radicalism

*The problem is far beyond prevention of terrorism. The main issue is that the current regime is promoting radicalism. They are opening thousands of Madrasas<sup>ii</sup>, staffed with extremist Mullahs<sup>iii</sup>. This will raise a big generation of radicals; and their extremist ideology will be institutionalized.*

- Int07 , Former Afghan UNAMA employee, June 2022

In line with the US-Taliban agreement in Feb 2020<sup>3</sup>, the resolutions 2513<sup>4</sup> and 2593<sup>14</sup> of the UN Security Council, and the EU Council's conclusions in September 2021<sup>1</sup>, the Taliban were expected to prevent the activities of terrorist groups and individuals in Afghanistan. Yet how realistic was this expectation and did the Taliban hold their promise?

As also stated by a former member of the Afghan negotiation team with Taliban “*those familiar with the Taliban's history and mindset find it very naïve to expect the Taliban to eradicate terrorist groups or control their operations*” (Int09, June 2022). There are at least two reasons for such an argument.

First, Taliban by nature is a radical and fundamentalist group, which largely shares the same values and beliefs with other extremist groups in the region, and has always been well connected with them. A few obvious, yet important facts in this regard to bear in mind: the Haqqani<sup>iv</sup> family and network, which has been responsible for some of the deadliest terrorist attacks of the past two decades are currently holding several key ministries of the Taliban cabinet, and form a very powerful fraction of the Taliban; moreover, it was the Taliban that brokered one of the unique talks between the Pakistani government and the Tahrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in June 2022; and it was again under the Taliban rule that on July 2022, the Al-Qaida leader was

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<sup>ii</sup> A *Madrasa* is an Islamic religious school. In Afghanistan-Pakistan area, Madrasas are seminaries where students of different ages, as young as those in the age of elementary school are, go to learn religious education. In the old times, it substituted for regular secondary and higher education. Taliban, as the term literally refers to, are students of Madrasas.

<sup>iii</sup> A Muslim man trained and teaches Islamic Sharia; and is usually the head of a mosque.

<sup>iv</sup> The Haqqani Network is the semi- autonomous forces of Afghan Taliban and a longtime ally of Al Qaeda and Tahrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP), also known as Pakistani Taliban. For further information on the group, you may refer to Clayton Thomas's article, *Terrorist Groups in Afghanistan*, available at <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10604.pdf>.

found comfortably living in one of the most protected areas of Kabul. These and many other examples demonstrate how deep and genuine the connections between the Taliban and other radical groups are. Meanwhile, these facts explain why the expectation that Taliban would disconnect itself from other regionally and globally active extremist groups and would not allow “*export*” of terrorism, is simply unrealistic. In fact, as it was stressed during the Tashkent International Conference (July 25-27, 2022), almost all of Afghanistan's neighbors are deeply concerned that the country has been already transformed into a regional terrorism heaven<sup>15</sup>. Almost all interviewees of this study, as well, share similar concerns. They believe that continuation of the Taliban’s rule and their radical actions such as establishing one *Madrassa* in every mosque—staffed with radical Mullahs teaching a very strict interpretation of Islam and Sharia— will replace the governmental modern schools<sup>16</sup> in many areas of Afghanistan, and lead to the emergence of thousands of radicals that would sooner or later become a problem not only for Afghanistan but also for the international community.

Second, even if we assume that the Taliban would be willing to stop harboring other extremist groups, the deadly terrorist attacks during past 15 months, including the brutal killing and injuring of more than 170 innocent female students of Kaaj educational center in west of Kabul on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2022, clearly indicate that the Taliban are not capable of preventing the growth of terrorism in Afghanistan.

Thus, the EU benchmark that “*Afghanistan's soil would not be served as a base for the export of terrorism to other countries*” does not sound realistic and needs to be revised. Regardless of the rhetoric, Taliban are neither willing nor capable of delivering such a promise. Thanks to them, Afghanistan has already re-transformed into one of the most fertile lands for the growth and expansion of terrorism, radicalism, and extremism. The consequences are already visible at the local and regional levels and, unless the international community—particularly the EU and Germany— takes concrete actions, it will be only a matter of time to directly witness the impacts at the international level.

## Providing Access to Humanitarian Aid and Allowing Free Departures

Following the collapse of the state in Afghanistan and the complete withdrawal of the international military and nonmilitary personnel, thousands of Afghans were added to the already high number of unemployed people in the country, whereas almost all considerable economic activities were halted. This, together with the effects of climate change and natural disasters such as floods and drought pushed around 24.4 million<sup>17</sup> Afghanistan citizens to the edge of death and “*Universal Poverty*”, which means a 97% poverty rate<sup>18</sup>. Thus, the EU, as part of its benchmarks set in Sep 2021, obliged the Taliban to provide “*Free access for humanitarian aid, respecting EU procedures and conditions for its delivery*”. The Taliban—benefiting from the humanitarian disaster in the country—pay extra attention to facilitating the operations of international organizations and those Afghan NGOs, but only under the condition of accepting to provide humanitarian services according to the Taliban’s defined regulations. In addition to the various reports of the locals—which suggest lack of justice and transparency caused by the Taliban in the distribution of aid<sup>19</sup>—the report of the UN aid coordinator in Afghanistan to the UN Security Council in June 2022 suggests “*limited progress*” in the distribution of the aid “*because of resistance by the de-facto authorities*”<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, the UN official raised concerns that the Taliban “*are also increasingly interfering with the delivery of humanitarian aid*” by “*seeking to play a role in the selection of beneficiaries and channeling assistance to people on their own priority lists*” or demanding “*data and information with regards to budget and staffing contracts*”.

Thus, despite the promises of the Taliban, and the increase in the number of organizations distributing the aid, the above-mentioned issues, and the statement of the EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan at the end of his visit in October 2022, urging once again the Taliban to “*refrain from attempts to interfere in or control the delivery of humanitarian assistance*”<sup>21</sup> indicate only a partial achievement of this benchmark.

The last, yet very important, benchmark set by the EU last year was the “*fulfillment of the Taliban’s commitment about the departure of foreign nationals and Afghans at risk, who wish to leave the country*”. While, in the course of the past 15 months, the Taliban have cooperated and facilitated the departure of foreign nationals, and have also stated that they would not prevent Afghans from leaving the country, their actions and policies have directly and indirectly prevented the second group of a smooth departure.

There have been several ways that the Taliban have been hindering departure of Afghans at risk. First, several activists and former employees of the Afghan government institutions, during the interview with the authors, talk about the informal arrangement between the Taliban and Pakistani embassy in Kabul to deny visas for part of the locals who have already been granted humanitarian visas by other countries and now need to legally go to Pakistan to travel towards their destination countries<sup>v</sup>. Moreover, and particularly affecting the women at risk, is the travel ban imposed by the Taliban on single women, or women without *Mahram*—adult male relatives like father, husband, or brother). Finally, and as an indirect method, the Taliban has repeatedly halted the process of issuing passports, which would be essential for anyone wishing to leave the country. This has left thousands of Afghans at risk keep waiting for months, though some are already granted humanitarian visa by other countries. Many of those who were working with organizations of foreign countries and Afghan institutions complain that they need to pay a huge amount of money to obtain a passport and Pakistani visa<sup>22</sup>; an amount that many of the individuals at risk cannot afford. To conclude, though the Taliban have continuously stressed that they have kept their promises of allowing departures from Afghanistan—and indeed they have done so with the foreign nationals—their actions on the ground have led to many challenges for Afghans at risk who need to leave the country immediately.

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<sup>v</sup> One of the interviewees, showed proves of 7 visa rejection by Pakistani embassy in Kabul

## **Recommendations Regarding Future Engagement with the Taliban**

Considering the realities on the ground—of which some mentioned in the above sections—it seems that the EU and Germany have no option rather than adopting a constructive approach and entering into a condition-based engagement. Within such an approach, the official recognition and resumption of the development cooperation would be linked to the steps the de facto regime in Kabul takes towards the demands of the Afghan citizens and the international community. Furthermore, the EU and Germany are recommended to, first, reconsider its reactive approach and acquire a more proactive one. Second, EU and German decision makers may want to acknowledge that a mere following of the United States' decisions and policies on Afghanistan does not necessarily guarantee the interests of the EU or Afghanistan. Surely, the US is considered a very important ally; however, as suggested by some of the interviewees of this paper, after more than 20 years of joint work on both military and civil fronts, the way the US proceeded with its withdrawal from Afghanistan and the dealt with the Taliban—sidelining both Afghan government and the European partners—teaches that the EU and Germany should have a more independent policy-and-decision-making approach on Afghanistan. After all, the consequences of the collapse, be it migration, terrorism, or other issues affect the EU and Germany much faster and stronger than the US.

Second, as it was argued in the previous sections, the benchmarks need to be revised. While the last two benchmarks—relating to humanitarian aid and permitting the departure of Afghans who want to leave—are partly achieved, there is no real progress on the third and second benchmarks—relating to inclusive government and rights. Finally, as also suggested by almost all interviewees of this research, under a Taliban government, the first benchmark through which they are expected to prevent terrorism and extremism, is not achievable.

Third, the EU and Germany need to put their benchmarks into clear frameworks and roadmaps defining what should or could be done by whom and when, with detailed contingency plans. This is also the stage, where Afghan diaspora experts, researchers, and sociopolitical activists can be involved to develop jointly a more realistic framework. .

## **Concerns and Demands of Afghan Diaspora**

Talking with—and reviewing the activities of—several diaspora activists and organizations, below we will provide a summary of the main concerns and demands of these actors towards the international community, in particular, the EU and German government.

First, is on preserving human rights in Afghanistan. As mentioned in the previous sections, ever since Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, violations have overwhelmingly happened against a variety of groups including social and political activists, women and girls, former government employees, and media associates. Reports from both local and international organizations confirm that the Taliban militants have repeatedly committed arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Over the past 15 months, the Afghan Diasporas have raised such issues with relevant organizations, experts, and politicians including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan<sup>23</sup> and Human Rights Council in Geneva. Now, they expect the decision-makers to take concrete actions—for instance, establishing of an accountability mechanism or fact-finding commission, or systematic documentation of human rights violations—to prevent further human rights violations in the country.

Second, the gender apartheid embodied by the Taliban, including banning of girls from secondary education and preventing women from participation in social and political activities have been at the top agenda of all Afghan Diasporas in Germany and across Europe. Afghan diaspora continues to support girls' education in several ways such as launching online education platforms for those deprived of secondary education, assisting girls in obtaining scholarships and continuing their education abroad; and advocating for women rights at the international level. Thus, an important demand of the Afghan CSOs outside of the country is to get the financial and political support of the EU and the German authorities for their education and advocacy efforts.

Third, the mass migration of the educated middle class elites over the past one and half years demonstrates that Taliban have destroyed the hopes and future of the huge segment of the citizens who endeavoured for a society based on democratic values and human rights principles. Before the state collapse, they were striving to turn Afghanistan into a tolerant and diverse country to be at peace with itself, the region, and the global society. Upon their evacuation to Germany and Europe, they are striving to get mobilized and contribute by participating in demonstrations and debates, as well as joining the research institutes, organizations, and digital platforms focusing



on Afghanistan issues. Thus, there is a great expectation that the EU and German government utilize these capacities.

Fourth, provision of financial support to help with the unprecedented poverty and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has been a major part of the diaspora engagement. Many individuals and organizations have held events and programs aiming at collecting aid and resources to transfer them through any available formal and informal channels to the needy and poor families in Afghanistan. The expectation in this regard is to unfreeze the Afghanistan resources outside the country and channel it via a Trust Fund monitored by both the international community and the Afghan civil society, and facilitate easy and legal transfer of resources to Afghanistan citizens.

Fifth, refraining from political recognition of the Taliban has been one of the clear messages of the Afghan diaspora including individuals, organizations, and communities. As many Afghans expected, the Taliban's approach towards governance and society has been in many ways in clear contradiction not only with the international human rights declarations and conventions but also with Islamic values. Thus, the de facto authority does not meet the internationally recognised parameters for becoming an active member of the international community; and the expectation from the majority of the Afghan diaspora is that the EU and German authorities continue their policy of non-recognition of the regime in Kabul.

Sixth, a growing concern of a large majority of the Afghan diaspora is the failure of the Taliban to establish an inclusive government. Taliban's radical interpretation of Islamic Sharia and its enforcement, as well as the implementation of the ethnic hegemony, have led to unprecedented marginalization of large segments of Afghanistan—including women, young leaders, technocrats, open-minded generations, and all non-Pashtun ethnic groups. Therefore, another important demand of the Afghan diaspora in Germany and the EU is to exert pressure on the Taliban to abide by the agreement that they signed with the US government in 2019, and form an inclusive government acceptable to the majority of the citizens of the country.

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