

Position Paper for the Crisis Committee

The Crisis Committee is currently debating two issues. The conflict between the Taliban and the Afghan government is the first, and the Afghan migration crisis is the second. France supports the Afghan people and will not recognize the Taliban regime at this time; they are also willing to accept Afghan refugees.

I. Conflict Between the Taliban and the Afghan government

The Taliban, founded in September 1994 by Mullah Mohammad Umar, started out with 50 students and slowly increased in size. The group is currently estimated as having around 2,00,000 fighters. After the overthrow of the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan, the Taliban rose to prominence with its heavily religious principles, recruiting followers from madrasas both from within the country and from its neighbors. The Taliban aims to establish Sharia law in the country, in accordance with the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. Between 1996 and 2001, the militia had control over a majority of Afghanistan, until the American military struck. Following the 9/11 attacks in America, the Taliban saw a global backlash, with most countries-except Pakistan-withdrawing recognition of the Afghan government. A month later, American troops initiated military action in the country, bombing Taliban and Al-Qaeda camps, starting a war that has gone on till now. In 2021, with American troops withdrawing from the country, the Taliban flooded back into the streets, capturing most of the country, with the final blow coming on August 15, as President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, leaving the militia in charge, by default.

The conflict between the Taliban and the Afghan government dates back to 1978. In 1979, the Soviet Union and Afghanistan war began, and after that, the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan. For the next ten years, the Soviets backed the communist government against a mujahideen-led coalition of Islamic insurgents that overthrew the administration in 1992. By 1996, a group of disgruntled fighters known as the Taliban had seized control of the majority of the country. The Taliban was overthrown in 2001 when the US accused them of aiding international terrorism. Almost 20 years after being evicted by a US-led military coalition, the Taliban have reclaimed control of Afghanistan. They currently dominate all significant cities in the country, including Kabul, after the withdrawal of US soldiers gave them confidence.

The situation in Afghanistan remains highly uncertain and is changing rapidly. The security situation is extremely dangerous and may become increasingly volatile at short notice. There is an ongoing and extreme risk of terrorism throughout Afghanistan. With the withdrawal of all US military forces from Hamid Karzai International Airport and the end of the evacuation operation on 31 August, the ability to help Afghans on the ground is very limited.

France stands alongside the Afghan people. The question of whether or not to recognize the Taliban regime is currently irrelevant. "You are not legitimate if you gain power by force. We are all familiar with the Taliban's history, what they've done in the past, and the recent acts of violence committed by some of them," said France's foreign minister. Nathalie Broadhurst Estival said the international community's demands vis-à-vis the Taliban, as set out in resolution 2593 (2021), are extremely clear. The first is the safe and unhindered departure of Afghans and foreign nationals who wish to leave Afghanistan. Recalling the Taliban's concrete commitments on that point and emphasizing the need to honour them, she said the next step is to guarantee humanitarian access throughout the country. France will participate in the ministerial-level meeting on that issue on 13 September, but assistance must reach all those who need it most, including women and girls, she stated, stressing that protection for humanitarian personnel must be guaranteed. Reiterating that the Taliban's compliance with their international legal obligations remains an absolute requirement, she said France will not compromise on respect for human rights, in particular those of women and girls. She echoed other speakers in underlining that Afghanistan must never again become a sanctuary for terrorists, and demanding that the Taliban sever all links, including financial ones, with terrorist groups, Al-Qaeda in particular.

II. Afghan Migration Crisis

The United Nations has warned that up to half a million Afghans could flee the country by the end of the year and has called on neighbouring countries to keep their borders open. The current crisis comes on top of the 2.2 million Afghan refugees already in neighbouring countries and 3.5 million people forced to flee their homes within Afghanistan's borders.

The Taliban control all the mainland crossing points with Afghanistan's neighbours and reports suggest they are only allowing traders or those with valid travel documents to leave the country. However, many of those trying to flee because they fear for their safety under Taliban rule will not have any paperwork. The UN has urged Afghanistan's neighbours to keep their borders open to refugees and called on the international community to support those countries. But Uzbekistan, which borders the north of Afghanistan, has said its main crossing point is closed to "ensure security" and there are no plans to open it. Pakistan, which has the longest border with Afghanistan, has also said it will not accept refugees.

Concerning the Afghan migration problem, Emmanuel Macron, the French president, stated that Europe must safeguard itself from irregular migrants. France will establish an "initiative with transit countries" to protect their arrival on the continent. The French president spoke after chairing a special defense council meeting on Afghanistan. He said "eventually the fate of Afghanistan is in her hands, and France will remain in solidarity". He added that France will continue to fight against Islamist terrorism under all circumstances.

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