



GLOBAL SIKH COUNCIL
VOICE OF SIKHS WORLDWIDE

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International Voice of The Sikhs

27 March 2020

UK Charity Number 1186311

Hon'ble Antonio Guterres
Secretary-General,
United Nations
New York

Hon'ble Secretary-General:

Greetings in the name of God -the light of every soul.

We are encouraged by your prompt condemnation of the attack on Sikhs in Kabul on 25 March which left 25 dead, and many injured still convalescing in hospitals. Your sympathies to the families are well received by them and the entire Sikh community. We are touched by your reiteration that the "attack against civilians are unacceptable and those who carry out such crimes must be held accountable."

We call upon you to take immediate and urgent steps in line with your statement that the "United Nations remains ready to support an inclusive Afghan-led process that includes women, minorities and youth; upholds the human rights of all citizens; and leads to a sustainable peace in Afghanistan."

While the United Nations stands in solidarity with the people and the Government of Afghanistan, we take up the matter of the absolutely innocent Sikhs and Hindus still surviving in the hostile atmosphere of Kabul and around, who look up to the United Nations and the international community for immediate succour and asylum to a country of their choice.

We are pained to reflect upon the fact that the United Nations set up the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in 2002, but in the last two decades, the efforts to provide security to the tiny minorities in Afghanistan -the Sikhs, Hindus and Christians has been few and far between.

The Global Sikh Council welcomes your call for a global ceasefire so that the necessary focus and resources can be provided to combating the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the UNAMA has noted that the conflict-related civilian casualties in the period 1-25 March have been more than a 100.

We have noted with unease that the recent agreement for peace between the United States of America and the Taliban has not factored the role and nuisance value of the ISIS and its wing the Islamic State (Khorasan Province) which has carried out many killings since the ceasefire and seems determined to kill the remaining Sikh-Hindu

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residents who are now totally scared and have been advised not to leave their home and hearth.

The Global Sikh Council believes that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, set up in 2002 as a political mission to provide good offices to support the Afghan government and support the process of peace and reconciliation, with a large paraphernalia of personnel and offices, mandated by Resolution 2498 (2019) of the UN Security Council on 17 September 2019 to continue to lead and coordinate international civilian efforts must deliver upon this and initiate all steps necessary to provide a safe haven to the Sikhs and Hindus in Kabul, Jalalabad and Ghazni.

It has come as a great relief that your spokesperson Stephane Dujarric, while speaking to the media after releasing your statement of condemnation of the ghastly crime against humanity has affirmed that the 'asylum rights of the Sikhs fleeing religious persecution in Afghanistan must be respected.' Your spokesperson added, "The asylum regime, the refugee regime must be respected the world over."

Additionally, there is no doubt that the UNHCR -the UN Refugee Agency has acknowledged that there are 2.5 million registered refugees from Afghanistan. The UNHCR has mentioned that its work in Afghanistan, among other things, involves providing "protection and response to internally displaced people, and the other on emergency shelter and non-food items, providing core relief items and emergency shelter assistance to vulnerable displaced people." Nobody should have any doubt about the vulnerability of the Afghan Sikhs and Hindus, especially those now left behind and as the situation unfurls today, they are forced to stay locked in their houses, not because of Covid-19 but because of fear that there are landmines outside the Gurdwara and houses adjacent to the Gurdwaras in Kabul.

Therefore, taking into account the sum-total of the entire situation unfolding by the hour, the Global Sikh Council requests you to:

1. Deploy a company of the remaining USFOR-A -US forces in Afghanistan or a company of the UN Peacekeeping Forces, with the specific duty of protecting the Sikhs and Hindus who are now all ensconced in a small area in the centre of Kabul, in and around the Gurdwaras. OR
2. Take measures to transfer the Sikh and Hindu population to any of the safe havens of the UNAMA, OR
3. Transfer the beleaguered families to the US Bagram airbase which is barely 60 kilometres from Kabul or any other safe and secure place in Afghanistan till they are repatriated as refugees.
4. Ask the UNHRC and/or the International Committee of the Red Cross to assist the suffering minority population with financial and logistical aid to the entire population left behind, especially the victim families.

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5. Initiate steps to enable the 400-odd Sikhs and Hindus to complete formalities that the UNHCR may require so that they can be given refugee status and they can seek asylum in any country of their choice directly from Afghanistan notwithstanding whichever country they choose to go, O
6. Embark on efforts to ensure that those Afghan refugees, already in Delhi, be given the liberty by the UNHRC to go to any other country of their choice. OR,
7. Take any and all measures that the United Nations may deem fit to save the lives and habitat of the Afghan Sikhs and Hindus and enable them to go a country of their choice.

The Global Sikh Council expects and hope that the United Nations and its offices, the UNAMA and its offices and the UNHCR and its offices will rise to the occasion and ensure that the Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan are moved to safety without delay and without any further casualty.

Sincerely

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