

## **An Appeal**

### **INDIAN FRIENDS OF AFGHANISTAN**

#### **Solidarity with India's Civilisational Neighbour for Peace, National Reconciliation and National Reconstruction**

The People of India, stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Afghanistan in these difficult times as they seek to embark on a new road of hope towards peace, national reconciliation and national reconstruction. The proud, patriotic and brave people of Afghanistan have defeated every invading army and continue to fight forces of extremism and terrorism.

Freedom is an inalienable right of every nation — small or big, poor or rich. Sovereignty of every nation is inviolable, and forms the key principle of international law and the basis of global stability. We welcome the complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. However, the unplanned manner of its execution created conditions of avoidable chaos. The chaotic circumstances emboldened certain terrorist groups to kill innocent Afghans and foreigners. We strongly condemn the barbaric suicide attacks in Kabul on August 26, in which scores of Afghans and over a dozen American soldiers lost their lives.

As friends of Afghanistan, we are deeply concerned over the current situation in that country. We care for the security, wellbeing and national aspirations of Afghan people because the millennia-old cultural relations between India and Afghanistan are deep and unbreakable. We believe it is our duty to stand in solidarity with our Afghan sisters and brothers because India and Afghanistan both cherish the fundamental human values of peace, freedom, justice and universal brotherhood. All the countries in South Asia — especially India, Pakistan and Afghanistan — should strive to make it a region of peace, harmony and collective progress. This dream is best symbolised by the close partnership between Mahatma Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan during India's anti-colonial struggle.

Peace, stability and ending the situation of strife are what Afghanistan needs the most today. This is the collective responsibility of all the internal stakeholders in Afghanistan and the international community, especially regional countries. Furthermore, we fear that the fires of terrorism, religious strife and regional turmoil could reach India if peace and stability elude Afghanistan.

We therefore make the following appeal.

#### **Our appeal to Taliban and other political forces in Afghanistan:**

Afghanistan needs an inclusive government that facilitates national reconciliation after four long decades of wars and violence. Therefore, we appeal to the Taliban (which are in near-total control of the country) and other political forces to begin an intra-Afghan peace process leading to a democratic governing establishment that —

- a) Ensures that no terrorist organisation has a sanctuary in Afghanistan and that its territory is not used for terrorist and extremist activities targeting any country in the world, near or far.
- b) Guarantees the safety and security of every Afghan citizen regardless of their ethnicity, ideology or past political background;
- c) Guarantees the safety, dignity and rights of women;
- d) Protects Hindus, Sikhs and other non-Muslim minorities, and facilitates the dignified return of those who were forced to leave their country.
- e) Safeguards and continues the developmental projects undertaken by India in Afghanistan.

### **Our appeal to the International Community:**

- a) No country in the region should be excluded from, nor isolate itself from, collaborative efforts to bring peace in Afghanistan and promote national reconciliation and national reconstruction. This requires India, Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran and other countries to evolve and implement a common strategy, in cooperation with the United Nations, USA, EU and other members of the international community.
- b) Providing humanitarian aid and assistance to Afghanistan is an immediate and common responsibility of the international community.
- c) All members of the international community should together shoulder the responsibility of rebuilding Afghanistan's war-damaged economy and creating livelihoods for its people.
- d) Multilateral regional forums such as SCO (in which both India and Pakistan are members) and SAARC (of which Afghanistan is also a member) should actively work for peace in Afghanistan and stability in South Asia and Central Asia.

### **Our appeal to the Government of India:**

- a) India should continue to engage with the Taliban to achieve the objectives set out in this appeal. We welcome the government's first official acknowledgement of its engagement with the Taliban in Doha and the positive assurances given by the latter.
- b) There should be no discrimination on grounds of religion in providing shelter to Afghans who have been forced to leave their country.
- c) India should permit temporary stay to Afghan journalists, artists and civil society leaders who are feeling threatened by the conditions in their country.
- d) No political party should be allowed to use the developments in Afghanistan to communally polarise Indian society for electoral gains and any such attempts should be dealt with sternly.

**This Appeal has been issued by the following on ...September 2021:**

1. **K. Natwar Singh**  
*Distinguished diplomat, former External Affairs Minister*
2. **Yashwant Sinha**  
*Former Union Finance and External Affairs Minister;  
Founder, Rashtra Manch*
3. **Mani Shankar Aiyar**  
*Former Union Minister and Consul General in Karachi*
4. **Julio Rebeiro**  
*Distinguished Police Officer*
5. **Najeeb Jung**  
*Former Lt. Governor of Delhi*
6. **Dr Vedpratap Vaidik**  
*Distinguished writer, well-known Afghan expert*
7. **Saeed Naqvi**  
*Distinguished writer having a longstanding association with  
Afghanistan and Asian affairs*
8. **K.C. Singh**  
*India's former ambassador to Iran and UAE*
9. **Sandeep Pandey**  
*Gandhian social activist and Ramon Magsaysay award winner*
10. **Shahid Siddiqui**  
*Former MP (Rajya Sabha), Chief Editor, Nai Duniya*
11. **Majeed Memon**  
*Senior Supreme Court lawyer and former MP (Rajya Sabha)*
12. **Sudheendra Kulkarni**  
*Aide to the late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and  
Founder, Forum for a New South Asia*

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