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ORAL STATEMENT

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MUST PLAY ITS PART IN IMMEDIATE, COORDINATED INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE REQUIRED TO CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN

UN Human Rights Council

31st special session on the serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan
24 August 2021

Madam President,

We acknowledge the holding of this special session as a recognition of the dire human rights and humanitarian crisis gripping Afghanistan. A credible outcome that rises to the needs of the situation on the ground is essential.

A recent Amnesty International investigation [documented](#) the massacre by the Taliban of nine ethnic Hazara men after they took control of Ghazni province last month. These killings are a reminder of the Taliban's past record, a horrifying indicator of what their rule may bring, and proof that religious minorities remain at particular risk.

The killings likely represent a tiny fraction of the total death toll inflicted by the Taliban to date, as the group have cut mobile phone service in many recently captured areas, controlling which photographs and videos are then shared.

We are gravely concerned for the thousands of Afghans at serious risk of reprisals – from academics and journalists to civil society activists and women human rights defenders – as door-to-door searches have begun in Kabul. [In one case](#), a journalist's family member was killed and another injured when he was not home. In another, they searched and took over a prominent women's rights group, also searching the Chairperson's home. A number of female journalists have been told not to report to work.

The world has watched in horror as thousands desperately trying to flee the country have been met with unlawful restrictions, indignity and violence. At least 20 [people have been killed](#) and many more injured, in the chaos around the airport, as the Taliban and the US Military have used gunshot to control crowds. This is a tragedy that could have been averted and must be urgently remedied.

The events of the past week come in the context of long-term and entrenched impunity for human rights violations and abuses, and serious crimes under international law, committed by a range of actors in the country.

Madam President,

Decisive action from the international community cannot wait.

States must do more to urgently support and facilitate the safe evacuation of people that wish to leave Afghanistan, including by ensuring safe passage to the airport, the resumption of civilian flights, expediting

visas, and providing relocation and resettlement. Particular attention must be paid to the protection of vulnerable groups, including women and girls, ethnic and religious minorities, internally displaced people, human rights defenders, journalists and others at risk of reprisals.

In addition to the urgent action required of the Security Council, this Council has a critical role to play. It must launch a robust, independent, investigative mechanism to ensure informed decision-making by the international community and combat impunity which continues to fuel grave crimes. Anything less is an abdication of responsibility.

Thank you, Madam President.

Background

This oral statement was delivered by Amnesty International via video message at the 31st special session of the UN Human Rights Council, on the serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan. Due to time constraints, it was delivered in abridged format.