

1. September 2022 | Open letter by female local staff of German organizations and (women's rights) activists who have worked in Afghanistan.

Who are we?

We are a group consisting of former Afghan female employees of German organizations, Afghan activists and advocates of women's rights. We have worked for various German institutions and other organizations tasked with implementing development projects; among other things, we have worked for human rights organizations and initiatives for women's and children's rights, implemented democratization and education projects, ensured compliance with the electoral law through our work, supported foreign government troops, and actively participated in measures against Taliban terror. We have continued the fight against poverty and worked for climate protection so that there is a better future for all people. Before our evacuation, we were in direct contact with the media, government institutions and influential people. Therefore, we are well-known people in our society and neighborhood.

Why are we appealing to you?

We have left our country only for security reasons - for no other reason. We have been living in the same household as our families and any security threats that might threaten our lives threaten theirs as well. The Taliban take every opportunity to search the homes of our relatives. Our family members are beaten, insulted, humiliated, and threatened with death. In addition, there have been recent kidnappings and mysterious murders of activists, journalists, international employees and their families by unknown persons. The situation in Afghanistan is catastrophic for people known to have worked against the Taliban and for their relatives.

The fact that our close family members are still in Afghanistan also limits ourselves in our right to freedom of expression and in our human rights activist, feminist and political work. We are afraid to speak out online or in other media, because it could put our families in Afghanistan in grave danger. Given this situation, many of us are in poor mental and physical condition. We are excellently trained and would like to be actively involved in German society - but the fear for our loved ones makes this impossible for many of us.

After the Taliban came to power on August 15, 2021, we were evacuated to Germany without our families. We were told that only the nuclear family, i.e. wives, husbands and minor children, would be evacuated to Germany. However, we could observe that many other local forces, human rights activists and journalists were brought to Germany together with their whole family including their parents and sometimes even with their married sons and daughters.

This process is incomprehensible to us. The definition of nuclear family is too narrow to protect the people who are in danger because of our connection to foreign organizations. The lives of our parents, our adult children, our siblings are threatened even if they do not fall under "nuclear family". They live continuously in reasonable fear that the Taliban will take revenge on them. At the same time, our family members have also lost their security of supply as a result of our departure, since in most cases we were the main breadwinners. The fact that different standards now apply to our relatives than to those of others classified as at risk is in no way comprehensible. For what reason were some of those who left allowed to take relatives with them who were not part of the nuclear family, while we were denied this?

What do we expect?

During the last months, we have observed with great interest and admiration the political and civil commitment with which Ukrainian refugees have been helped. We consider this attitude towards the refugees to be appropriate and correct.

However, we cannot help but wonder where this support is for our families in Afghanistan, who still fear for their lives and whose situation is likely to worsen: Observers are convinced that the Taliban will use the distraction of the international community by the war in Ukraine to introduce further extreme regulations in the country.

We remember clearly the days after August 15, 2022, when the German government promised to bring all local forces and their families to safety. There was no apparent intention to separate the families at that time. The fate of the people in Afghanistan must not be forgotten. Germany must live up to its responsibility. We had to leave behind our country, our careers, our families and many of our dreams because we worked with the international forces and organizations.

Our demand to the German government is that you keep your promise to bring our families to safety. For the upcoming federal admission program, the German government should allow us to put our families on the list of people who will be protected and evacuated to Germany.

We are a strong and large group of former local forces and we have decided to stand up, raise our voices for the safety of our families and bring our demand in a peaceful way to political decision maker, the media and other organizations who want to support our rights.

With hopeful greetings

Name(s) of representative(s) and Organizations

Amena Rahemy, KFW banking group

BiBi Mariam Arween, FEFA

Anisa Rahman Niazy, WHH (welthungerhilfe)

Zala Alami, TDH (Terre des Hommes) Germany

Hosnia Eftikhari, GIZ/GFA Consulting Group

Brishna Habibi, Save the Children International

Gulbibibi Juya, GIZ role of law

on behalf of the group of Afghan women activists and local women staff.