



**Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission**  
**Chairperson Shaharзад Akbar's Message to Human Rights Council**  
**Session 46**

Greetings all,

I want to draw the Human Rights Council's attention to continued targeted killings in Afghanistan and its impact on the civic space and potentially the peace process. According to our figures, targeted killings were the second leading cause of civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 2020, with a threefold increase compared to 2019. The attacks have targeted human rights defenders, journalists, media workers and activists, prosecutors and judges, including female journalists, judges and activists. Prominent activists are either being killed or forced to leave the country. Most attacks remain unclaimed and investigations are slow. While those who can, are leaving the country, many across Afghanistan feel silenced by fear and are constrained in their activism. This unimaginable attack on Afghanistan's civic space is on-going and the world is not doing enough to stop it. Meanwhile the Afghan negotiations in Doha are paused. Afghans are desperate for peace but what will peace look like in absence of one of Afghanistan's most important gains, its vibrant civil society and human rights community? If this deadly trend continues, it will be even harder to protect human rights gains of Afghanistan during and after the peace talks.

We need the United Nations and the global human rights community to stand with Afghans and urge both parties to stop the violence, and continue engaging in talks. For the peace process to be seen as credible by all Afghans, we need a ceasefire, a real possibility of public engagement and protection of the civic space.

Thank you.