



A Call To Release the Funds of the Afghan People

October 12, 2021

Today and in the coming days, we, informed citizens of the world and patriots of our own nations, stand united, in Washington, Berlin, Lima, Paris, Rome, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Madrid, Stockholm, Brussels and in many other cities of the world, to expose and denounce a crime.

On August 15, after four decades of foreign interventions, a new government took power in Afghanistan. While having orientations we don't necessarily approve of, the new government has expressed its willingness to face the immediate humanitarian challenges, eradicate opium production, reconstruct Afghanistan's health system and build the basic infrastructure required to jump-start trade and development. As clearly understood by Pakistan, India, China, Russia, Turkmenistan, Iran and others, it is in the interest of all to allow the new government to stabilize the situation by engaging in normal international relations. But more is required: without a minimal foreign input, Afghanistan will fail in dealing with a deadly food and health crisis that started way before Aug. 14.

Hence, it is outrageous that in the days following the Taliban takeover, the White House announced that all assets of Afghanistan's central bank held in the U.S. would not be released to the new Afghan government:

- The U.S. Federal Reserve refuses to release the \$9.5 billion of assets of the Central Bank of Afghanistan, \$7 billion of which are held by the New York Fed. About \$1.3 billion of these are held in international accounts, with some of it in euros and British pounds, while the rest are held by the Bank for International Settlements based in Switzerland. As a result, Afghanistan can only access 0.1-0.2 % of its total reserves!

- The International Monetary Fund has suspended all financing for "lack of clarity within

the international community" over recognizing the new government. \$370 million set to be released on Aug. 23 was withheld and access to the IMF's reserves in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) assets, which can be converted to government-backed money, have also been blocked.

- The World Bank (as denounced by a petition of Code Pink) has refused to release some \$440 million, notably the funds required to pay Afghan teachers and health workers. Hence, while there is a huge outcry over "women's rights," 13,000 female healthcare workers, including doctors, midwives, nurses, vaccinators, and other female staff, are not being paid by the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).

On Feb. 29, 2020, the Taliban and the U.S. government signed an agreement. Part III of that agreement stipulates: "The U.S.A. and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are committed to continue positive relations, including economic cooperation for reconstruction.... The United States will refrain from the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Afghanistan or intervening in its domestic affairs."

Today, if the United States wants to regain respect and esteem, it has to live up to its own commitments, especially when millions of human lives, both female and male, are at stake, which is the case in Afghanistan as a result of a food and health crisis of apocalyptic dimensions. Two out of five Afghans, many of them children, are facing starvation.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on President Joe Biden to act in the spirit of the 2020 Doha agreement, signed by the U.S.A., and lift all unnecessary sanctions against Afghanistan, including the use of malign pretexts to prevent its control over the assets of its own central bank as well as its normal access to the international financial markets. The urgency is now!