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Increased targeting of members of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission

Front Line Defenders, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights, in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the International Service for Human Rights, condemn the killing of two employees of the **Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)**, Fatima Khalil and Ahmad Jawed Folad, on 27 June 2020. The AIHRC staff were killed by an improvised explosive device while on their way to work in the organisation's official vehicle in Kabul. We believe the killing is a direct reprisal for their human rights work.

The AIHRC is a national human rights institution, dedicated to educating, promoting, protecting and monitoring human rights and the investigation of human rights abuses. The commission has been an active body in a highly volatile and challenging environment and has been in the forefront for the protection of human rights.

On 27 June 2020, at 7:40am, AIHRC's donor liaison officer, Fatima Khalil, and the organisation's long time driver, Ahmad Jawed Folad, were killed in a bomb explosion at Butkhak Square in the twelfth district in Kabul.

This is not the first time that a member of the AIHRC has been attacked. Over the past years, there has been an increasing number of attacks on those associated with the organisation. In September 2019, Abdul Samad Ameri, the Acting Head of the Ghor Provincial Office, was abducted and killed by the Taliban on the Kabul-Ghor highway in Maidan Wardak Province. In 2015, the Deputy Director of the Children Rights Unit, Mr. Imran Aziz, and the receptionist of the Regional Office of Nangarhar Province, Mr. Shafiqullah Naser, were [killed](#) and six others injured by a roadside explosive device in Nagarhahr Province. Several others have been victims of terrorist attacks, including the former Commissioner of the AIHRC, Hamida Barmaki, and former Head of the Ghor Provincial Office, Mr. Ansari Baluch.

Human rights defenders in Afghanistan work in an atmosphere of intensifying attacks including threats, intimidation and violence from both the government and armed groups. The most recent killing adds to a pattern of deliberate attacks and targeting of the independent and constitutionally-mandated national human rights institution. Furthermore, against the existing socio-political backdrop, human rights defenders are finding themselves at increased risk. Despite a public commitment to protect defenders and the launching of a protection strategy for human rights defenders in early 2020, the government has failed to investigate and bring justice to those that have been victimised and targeted as a result of their human rights work.

We strongly condemn the killing of Fatima Khalil and Ahmad Jawed Folad and the unchecked attacks against members of the AIHRC, which we believe are solely motivated by the AIHRC's

legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights. We are concerned about the increasingly hostile environment that human rights defenders face in Afghanistan and the level of impunity and disregard shown towards attacks on them and the human cost of these crimes. We call on the Afghanistan government to provide effective support and protection to human rights defenders and to carry out immediate, thorough and impartial investigations into these attacks, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice.

Signatory organizations:

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Front Line Defenders

FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights, in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

International Service for Human Rights

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