



STATEMENT ON US WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN AND THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER OF KABUL 15 AUGUST 2021: The Iraq Project for Genocide Prevention expresses extreme concern for the tragic events occurring in Afghanistan and warns about the devastating consequences of the Taliban establishing an extremist Islamic state in the country.

The now former president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, fled to Uzbekistan Friday evening, prior to the Taliban reaching the capital city of Kabul on Sunday. This departure of the president is symbolic of the plight of Afghan civilians in this moment: Through no fault of their own, they are being abandoned and left to fend for themselves within the very regime that many had sought to defeat, with US support, for twenty years.

Reports of Taliban occupation of regions outside of Kabul detail executions of surrendering soldiers and other people believed to have been linked to the US-backed regime, forced marriages of young women to Taliban fighters, and the assassination of journalists, among other atrocities. The IPG is gravely concerned that the Taliban will radicalize its approach to civilians as it consolidates its power over the Afghan people once again, after two decades of war with the United States and its coalition forces. Particularly vulnerable to Taliban persecution are women and girls of all ages as well as members of ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Shi'a Hazara people, who were subjected to genocidal violence during the previous Taliban regime.

The Taliban offensive, which started in May and swiftly took control of province after province in the country, should have been a sign to US President Joseph Biden that a rapid and complete withdrawal might end in catastrophe. It is a moral failure on the part of the US leadership not to place at the forefront of policy the safety of those who helped the United States military over the past two decades. The rapid withdrawal of US forces has left ordinary Afghans, especially those who supported the US-backed government, defenseless against reprisals from the new regime. It thereby opened the door to any mass atrocities committed by the Taliban in the coming weeks, months, and years.

The takeover of Kabul by the Taliban is another sobering demonstration of the devastating consequences to America's failed interventionist policy toward this region. Not only has the United States added another country to a list of places where "military operations" have ultimately left a country in a worse state, but the Biden administration has also opened the door for a possible regrouping of international genocidal organizations that have only radicalized and grown in power over the past twenty years, including the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).

A fresh, decolonial perspective within global foreign policy circles is needed now more than ever, as the world is increasingly united by intractable conflicts and climate catastrophe.

In calling attention to the potential for the escalation of violence in Afghanistan in the form of genocide and other mass atrocities directed against members of the former regime, ethnic and religious minorities, and women and girls, *the IPG reminds Taliban leaders of their obligations under international law, particularly under the Genocide Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, both of which Afghanistan has signed and ratified.* Any stabilization of Taliban rule in the global community must rest on the firm foundation of good governance and respect for the dignity of all human beings.

The IPG also reminds the international community, and particularly the United States, of its responsibility to protect civilians using every tool at its disposal. Top priority must be given to meeting the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Afghanistan and to securing the transit of threatened members of Afghan society to safe havens in foreign countries. The United States and its allies should finally fast track visas for interpreters and other personnel and their families as well as for human rights workers, journalists, members of the LGBTQ community, threatened minorities, threatened women and girls, and all other persons who face probable persecution because of their ties to ideas and institutions rejected by Taliban ideology.