



USG Ms Rosemary DiCarlo
Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
United Nations Headquarters

7 February 2024

Dear Under-Secretary-General Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo,

We are writing on behalf of the **Afghanistan LGBTIQ Organization**, an advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the human rights of LGBTIQ Afghans, and **Outright International**, a global human rights advocacy organization that works to improve the lives of LGBTIQ people everywhere. We write to raise concerns about the lack of inclusion of LGBTIQ perspectives in UN engagement on Afghanistan to date and to request that the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), under your leadership, work with the Security Council, the proposed UN Special Envoy on Afghanistan, and other relevant UN organs to adopt a more inclusive approach in the implementation of [Resolution 2721](#) (December 2023) and in all future UN engagement on Afghanistan.

LGBTIQ people are among the most marginalized groups in Afghanistan. Extensive documentation by non-governmental organizations demonstrates that since the Taliban seized power, LGBTIQ people have been subjected to grave human rights violations including rape, arbitrary detention, torture, forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and the death penalty.¹ We are deeply concerned by the inattention to these severe violations on the part of the Security Council, the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the Special Coordinator responsible for the recently issued independent assessment.

¹ Outright International, *A Mountain on My Shoulders: 18 Months of Taliban Persecution of LGBTIQ Afghans*, 14 February 2023, <https://outrightinternational.org/Afghanistan-Report2023>; Outright International and Human Rights Watch, *“Even if You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You”: LGBT People in Afghanistan after the Taliban Takeover*, January 25, 2022, <https://outrightinternational.org/our-work/human-rights-research/lgbt-people-afghanistan-after-taliban-takeover>; Rainbow Railroad, *No Safe Way Out: Human Rights Violations Against LGBTQI+ People Under the Taliban*, 2022, <https://rainbowrailroad.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/No-Safe-Way-Out-Human-Rights-Violations-Against-LGBTQI-People-Under-the-Taliban.pdf>.

Resolution 2679 (2023), adopted by the Security Council on 16 March 2023, called for the Secretary-General to conduct an independent assessment “in order to address the current challenges faced by Afghanistan, including, but not limited to, humanitarian, human rights and especially the rights of women and girls, religious and ethnic minorities, security and terrorism, narcotics, development, economic and social challenges, dialogue, governance and the rule of law.” The resolution specifically emphasized the importance of “upholding human rights, including those of women, children, minorities, and persons in vulnerable situations.”

Our LGBTIQ communities have never been visible in Security Council resolutions, but we hoped that this language might be inclusive enough to allow for LGBTIQ voices in the independent assessment.² In response to an open call for Afghan civil society participation in consultations with the Special Coordinator’s office, we proposed a separate consultation for LGBTIQ Afghans, who would not be safe or able to speak freely in a general civil society meeting. The Special Coordinator’s office agreed, holding the LGBTIQ consultation virtually on 24 September. Fourteen LGBTIQ Afghans participated, recounting the grave human rights violations they face under Taliban rule. They also shared key recommendations, among them: conditioning engagement with the Taliban on their respect for human rights, including the rights of Afghan LGBTIQ people; holding the Taliban accountable for crimes against women, girls, and LGBTIQ people, including crimes that amount to gender persecution and gender apartheid under international law; and engaging consistently with civil society organizations that work for LGBTIQ people in Afghanistan. We were surprised that in the [final independent assessment](#), **the only reference to LGBTIQ people** was a footnote on p. 43 of the report mentioning the consultation participants’ nonbinary gender identities. Elsewhere, the report writes LGBTIQ Afghans out of its frame of reference, with no reference to human rights violations experienced by LGBTIQ Afghans and no commitment to remedy these abuses, in contrast with its discussion of the human rights of women, girls, ethnic and religious minorities, and journalists.

This forced invisibility echoes the approach taken by UNAMA, whose [2022 human rights report](#) entirely omitted the experiences of LGBTIQ people. An UNAMA staffer told Outright that UNAMA had been unable to report on human rights violations against LGBTIQ people because of a lack of firsthand testimonies. The UN, through the Special Coordinator’s office, does now have such firsthand testimonies. The exclusion of LGBTIQ people from the independent assessment, despite the efforts made by LGBTIQ Afghans to avail themselves for a consultation and relive their trauma, sends a signal that the United Nations considers certain voices dispensable, reinforcing the very exclusion and discrimination to which the Taliban subjects LGBTIQ people on a daily basis. We cannot achieve inclusive and enduring peace and security in Afghanistan when the United Nations itself accepts the marginalization and invisibilization of a sector of society.

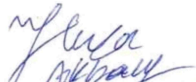
The United Nations urgently needs to adopt a new approach to LGBTIQ inclusion in Afghanistan. We strongly urge that:

² Outright International, *LGBTQ Lives in Conflict and Crisis: A Queer Agenda for Peace, Security, and Accountability*, 7 February 2023, <https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/12072023-LGBTQLivesConflictCrisis.pdf>.

- In appointing a new Special Envoy, the Secretary-General should ensure that the successful candidate has a track record of working with LGBTIQ people and is committed to their full inclusion in all UN initiatives related to Afghanistan and, ultimately, in Afghan society.
- The Special Envoy and UNAMA should both be mandated to engage with Afghan LGBTIQ organizations and individuals to ensure that their voices are heard and valued. The “Intra-Afghan dialogue” suggested in the report as a method to achieve inclusive governance in Afghanistan is a laudable idea, but inclusive governance can not be achieved if the exclusion of LGBTIQ Afghans is built into the process.
- The UN system should remedy the oversight to date of LGBTIQ Afghans’ experiences by producing a standalone report on marginalized groups in Afghanistan, including LGBTIQ people. The UN system should also ensure inclusivity and diversity in all future reports about Afghanistan, including by systematically acknowledging and recognizing violations of the human rights of LGBTIQ people in Afghanistan.
- Any engagement by the international community with the Taliban, including the UN Security Council, must be done in a way that ensures the human rights of LGBTIQ people are fully respected and protected.
- The international community should take steps to ensure that the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan, reaches LGBTIQ people, who face specific challenges with regard to freedom of movement and access to services.
- Given that Afghanistan is no longer safe for LGBTIQ people under the Taliban’s rule, the international community should provide safe and legal routes for their transfer to safer countries.

We look forward to further engagement with you in the coming weeks to discuss steps that DPPA can take to ensure that LGBTIQ people are included as a matter of urgency.

Sincerely,



Artemis Akbary
Founder and Executive Director
Afghanistan LGBTIQ Organization



Neela Ghoshal
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