

20 November 2018

## **Urgent APRRN Statement**

### **Bloody Violence Waged Against Hazara Highlights Insecurity in Afghanistan**

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) strongly condemns the acts of intensifying violence and terror being waged against Hazara populations across Afghanistan. Commencing in late October, Hazara communities in Khas Uruzgan, Jaghori and Malistan in Afghanistan's Hazarajat region have faced a series of relentless attacks by the Taliban. These targeted assaults have left hundreds of individuals including women and children dead and thousands more forcibly displaced from their homes. Formerly considered a relatively safe district, Hazarajat has now fallen under Taliban control, meaning that people are unable to return and are subsequently displaced inside Afghanistan. It is estimated that more than 5000 people have been displaced.

Following more than two weeks of violence, on 12 November 2018, several hundred Hazara protesters took to the streets of Kabul to vent their frustration at the inability of the Afghan government to protect them. Sadly, part way during the peaceful protest near the Gulbahar commercial district, a suicide bomber blew himself up, killing six and wounding dozens more.

Notably, the impact of the violence in Hazarajat region has extended far beyond the boundaries of Afghanistan's borders. Most notably, diaspora communities in Pakistan, Iran, Europe and Australia have expressed their outrage and sadness at such a horrific loss of life and livelihoods. Hayat Akbari, Chair of APRRN's Youth Working Group and a resettled Hazara refugee residing in Australia calls the attacks "nothing short of despicable". He added that "the Afghan Government should immediately mobilise all available resources to provide those affected with the support that they need to access safety and rebuild their lives."

Located in Afghanistan's central highlands, Hazarajat has historically been considered one of the country's safest regions. The area was also known for having a liberal approach towards education for girls, and for active female participation in civil and political affairs. Without appropriate security, these attacks by the Taliban have promptly quashed these positive developments and freedoms. Evan Jones, Programme Coordinator at the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, claims that "it's time for western governments to open their eyes to the realities on the ground inside Afghanistan. Far from being a 'safe' country, threats such as kidnapping, suicide bombings and terrorist insurgencies remain far too common."

APRRN calls upon **countries hosting Afghan refugees to:**

- Immediately halt the deportation or forced return of any Hazara to Afghanistan, regardless of whether or not they have refugee status from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Provide long-term protection to Hazara within their borders, allowing them access to protection from the host state and all the rights that are associated with such status.

APRRN calls upon **UN agencies and the international community to:**

- Engage with refugee hosting countries such as Pakistan, Iran and the European Union not to deport or forcibly repatriate Afghans to Afghanistan, especially when their life or liberty may be in danger.
- Engage with traditional resettlement countries to explore durable solutions for displaced Hazara and other affected populations.

APRRN calls upon the **Afghan Government to:**

- Provide immediate humanitarian support to forcibly displaced communities by way of shelter, food, education, cash assistance, and medical requirements.

*While APRRN statements are prepared in consultations with APRRN members, they do not necessarily reflect the views of all members.*

**For media enquiries, please contact:**

Evan Jones, Programme Coordinator  
Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)  
**Email:** [evan@aprrn.info](mailto:evan@aprrn.info) | **Phone:** +66 9724 64 270