AFGHANISTAN UNDER A TALIBAN GOVERNMENT: PUBLIC OPINION AND FUTURE
DEMOCRACY & HUMAN RIGHTS.

Virtual Discussion, November 9, 2021

1. Background

Afghanistan's fall back into the hands of the Taliban is a severe blow to the global political landscape. It will impact democracy and human rights not only within its borders but also in the region. With the withdrawal of the US and NATO troops after signing the Doha Agreement, the international community immediately knew that it would only be a matter of time before the Taliban could retake Afghanistan's center of political power on August 15, 2021; finally, it did happen.

After two decades of war costing multi-billions and uncounted lives lost, efforts to uphold democracy and human rights in the country were suddenly reversed and left Afghans in fear and uncertainty. Fear of retaliation and persecution lingers among people who have worked in various civil society sectors as they seek a chance to evacuate. More gravely, a haunting terror over the return of restrictions on civil and political rights and violation of human rights, especially toward women and children, has taken over the nation.

While the Taliban is defining the contours of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, it has invited speculations and careful observation among state and non-state actors, including human rights organizations. As they continue to structure their control over governance, the ambiguity related to their approach and commitment to upholding democracy and human rights has elicited credible concerns. Human rights defenders and pro-democracy activists must work together to ensure the safety and security of defenders and activists inside Afghanistan and prevent any traces of human rights and freedom from being compromised.

2. Objectives

To increase awareness of the CSOs and pro-democracy actors on the situation in Afghanistan and provide analysis for stakeholders in response to the crisis happening inside the country, at the same time understand the impact in the regional arena.

3. Target Outcomes

a. The regional civil society members could gain awareness regarding the situation in Afghanistan and its impact on the region.

b. Speakers and discussions can provide a pointer to navigate CSOs to respond to the current Afghanistan situation and the impact in the region.
4. Program Design

Asia Democracy Network (ADN) and FORUM-ASIA have been closely monitoring the situation in Afghanistan since the takeover of the government by the Taliban regime. In just over two months, the twenty years of effort to democratize Afghanistan seems to have failed. Women, children, and vulnerable communities have been re-victimized by the Taliban.

The CSOs need to keep track of the situation and continue build awareness of the country's ongoing dynamic. We also hope the panelists will be able to share some critical points on the humanitarian assistance that is urgently needed in Afghanistan at the moment and how can the international community provide further assistance.

The summary of this discussion will be shared and presented at the 2021 Asia Democracy Assembly scheduled on November 23-24, 2021. We hope to raise greater awareness of the issues in Afghanistan and bolster solidarity for the people of Afghanistan.

Contents, Resources Person, and Run-down:

The resources persons or experts will need to cover the following points during the discussion:

1. **An overview of the current Afghan situation after months of falls to the Taliban.** The critical presentation of the speakers shall cover different aspects of concern related to the situation of democracy, human rights, especially that of women and girls, and the status of civil society and activists, including the current political constellation surrounding the Taliban government. This update is important to CSOs to sensitize themselves to the situation and align their response towards it.

2. **Threat towards democracy and human rights:** As the Taliban regime imposes restrictions on democracy and human rights, we hope that the panelists will be able to provide a brief analysis on the situation given the limited awareness, information, or access among the CSOs and pro-democrats in Asia on the reality of what is happening in Afghanistan. Resource persons shall also share ideas or suggestions that the regional CSOs can consider as areas of intervention to help the current suffering of the Afghan people. It is very important to know what lies ahead for the work on democracy and human rights in Afghanistan and identify external threats that may emerge in Asia from the rise of support to the extremists taking advantage of the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan.

3. **What should be done to help activists and uphold democracy?** With all threats to humanity and democracy, the biggest concern is saving lives and putting pressure on the Taliban to protect and preserve dissent's freedom. International communities shall take part to keep voice out at all possible channels and arenas. On this occasion, speakers and audience are invited to suggest what are each organization can do to address the concern and promote democracy ahead in the war-torn—Afghanistan.