

## **Statement from the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) regarding allegations of sexual abuse of boys in Logar province and subsequent actions against human rights defenders**

*3 December 2019*

We, the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan, are extremely concerned about the allegations of sexual abuse of a large number of boys in several schools in Logar province and the subsequent arbitrary and incommunicado detention of civil society activists who reported the alleged exploitation and violence.

Protecting the lives and welfare of children should be central to every society, especially during times of armed conflict. Ensuring that children in Afghanistan are shielded from sexual abuse and violence must be a priority for the government, national security and defense forces and civil society. Equally as important is the need to ensure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders to carry out their work as they play a critical role in the protection and promotion of the human rights of all citizens.

For the protection of all children in Afghanistan, we urge:

1. The Attorney General's Office (AGO) to launch a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into:
  - a. allegations of sexual abuse and violence against boys in Logar province, which maintains their dignity and ensures protection of both the alleged victims and witnesses, including of their identities;
  - b. the alleged arbitrary and incommunicado detention of two civil society activists, by the National Directorate of Security from 21 to 27 November 2019, as well as their treatment while detained; and
  - c. the ongoing threats against the civil society activists.
2. The Afghan government to take immediate measures in Logar to ensure the protection of the boys who were alleged to have been abused, including the temporary removal from their positions of the teachers, principals and other adults who are allegedly implicated, pending the outcome of the AGO's investigation; and provide victims and their families with necessary services such as psychological and social support and shelter, if required, as well as engaging an appropriate dialogue with communities.

The Group of Friends for Children and Armed Conflict consists of UNAMA (co-chair), Sweden (co-chair), Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative and UNICEF.