

## SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN YOUTH MANIFESTO

We, the youth of the southern Afghanistan,

**Are ready and willing to work for our country, but need support and opportunities to do so. We call on the international community and the authorities to invest in education, create jobs, and ensure equal opportunities for all, including women. We believe that our future and the future of Afghanistan depends on it. Unfortunately, we feel unheard, sidelined, disappointed and are losing hope. We do not only seek to survive, but want to be given a chance to thrive and contribute to the country's development and wellbeing.**

We, the youth of the southern Afghanistan,

- Acknowledge the positive changes which have occurred in the past three years, such as improved security, decrease in poppy cultivation and efforts to enhance access to drug treatment for addicts, but also share our deep concerns about widespread unemployment, lack of access to education, lack of respect for basic human rights, the impact of climate change and the lack of progress in reconstruction efforts in our region.
- Emphasize that the education system is in a dire state, with many schools lacking qualified teachers, buildings, and resources. We ask the authorities and international community to put in place a strong public school system. As a result, many youth are now questioning the value of pursuing their studies when job opportunities are so scarce and government recruitment practices are perceived as biased. We are particularly concerned about the exclusion of girls from schools and women from the work force and higher education, and the negative impact this has on women's mental health as well as their overall contribution to the country's development.
- Acknowledge some of the efforts of the authorities to engage with youth through the organisation of writing competitions and sporting events, but stress that this is not sufficient. Youth also have interests in music, arts and technological development. We need more capacity building and employment programs for both men and women. We call on the international community and the authorities to invest in the future of youth, to provide us with opportunities for growth and development, and to listen to our voices. We note that the morality law has had a negative impact on the freedom and development of youth, particularly women.
- Recognize the traditional consultative role of elders in Afghan society but are nevertheless worried that youth's concerns are often overlooked and that elders are unable to effectively advocate for them. We have seen our place in society diminished in the past few years. We ask for more inclusive decision-making processes to be put in place, processes that value our voices and address our specific challenges. We are seeking guidance from elders, are willing to actively listen to their valuable insights, and call for a future where we, both men and women, can freely express our concerns and have them addressed in a meaningful way.
- Have a strong desire to participate in decision-making processes which are based on meaningful involvement, representation, and inclusion. To that effect, we

recommended the establishment of youth committees, with the equal participation of men and women, at the district, provincial and central levels, with members selected based on merit. These committees would help the government, and the international community better understand the needs of youth and help channel youth's readiness to support their community. We encourage the international community to support such committees. We believe that youth participation can complement and support the primary role of elders. Open public forums in all districts would facilitate youth participation, while civic literacy resources and leadership programs would empower informed youth stakeholders in policy conversations. We would also like to emphasize the importance of gender equality and the need for women's voices to be heard and listened to in decision-making processes.

- Ask the Emir to make more public appearances, trust youth and appoint them to positions of responsibilities. We also ask the authorities to draft a constitution and to prioritize quality education as in a rapidly changing world modern education should be given equal attention as religious studies.
- Ask the international community to fund sustainable development and infrastructure projects that will help Afghans withstand the severe impact of climate change, particularly the lack of water. We ask that the international community put aside its political differences with the Taliban and that it focusses on improving the lives of 40 million Afghans who are in dire need of assistance. We also ask donors to put in place the necessary mechanisms that will allow them to limit the authorities' ability to divert program resources.
- We ask the international community to work towards recognizing the current regime so Afghanistan can reintegrate the concert of nations. That recognition, however, should not be granted until the fundamental rights of Afghan women are respected and that the authorities have gained proper internal recognition by establishing an inclusive governance model that meets the needs of Afghans and through a meaningful intra-Afghan dialogue. We also request the international community to encourage the authorities to launch this dialogue as it could lead to a more inclusive government and more fruitful engagement with the international community.
- We request that the United Nations keep Afghanistan on the agenda of the international community so that the country is not forgotten. We also ask the United Nations to continue conveying the voices of Afghans who live inside the country to the international community, and to protect Afghans migrants and refugees around the world.
- Finally, we ask that youth who live in Afghanistan, including in the south of the country, be included in international forum, such as the Doha process and climate change conference, where the future of Afghanistan is discussed directly and indirectly.

**Adopted in Kandahar on 12 November 2024**