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## Afghanistan: Aid Donors Should Stress Accountability

Government Commitment to Basic Protections, Women’s Rights Essential

8/31/2015

Afghanistan’s foreign donors should press the government to address the country’s persistent human rights problems at a major international meeting of senior officials, Human Rights Watch said today in letters to representatives of a dozen donor countries. Delegations from more than a dozen countries will gather in Kabul on September 5, 2015, for the Senior Officials Meeting to discuss humanitarian and security commitments to the country. The meeting is a follow-up to the December 2014 London Conference and the 2012 Tokyo Conference.

“Afghan officials and foreign donors need to put human rights front-and-center in all discussions of ongoing and future support for the Afghan government,” said Phelim Kine, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “They should recognize that human rights gains since 2001 remain extremely fragile and in some areas have reversed, putting at risk the rights of all Afghans, particularly women and girls.”

Despite Afghanistan’s important improvements in human rights, many serious abuses persist. The Afghan government and its international donors should strengthen their support for the

protection and promotion of human rights in Afghanistan through continued emphasis on the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (the “Tokyo Framework”), Human Rights Watch said.

However, there are indications that the Afghan government’s Realizing Self-Reliance paper, presented by President Ashraf Ghani at the December 2014 London Conference, will be the centerpiece of the September 5 meeting’s agenda. While the paper reaffirms Afghanistan’s human rights commitments, including its obligation to carry out the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law, the document lacks specific goals and measurable benchmarks for progress on human rights. Donors and the Afghan government should ensure that the human rights benchmarks built into the Tokyo Framework remain at the core of their discussions and that they focus on updating and expanding the Tokyo Framework to include new, realistic, and measurable human rights commitments.

Donors should press the Afghan government to ensure greater accountability of state security forces responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, and other abuses. Respect for the basic human rights of the general population is a crucial element of counterinsurgency operations. In addition, protecting the rights of women and girls will require President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah to enforce the EVAW Law and for donors to fund initiatives that help promote the rights of women and girls, including earmarking funding to recruit and retain female police officers. The Afghan government and foreign donors should also take substantive steps to bolster the resources and capacity of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

“The Senior Officials Meeting provides the Afghan government and its international supporters an important opportunity to recommit to specific, measurable steps for protecting the rights of the Afghan people,” Kine said. “The fundamental rights of Afghans are at real risk without international support and pressure, and genuine commitment from the Afghan government.”