



Summary of Discussions and Recommendations

Series of CDP-G National Dialogue Conferences; the Role of Civil Society and Democratic Forces in the Future of Afghanistan

26-27 May, 2025 Antalya, Türkiye



IV CDP-G Conference on Afghanistan

National Dialogue on the Role of Civil Society and Democratic Forces in the Future of Afghanistan

26-27 May, 2025 Antalya, Türkiye

Chairs' Summary

4th National Dialogue Conference

On the Role of Civil Society and Democratic Forces in the Future of Afghanistan

“Afghanistan in Transition: Escalating Rivalries and Deminishing Consensus”

Dates: May 26-27, 2025

Location: Antalya, Turkey

The Fourth Round of the CDP-G's National Dialogue Series, focusing on the role of Civil Society and Democratic Forces in the Future of Afghanistan, took place in Antalya, Turkey. The event brought over 60 participants together, including political figures, civil society leaders, academics, media representatives, women's rights and youth activists, and analysts from both within Afghanistan and abroad. The primary objectives of this Conference were to critically assess Afghanistan's current situation, review the Doha Process and the United Nations' "Mosaic" plan, explore the role of the constitution and the rule of law under the Taliban regime, and reinforce alternative mechanisms for democratic participation. Furthermore, participants sought to define coordinated strategies for addressing the political and social legitimacy crises in Afghanistan.

Key Discussions and Recommendations:

Participants emphasized that Afghanistan's current circumstances—marked by a repressive regime, political monopolization, and the systematic dismantling of legal and participatory structures—underscore the crucial importance of national dialogue. Given the highly complex and challenging domestic, regional, and international environment, dialogue is viewed as one of the few viable tools for rebuilding trust, strengthening social cohesion, and generating alternative solutions. Open and responsible dialogue offers democratic forces the opportunity to learn from past experiences, craft a more realistic vision for the future, and develop a unified national narrative that addresses the ongoing crises. The Fourth National Dialogue Conference aimed to amplify the voices of marginalized groups—especially women, civil society, and youth—at both national and international levels, thereby laying the groundwork for a democratic and inclusive future for Afghanistan.

Opening Remarks:

- The necessity of continuing national dialogue in a safe and open environment was emphasized.
- The importance of rebuilding national trust and fostering solidarity among Afghanistan's diverse factions was highlighted.
- The UN's "Mosaic" framework was critically analyzed and viewed as ambiguous, unrealistic, and overly favorable toward the Taliban position. There was a unified call for its revision in an inclusive manner.
- The establishment of Afghanistan's Civil and Democratic Forces Network (ACDFN) and specialized working groups was welcomed and supported as a mechanism to consolidate the voice of the civil society.

Session One:

The UN Framework (MOSAIC) and the Doha Process

Focus: Substantial review and critical discussion on the UN "Mosaic" plan, as well as an assessment of the international trends affecting Afghanistan's political future.

Key Points:

- The "Mosaic" plan was criticized for its lack of meaningful consultation with the Afghan civil society and democratic forces.
- It was viewed as significantly aligning with the Taliban's interests rather than meaningful consideration of the good and needs of the people of Afghanistan. The three main asks of the Taliban are clear, measurable, and visible. In comparison, the three demands addressed to the Taliban by the international community are ambiguous, immeasurable, and murky.
- The failure to incorporate clear human rights benchmarks, political inclusivity, and the protection of women, minorities, and transitional justice was highlighted as a fundamental weakness of the Plan.
- Participants highlighted that the plan is in conflict with internationally accepted principles, including the human rights conventions, and could undermine international legitimacy.

Recommendations:

1. A comprehensive revision of the "Mosaic" plan or the development of a national alternative to replace it.
2. Strengthening the independent participation of democratic forces, women, youth, and civil society groups in any decision-making process that concerns the future of Afghanistan.
3. Crafting a participatory roadmap that centers on Afghan society.
4. Elevating the role of youth and emerging political groups as a transformative force.

Session Two:

Who Are the Other "Domestic Stakeholders"?

Focus: Redefining the true stakeholders in Afghanistan's politically volatile environment.

Key Points:

- Afghanistan's civil society and its role need to be redefined, as current perceptions have often diverted its focus from representing the people and defending fundamental rights.
- Civil society and democratic forces should reject being reduced to an extension of foreign initiatives, emphasizing social and political roots and inclusion.
- The Taliban lack a legitimate popular base and can not be considered the sole political actor in Afghanistan. Not only are they a legitimate political movement, but rather a historical catastrophe for Afghanistan and a tool of widespread repression.
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- Marginalized and excluded groups, such as women, minorities, civil society, and youth, should be recognized as key stakeholders in any process on the future of Afghanistan.
- Platforms such as the National Dialogue Conference series, Afghan Civil and Democratic Forces Network, and similar initiatives prove that the Afghan civil society has the potential to gather and play a role in any political process, should political will exist.
- Ethnic and identity-based politics should be redirected toward fair, merit-based power distribution.

- The role of women, from victims to active agents of change, was emphasized.
- A reexamination of the fall of the republic, historical accountability, and the strengthening of narrative and political alternatives were also among key discussion points.

Recommendations:

1. Identify and strengthen legitimate stakeholders.
2. Facilitate the establishment of a participatory framework and a social contract among Afghans..
3. Reject any effort to legitimize the Taliban.
4. Learn from the collapse of the republic and build on past failures.
5. Reliance on internal capacity and self-belief.
6. Empower civil society to move beyond its identity crisis and become a driving force for transformation.
7. Strengthening an alternative political narrative to build consensus at the national, regional, and international levels.

Session Three:

Reimagining Constitutionalism and the Rule of Law

Focus: Launch of the first of its kind, policy research report on the status of constitutionalism and the rule of law in Afghanistan since August 2021. The report is co-authored by a group composed of scholars and experts from the Constitutional Law Expert Group of the Center for Dialogue and Progress – Geneva. Relevant parts of the report were presented by Dr. Haroon Mutasem, Dr. Lutfurahman Saeed, Dr. Shamsad Pesarlay, and Mr. Shoaib Timory.

Research Findings:

- The Taliban regime has effectively eliminated the concept of a constitution.
- The collapse of the division of power (checks & balances) and the absence of a legitimate legal framework were noted.
- The Taliban judicial institutions and law enforcement agencies operate in an authoritarian, extra-legal, and unprofessional manner.
- The Hanafi jurisprudence is utilized as a tool to legitimize repression and marginalize the public from the legislative process.
- Historical examples were given, highlighting the existence of the constitution within Islamic Sharia across various periods and its necessity.
- The lack of transparency, judicial independence, justice, and upholding legal standards in Taliban courts has led to widespread distrust and uncertainty across all sectors, including the private sector investments.

Significance of the Report:

This is the first researched and scholarly report with an analytical approach to constitutional law under Taliban rule, which can serve as a foundation for policymaking and academic analysis.

Session Four:

Dominant Narratives, Alternative Narratives, and Misinformation in Afghan Media

Focus: The fourth session focused on the state of media in Afghanistan following recent political developments. The aim was to examine the dimensions of censorship, the Taliban's media policies, the role of dominant and alternative narratives, and the use of media by the Taliban to distort reality and spread misinformation. Discussions also addressed the operational environment for journalists inside and outside the country, the situation of exiled media outlets, and the use of new tools for delivering information and creating content.

Key Points:

- The media in Afghanistan operates under severe restrictions and censorship. Journalists face threats, detention, violence, or being forced into silence by Taliban-affiliated entities such as the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the intelligence services.
- The Taliban have imposed strict red lines on the media. Outlets are compelled to cover only the official narratives of the Taliban; otherwise, they face prosecution and forced closure of their operations.
- Free access to information has been severely restricted. Official lists determining approved media experts are an example of structured control over the flow of information in the country.
- Many media outlets have either ceased operations or relocated abroad, continuing their work as exile media, though they encounter significant technical and financial challenges.
- The Taliban have weaponized the mainstream and social media to promote propaganda and distort reality, portraying false narratives of economic success, public support, and stability while real issues like poverty, hunger, and repression are ignored.
- Despite these challenges, several media outlets in exile are striving to provide alternative narratives and counter the Taliban's monopolized discourse.

Recommendations:

1. Provide urgent international support for Afghan media, both inside the country and in exile.
2. Produce and strengthen alternative narratives that reflect Afghanistan's social, economic, and political realities without exaggeration or censorship. The following points were proposed as alternative narratives: Publishing articles in international media and sharing knowledge externally. Expert review and critique of published reports.
3. Promote collaboration between independent media outlets inside and outside Afghanistan.
4. Advocate for the international community to exert pressure on the Taliban to uphold media freedoms.
5. Empower young journalists, train them to combat misinformation, and create a safe environment for their work.

Session Five:

Alignment with UN Security Council Resolution 2721 and the Independent Assessment

Focus: This session was held to examine the role and capacity of Afghan civil society institutions in engaging with international mechanisms. The primary focus was United Nations Security Council Resolution 2721 and the factors influencing its formation. Discussions also addressed upcoming opportunities in 2025, Afghanistan's transitional context, and ways to amplify the voice of civil actors at the regional and global levels.

Key Points:

- The rapid pace of global developments and Afghanistan's diminishing priority on the global

stage present a significant challenge for civil and political forces.

- The Doha Process has been critiqued for its failure to achieve regional consensus, partly due to the absence of coherent leadership among anti-Taliban forces.
- Civil society's role should be reframed to emphasize human rights, democracy, and constructive activism in order to engage effectively with international institutions like the UN Security Council.

Regional Challenges and Dominant Narratives: The resolutions adopted following the collapse of the Republic have failed to secure simultaneous support from both regional and international actors. At various points, regional countries have viewed the Taliban as a tool to undermine U.S. influence. Perspectives suggest that views on the Doha Agreement among regional actors have been divided and driven by competing interests.

The lack of cohesion among anti-Taliban forces over the past three years was also identified as a key factor in the failure to garner international support. Nonetheless, it was emphasized that one of civil society's strongest assets is its ability to challenge the Taliban's narrative within the regional context—an effort that requires active diplomacy and direct dialogue with neighboring countries.

A key highlight of the panel was the need to understand the political language of the international community and engage effectively with institutions such as the UN Security Council and UNAMA. To influence international mechanisms, Afghan civil society must become fluent in the language of human rights, democracy, and constructive advocacy.

It was stressed that continued indifference to global developments will gradually push Afghanistan off the international agenda. Conversely, an effective discourse can help draw renewed global attention to the Afghan issue.

Active participation in redefining key concepts, building collaborative networks, and producing content and policy documents were presented as practical strategies for influencing the international system.

Meanwhile, it was noted that while the Mosaic initiative has strengthened UNAMA's role, it has not garnered trust among the Afghans, and UNAMA alone is not enough to navigate Afghanistan through this phase.

Recommendations:

1. Revive the proposal for a UN Special Representative for Afghanistan to oversee peacebuilding efforts.
2. Redefine civil society's role internationally by emphasizing the intersection of human rights and global geopolitical interests.
3. Establish a regional discourse that reflects Afghanistan's realities and is driven by civil society and political forces.
4. Utilize existing international mechanisms to revive the voice of the Afghan people in international forums.
5. Produce knowledge, analysis, and alternative narratives to counter the Taliban's monopoly over narratives and to rebuild international trust in alternative forces.

Formation of Specialized Technical Committees

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants formed four specialized technical committees to ensure the continuation of specialized work, structured analysis, and the development of practical solutions for Afghanistan's future. These committees are designed to each cover a key area of the

country's current and future challenges, serving as platforms for producing expert-driven and implementable alternatives:

1. Media Committee: tasked with analyzing the Taliban's media policies, identifying patterns of censorship and information control, reconstructing alternative narratives about Afghanistan, and developing effective communication strategies at both national and international levels.
2. Peace, Democracy, and Good Governance Committee: mandated to analyze the failures of the republic, examine alternative governance structures, and propose models for rebuilding a participatory, inclusive, and democratic governance system in Afghanistan.
3. Committee for Promoting Organizational Capacity and Public Participation: Focused on designing educational and political awareness programs, strengthening civil institutions and local networks, and promoting informed and sustainable citizen engagement in decision-making processes.
4. Committee on Gender and Human Rights: Responsible for the legal and structural analysis of the human rights situation, reviewing constitutional rights experiences in conflict-affected countries, and advocating for the rights of women, minorities, accountability and justice in Afghanistan's future.

These committees identified actionable plans, and were tasked with developing roadmaps which will serve as both intellectual and practical foundations for further national dialogue and international engagement.

The 4th National Dialogue Conference underscored the importance of developing a national, inclusive, and democratic narrative in the face of imposed authoritarianism. While highlighting the need for an alternative to the "Mosaic" plan and decrying the Taliban's violence, the dialogue emphasized the responsibility of civil society and democratic forces to engage strategically with international institutions and redefine Afghanistan's future as a just, democratic, and participatory society.