AjSO
Afghanistan Journalists Support Organization

# OPEN LETTER FROM THE AFGHANISTAN JOURNALISTS SUPPORT ORGANIZATION (AJSO) TO THE UNITED NATIONS: ADVOCATING FOR AFGHAN JOURNALISTS STRANDED IN THIRD TRANSIT COUNTRIES

**To: Her Excellency Ms. Tatiana Valovaya**
**Director-General**
**United Nations Office at Geneva**
**1211 Geneva 10 Switzerland**

**27.04.2025**

Dear Ms. Director-General,

Afghan journalists, over the past two decades, have made significant efforts to act as representatives of civil society, playing an important role in shaping public opinion toward progress, prosperity, and civilization despite numerous challenges. One of the key achievements of this period has been the creation of a platform for public participation in social and political affairs. However, following the collapse of the republic (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – IRoA), journalists have been marginalized. They are deeply disappointed by the lack of attention from supporting institutions and the international community.

Journalists who have been forced to migrate due to security threats are now struggling with harsh and costly conditions in third countries, desperately searching for a glimmer of hope amid this crisis.

**Challenges faced by Afghan journalists in third countries:**

1. Prolonged processing of immigration cases

   The immigration cases of journalists are facing long delays. Every day is crucial for them, so waiting years for a final decision has become unbearable. Journalists who cannot return to Afghanistan see expediting their case processing as their only hope for survival.

2. Lack of adequate attention from UNHCR

   Afghan journalists whose cases are registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) complain of excessive delays and discriminatory treatment. They demand immediate action regarding their situation.

3. Security threats in third countries

   Many journalists face security threats even in third countries. In places like Pakistan, multiple cases of attacks and harassment against journalists have been reported.

4. Lack of job opportunities
Displaced journalists are forced to take on physically demanding and unrelated jobs to survive, yet their income barely covers their basic needs.
5. Visa renewal and high cost of living
Extending visas in countries such as Pakistan, India, Iran, and Turkey is complicated and expensive. Failure to renew visas increases the risk of forced deportation to Afghanistan.
6. Mental health issues
Financial stress, security concerns, and uncertainty about the future have significantly affected the mental health of journalists and their families.
7. Limited access to healthcare services
The high cost of medical treatment prevents journalists and their families from accessing adequate healthcare.
8. Lack of educational opportunities
The children of journalists in third countries are deprived of educational facilities, and many families cannot afford school expenses.

**Responsibilities of journalist support organizations and the United Nations:**
Under these circumstances, journalist support organizations, human rights institutions, and the United Nations must not abandon this vulnerable group. Short-term and medium-term solutions are essential to address their challenges. Immediate actions, such as implementing employment projects and collaborating with embassies and UNHCR to accelerate the processing of immigration cases, are necessary.

**Demands of Afghan journalists in third countries:**
1. Expedited processing of immigration cases
Journalists' cases should be prioritized, and final decisions regarding their transfer to safe countries should be made as soon as possible.
2. Establishment of sustainable financial resources
The prolonged immigration process has depleted journalists' financial resources. International organizations must allocate the necessary funds to support them.
3. Mental health support services
Providing psychological counseling and support services for journalists and their families is essential.

**Capabilities and Readiness of the Afghanistan Journalists Support Organization (AJSO):**
The Afghanistan Journalists Support Organization (AJSO) is prepared to play an active and practical role in supporting exiled journalists. This organization possesses

the necessary human and technical resources and is dedicated to advocacy, capacity-building, and addressing the challenges faced by Afghan journalists.
AJSO can act as a bridge between vulnerable journalists and international institutions, assisting in the professional verification of their identities and the implementation of support programs. Advocacy initiatives, training programs, and job creation projects are among the organization's planned activities. Fortunately, in a short period, AJSO has gained a high level of credibility among Afghan journalists.

By establishing a comprehensive database of Afghan journalists and developing strong relationships with media outlets and international organizations, AJSO is fully prepared to collaborate in resolving the issues faced by exiled journalists.

**Expectations from international organizations:**
We, Afghan journalists residing in third countries, expect international organizations to fulfill their promises and provide practical and immediate support in this critical situation to help us escape these dire circumstances.

**With respect and humility,**
**Afghanistan Journalists Support Organization (AJSO)**

**Copy:**
RSF – Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontières)
IMS – International Media Support
CPJ – Committee to Protect Journalists
FNF – Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit)
Internews – Internews Network
JHR – Journalists for Human Rights
NED – National Endowment for Democracy
IFJ – International Federation of Journalists
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
PEN Canada – PEN Canada (part of PEN International)
Amnesty International – Amnesty International
CHRI – Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
FIDH – International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération Internationale pour les Droits Humains)
ECPMF – European Centre for Press and Media Freedom
IPI – International Press Institute
Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) – Global Forum for Media Development
Front Line Defenders – Protection for Human Rights Defenders at Risk
Open Society Foundations (OSF) – Support for Media Freedom and Human Rights
NHRF – Norwegian Human Rights Fund
MICT – Media in Cooperation and Transition