

Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights
30 June 2020 - Joint Statement – Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

Madam President

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Canada, Germany, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Independent national human rights institutions and human rights defenders play a crucial role in preserving and advancing human rights.

This is precisely why some governments, groups or individuals seek to stifle the voices of women and men who defend human rights. Far too often, not only is it hard for them to go about this important work, but they also are subject to violence, threats and reprisals, and even arbitrary detention and extrajudicial executions. We condemn these persecutions.

We strongly condemn the terrorist attack on staff from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in Kabul on 27 June 2020. No attack against human rights workers is ever justified. The murder of these two people, dedicated to improving human rights, especially women's rights, is devastating. Our sympathies are with their families and with the staff of the AIHRC.

The Commission is a strong, independent institution that has acted courageously for the protection and promotion of human rights in Afghanistan since its establishment in 2002. Sadly, this is not the first time its staff have been targeted or killed.

We call on all states and parties to commit to protecting human rights workers and advocates everywhere, ensuring an environment for National Human Rights Institutions and Human Rights Defenders conducive to their activities, freely and without interference, intimidation, abuse, threat, violence, retaliation or undue restriction. Measures to protect survivors and witnesses from retaliation is also critical.

256 words