

## FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES

### Agenda Item 5: Open Dialogue: Urgent Situation Faced by Minorities

**Date:** December 2, 2022

**Afternoon Session:** 15:00-18:00



**Organisation:** Christian Solidarity Worldwide

**Speaker:** Claire Denman

### Situation Update

Thank you, Mr Chairperson

CSW wishes to draw the attention of the forum to the plight of Afghan refugees who have fled from Afghanistan to neighbouring countries such as Iran and Pakistan.

After the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, religious, sectarian, and ethnic minorities, including Shia Hazaras and Ahmadis, were forced to flee their homes and country, to save themselves from being targeted for their religion or belief.

These Afghan refugees are living under deplorable conditions in neighboring countries where they continue to face the threat of being deprived of their rights. Their economic marginalisation, including being denied access to employment, mounts extreme pressure on their ability to lead a safe and stable life in the countries they are currently residing in. Their children are also deprived of the right to education.

Being a refugee minority in a country like Iran or Pakistan, where minorities do not enjoy equal rights and continue to face hardships due to their religion or belief, adds an additional layer of marginalisation and increases their vulnerability.

The situation is dire with mounting obstacles for Afghan refugees seeking asylum in a country of permanent residence. They remain in need of immediate assistance.

### Recommendations

In this respect CSW proposes the following recommendations:

- We urge the de facto authorities in Afghanistan to guarantee the right to freedom of religion or belief for all in accordance with article 18 of the ICCPR and guarantee equal opportunities for all minorities
- We urge UN member states to increase their quotas to grant asylum to more Afghan refugees in their respective countries, and to allow special concessions to refugees who may not have proper travel and identification documentation on account of the conditions that they were forced to flee.
- We urge the UNHCR to adopt measures to ensure strict confidentiality in its refugee assessment processes, so that refugees who come to register with them feel safe to declare their religion or belief without the fear of being targeted or discriminated against.

Despite all the hardships and threats mentioned, CSW stands firm and committed to advocate for all, regardless of their religion or belief, to enjoy equal rights within the state of Afghanistan.

Thank you