



**Alliance in Support of the Afghan People deplores continued
Taliban repression against dissent and free media in Afghanistan**

Washington, D.C. (February 14, 2022) – A statement by the Alliance in Support of the Afghan People:

If anyone still believes that the Taliban have somehow transformed themselves into a group that respects human rights, political freedom and fundamental decency, the group's recent abductions of women's rights activists, journalists and aid workers in Afghanistan should dispel that illusion.

As the Washington Post [reported](#) recently, "Taliban fighters have targeted women's rights activists, especially those protesting the Taliban's denial of their basic rights." Extensive interviews by the Post revealed that women protesters have been beaten by these armed militants, pepper sprayed, shocked with electric prods and harassed via phone calls, texts and social media posts. Many have been forcibly taken away, their whereabouts unknown.

Even during reconciliation talks in Oslo last month, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi blamed such repression on rogue elements within the Taliban that the group was expelling, according to [Human Rights Watch](#). No evidence of such internal enforcement is apparent, and, while one, Parwana Ibrahimkhil, was released after three weeks in prison, [according to her family](#), others are still missing. Later, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid contradicted this already-suspect cover story by stating that the Taliban had the right "to arrest and detain dissidents."

Last week, [news emerged](#) that the Taliban had also abducted two foreign journalists and other staff working for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The Taliban's response – again through Mr. Mujahid – was less than reassuring about even the fact, let alone the fate, of the abductees. "We have received information about this and are trying to confirm whether they have been detained or not."

Though some captives were [subsequently released](#), the Taliban nevertheless bear responsibility for violent crackdown of Afghan dissenters and free media. These recent incidents are only the latest of far too many examples of authoritarian repression that the Taliban have practiced since their takeover of Afghanistan in August (and very much in keeping with its actions before 2001).

Considering these atrocities and the Taliban's responsibilities for them, it would be an immoral betrayal of the Afghan people and of U.S. strategic interests for the international community to do anything to provide diplomatic recognition or economic support to a regime that carries out such atrocities.

Much as the Taliban would like the world to believe it is kinder and gentler than it was before it was toppled from power in 2001, voluminous, painful evidence tells a starkly different and deplorable story.

The Alliance in Support of the Afghan People (or ASAP) represents a cross section of American national security, military, civilian and human rights leaders who advocate for continued U.S. engagement that protects, sustains, and advances the progress the Afghan and American people have made in Afghanistan since 2001. For more information: <https://www.allianceforafghans.org/>