



RESEARCH REPORT

**Towards an Inclusive, Lasting, and Sustainable Peace:
Recognize, Legitimize, and Empower
Afghan Non-Dominant Minorities**

Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization ([HREVO](#))

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Acknowledgement

This pioneering study on the Inclusion of Marginal Minorities' Voice in the Afghan Peace Process was funded by the European Union (EU) through the Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency (SIDA). The aim of the extensive and in-depth investigation was to bring attention to the marginalized Afghan populace, the non-dominant minorities, and raise their voices, demands, and concerns in the ongoing and post-peace settlement efforts.

We express our sincere gratitude to all research participants including the community members of the 'non-dominant' minority groups, their elders, representatives, and minority experts who participated and collaborated in this challenging research. We also thank our gracious and committed partner, the Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN) for their invaluable contribution during the implementation of this project.

It is with utmost faith that this study is expected to impact on Afghanistan's progressive policymaking and reforms and contribute significantly towards a more embracing Afghan peace program with the inclusion of non-dominant minorities' voices, demands, and concerns in the country's ongoing peace process and post-peace settlement. May the findings of this painstaking research help Afghan policymakers in their future program interventions on peace as well as to extend empirical data in the related fields of conflict resolution, ethnocentric sociology, marginalization and cultural upheavals. We hope that the recommendations of the investigation be given serious attention and critical response from all the stakeholders, including those in foreign contexts but which are similarly situated as Afghanistan. The long-term goal of this fulfilling scholarly endeavor is to ultimately inspire and create more genuine and concerted efforts towards the attainment of societal peace in the global community of nations.

Abdul Wadood Pedram
Executive Director of HREVO

Executive Summary

Afghanistan is a “nation of minorities,” as described by Nassim Jawad, an Afghan academic.¹ Various ethnic, religious, and sect minorities have lived in the country, reflecting Afghanistan’s geographical location and socio-cultural historiography as the crossroad and melting pot of many empires and civilizations in Central Asia. In its modern state formation, as Afghanistan has become more distinguishable along ethnic lines, *non-dominant* or marginal and smaller minorities have been absorbed either within the larger groupings of language, ethnicity, and religion/sect or have been alarmingly and deliberately neglected. This reality has given rise to a new set of societal problems in the advancing Afghanistan milieu. Historically, the absence of inclusive mechanisms for the protection and representation of rights of non-dominant minorities has seriously excluded and marginalized them from Afghan polity and society. The sad picture is a universal dilemma in a modern world that has become one of the key issues in globalization. However, the Afghanistan experience has its own unique story or historicity. Afghanistan’s last four decades of war and violence have significantly restructured and transformed state-society relations, further exacerbating the vulnerability of these non-dominant minorities. In post-2001 Afghanistan, there have been several important citizen rights embedded in its constitution, *de jure*, protecting the rights of minorities. However, *de facto*, non-dominant minorities continue to suffer from a lack of political representation, service delivery, and economic development.

The ongoing peace talk between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban is promising and presents an excellent opportunity to end the Afghan conflict. However, the process and the composition of the negotiating team and peace-related institutions have come under immense pressure by various groups and minorities for the lack of representation of their constituencies. Critics have pointed out that the

¹Jawad, Nassim. “Afghanistan A Nation of Minorities.” In *Minority Rights Group International Report*, Manchester Free Press, 1992.

peace process has remained limited to the small circle of political elites from the *dominant minorities*, once again at the expense of the smaller marginalized minorities. Experiences of other post-conflict contexts in the world show that for a peace process to be successful and sustainable, it must include all parties who have been either part of the conflict or somehow affected by it. Quite the demands and requisites of modern societies compel equitable sharing of power, responsibilities, and rights among the various ethnicities constituting the entire fabric and socius of a nation especially in a crucial scenario and period of conflict resolution and peace talks. Active participation is as vital as transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, in state governance, and hence, peace is an elusive quest not until all voices are recognized, legitimized, and empowered. Social capital is fundamental in any political and economic reforms as observed worldwide, and given this, minority groups are as important as the cultural elites in national development, so they must be allowed to take part in critical discourses such as in peace talks and policy formulation. In line with these observations, experiences of peace processes around the world have proven that processes that are inclusive of a broad section of the society last longer than peace pacts signed between elites and leaders of the conflict parties.²

This study is an attempt to fill in the gap in the ongoing peace process by addressing the following two research objectives: 1) non-dominant minority groups' [NDMGs] concerns and demands in the peace process; 2) by situating the NDMGs in a broad spectrum of political inclusion, introduce a series of recommendations that could help national and international policy formulation in peace talks and post-peace settlement.

This comprehensive study has surveyed over 595 people (52% men and 48% women) from various non-dominant minority groups, as well as conducting interviews and focus group discussions with 18 expert interviews and fifty [50] focus group discussions (FGDs). The composition of the study reflected language, religion/sect, and ethnic diversity, and it was carried out in nine provinces of Afghanistan: Badakhshan, Balkh,

² Nilsson, D., 2012. Anchoring the peace: Civil society actors in peace accords and durable peace. *International Interactions*, 38 (2), pp.243-266.

Bamyan, Ghor, Kabul, Nangarhar, Nouristan, Nimroz, and Jawzan. The non-dominant minorities identified for this study were Aimaq, Qizilbash, Pashai, Turkmen, Baluch & Brahwui, Arab, Sadat, Nuristanis, Wakhi, Kyrgyz, Gujur, Ismaili Shias, Sikhs and Hindus, and Jat of Afghanistan.

The overall result is mixed. While generally, minorities' awareness regarding the peace talks between the United States and the Taliban, prisoners' release, and the intra-Afghan negotiations was relatively high, their main concern was lack of representation in the peace process with 79.1 percent stated that they have not been part of any peace-related initiatives and worried about this. 80 percent asserted they wish their communities were consulted in the ongoing talks. Concerning post-peace settlement, they overwhelmingly (98 percent) stressed that the agreement must guarantee the protection of the ethnic and religious minorities' rights, values, and customs. Minorities also suggested developing an independent oversight body that could oversee and monitor the infringement of minorities' rights in the current peace process and post-peace political settlements should be established. This body should be established with the cooperation of all stakeholders, including national and international human rights and civil society organizations, the Afghan government, and its partners.

Interviews and focus group discussions revealed that most of the non-dominant minority leaders were concerned about their inclusion in the future political set up as well as protection of their rights both under the future constitution and international laws. The lack of a coordinated address to raise their fear and concerns was also highlighted. As such, they demanded the establishment of a specific address/mechanism through which they could reflect their needs, priorities, and concerns. More accountability and commitment to peace and peacemaking from the Taliban were also noted as key to ensuring their rights are protected. All the main groups demanded positive discrimination as a key policy of inclusion in Afghan polity and development in the post-peace settlement.

Also, the following are the minorities' demands besides the general issues such as the protection of the achievements of the last two decades: rights to education, work, and freedom of expression, included the following: 1)

Official recognition of and respect for minorities' ethnic, religious, and linguistic values and practices. 2) Enacting positive discrimination that would open the space to support and protect marginalized minorities. 3) Developing a mainstream debate and discourse and launching the debate on minority issues at the national level. 4) Broader public participation and inclusive peace process and post-peace political settlement. 5) Creating an environment conducive to peacemaking. 6) a grantee for lasting peace and 7) Because most of the Taliban's released prisoners have joined the battle back, members of minority groups demand more accountability and commitment to peace and peacemaking from the Taliban.

Recommendations

The Afghan government and the international community must pay close attention to the following key recommendations:

- Minority Right Approach to the Peace Process: even though minorities' rights and freedoms are respected under international conventions, it is highly important to the Afghan state, the international community, and the Taliban to employ a minority rights approach to peace talks considering the international Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities, 18 December 1992, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, 1981;
- Inclusion of non-dominant or marginal minority groups' interests, concerns, and aspirations, a cornerstone of the ongoing peace talks and post-peace settlement.
- A future revision of the Constitution must be inclusive of all groups, in particular minorities in the country. The constitutional framework should include representation from minority groups including those of 'stateless' minorities.
- Support the establishment of a coalition of minorities [National Coalition of Afghan Minorities (NCAM)] at the national level which could function as the platform to lobby for voices of minorities.
- There is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of independent institutions such as the AIHRC to offer the best potential support to

include demands, concerns, and priorities of marginalized minorities in the peace process. The AIHRC has no specific unit for minority issues. This can be applied to the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission as well.

- National Reconciliation and Justice: in the post-peace settlement, while there is a need for a multi-level engagement of Afghans to the peace process, support is needed to establish an independent entity under Afghanistan's Judiciary Unit to conduct investigations and deliberate on the attainment of justice for crimes against humanity and war atrocities. Transitional justice is deemed necessary for the rights of victims of war and the sustainability of peace.

I. Background

Afghanistan is a “nation of minorities.”³ Various ethnic, religious, and sect minorities have lived in the country, reflecting Afghanistan’s geographical location and socio-cultural historiography as the crossroad and melting pot of many empires and civilizations in Central Asia. But, Afghanistan’s state formation in decades has been of exclusion and discrimination, especially against the non-dominant minorities. The marginalization of non-dominant minority groups in Afghan polity and society has been observed and written widely in academic publications and policy documents. Additionally, the post-Bonn international-sponsored state-building process has further divided the state and its bureaucracy along ethnic lines. Four dominant minority groups (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazara, and Uzbeks) have come to constitute and control the Afghan state and security institutions. In the attempt to make up for such shortcomings of exclusion and discrimination, the Afghanistan 2004 Constitution provided immense rights and political protection to minorities. It enshrined 14 ethnic groups in its provisions and laws. However, other minority groups were seriously left out. De facto, exclusion, and marginalization of minorities has continued in the country.

Afghanistan’s last four decades of war and violence resulted in factionalism and state collapse with the civil war having significantly restructured and transformed state-society relations. The Bonn Agreement in 2001 enacted to re-create the state of Afghanistan was an initiative aiming at concluding the conflict. This initiative resulted in Afghanistan’s relative stability, but it failed to include anti-government elements such as the Taliban.

To address the problem, the Afghan government has put forward several peace-making initiatives to end the conflict. The establishment of the Commission on Consolidation of Peace in 2005, the High Peace Council in 2010, and the Taliban office opening in Doha Qatar in 2010 were among sporadic efforts that have taken place. In early 2018 Afghan President,

³ Jawad, Nassim. “Afghanistan A Nation of Minorities.” In *Minority Rights Group International Report*, Manchester Free Press, 1992

Ashraf Ghani announced that the government was willing to enter into comprehensive peace discussions with the Taliban. This offer, along with reaffirming it in the Kabul Process for Peace & Security Cooperation in Afghanistan Declaration (2018), Geneva Conference on Afghanistan (2018), and occasional ceasefire has intensified the peace efforts. Subsequently, a conditional agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban was signed on February 29, 2020, after a six-month negotiation. Since September 2020, talks between officials from the Afghan state and the Taliban have been going on. All these efforts constitute an exceptional opportunity to reach a peace agreement wherein legitimate concerns of Afghans are discussed. However, since the start of the 'Intra-Afghan dialogue,' one of the pressing concerns is that the peace process has remained limited to the small circle of political elites and dominant minorities wherein non-dominant groups are glaringly neglected. While successful peacemaking efforts in other countries show that the success of the peace process needs to be accompanied by creating democratic space for the voice of everyone who is directly or indirectly affected by the process, this exclusion of non-dominant minority groups in the Afghanistan context remains alarming.

I.I. Objectives of the Study

This study was motivated by two research objectives: 1) to collect and analyze the non-dominant minority groups'[NDMGs] concerns and demands in the peace process; 2) to situate the NDMGs in a broad spectrum of political inclusion, and 3) to introduce a series of recommendations that could help national and international policy formulation in peace talks and post-peace settlement.

I.II. The Non-dominant Minorities

The dominant minorities are the ethnic-Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazara, and Uzbeks who while, being different in their dominance, are situated in the Afghanistan political dynamism. This study is not about them.

In Afghanistan, both in academic discussion and among policymakers, there is hardly a commonly perceived definition of minorities in

Afghanistan, yet seemingly, most of the scholars make an acute distinction between majority-minority as well as differentiating them along with ethnic, tribal, religious and sect categories.⁴ For instance, one faces the challenge to categorize Sunni Hazaras or Shia Tajiks, and Pashtuns, who religiously belong to a non-popular group while their ethnicity is of a majority and popular one, or vice versa. Baluch while being affiliated to Sunni Muslim which is a majority, yet their ethnicity makes them a minority. Non-Muslim ethnic groups rarely get included in the national discourse. Prominently, three factors are often used to measure and differentiate majority and/or minority: language, race, and religion.⁵ However, at the same time, there is the issue of mixed identities in Afghanistan that the current scholarships missed studying them.

This investigation is in line with the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities, which states that “States shall protect the existence of the national or ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity,” Minority, according to a definition offered by Francesco Capotorti in 1977, is “a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the State - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language”.⁶ The Afghan 2004 Constitution mentions

⁴ For study of minorities and the problem of differentiations, see Peter, Marsden. “Afghanistan: Minorities, Conflict and the Search for Peace.” In Minority Rights Group International Report. p8; Kaufman, 2000, p441; Wimmer & Schetter 2003; Roy 1995; Dorronsoro 1995; Simonsen 2004; William, Maley. *The Afghanistan Wars*, Palgrave Macmillan. New York City, USA. 2002, p8; Jogis: Afghanistan’s Tiny Stateless Minority Strives to Survive without Rights, Services, available at: <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/jogis-afghanistan-s-tiny-stateless-minority-strives-to-survive-without-rights-services/30216120.html>

⁵ Peter Marsden who also provided a similar categorization has argued that no ethnic group in Afghanistan forms more than half of the overall population of the country, and he asks for a careful explanation of the dynamics of Afghanistan’s minorities which is also twisted by war. Peter, Marsden. “Afghanistan: Minorities, Conflict and the Search for Peace.” In Minority Rights Group International Report, p16.

⁶ Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementations, United Nations, 2010.

14 ethnic groups comprising Afghanistan, but it has ignored the rest.⁷ This study has involved both those ethnic groups included in the constitution and those who were excluded like the non-state group of Jats and Joggis.⁸

In relation to the latter group, the UNHCR report states that “Lack of identity documentation can increase risks of statelessness due to difficulties in proving nationality.” For instance, some members of the Jat ethnicity, including the nomadic Jogi, Chori Frosh, and Gorbat communities have been denied issuance of Afghan ID cards (Tazkera).⁹

See Annex I. for the list and description of minorities included in this study.

II. Methodology

This undertaken research was comprehensive in scope though it proved to be quite an intricate investigation. For instance, identifying non-dominant minority groups including non-state ones came out too challenging and difficult to study and required a high level of trust.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches was adopted in the study to generate an extensive and in-depth understanding of the minorities’ voices, concerns, demands, and priorities related to the peace process in Afghanistan (see annex II for data collection tools). Three major considerations for this mixed approach were: (1) to gather a pool of opinion from the typical people from minorities through a survey; 2) to

⁷ These are Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aimaq, Arab, Kyrgyz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwui

⁸ According to the UNHCR review, “although no in-depth assessment has been undertaken in Afghanistan on the scope and magnitude of statelessness in the country, there are clear indications that there are persons with unclear citizenship status who may be of concern to UNHCR, in particular members of the Jat ethnicity, which encompasses the Jogi, Chori Frosh and Gorbat communities. See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Compilation Report –Universal Periodic Review: AFGHANISTAN, p3.

⁹ Ibid, p7. For recent development on Jat community see AAN <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/context-culture/citizens-finally-but-no-place-to-settle-the-magats-one-of-afghanistans-most-marginalised-minorities/> (accessed Nov 20, 2020).

generate detailed and divergent voices from the community's elders, public figures, youth, students, and civil society members through the FGDs; and 3) to get expert opinions through the key informant interviews. In this section, procedures of data collection and analysis are presented.

The study site included nine (9) provinces where a large number of minorities could be accessed. They are Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamyan, Ghor, Jawzan, Kabul, Nangarhar, Nimroz, and Nooristan. The minorities' participants were Aimaq, Arab, Baluch & Brahwi, Gujur, Hindus, Ismaili Shias, Jat, Kyrgyz, Nuristanis, Qizilbash, Pashai, Sadat, Sikhs, Turkmen, and Wakhi of Afghanistan. Study participants included local typical people, students, experts, community elders, and academics.

The gathering of data was difficult at the peak of COVID-19 but this unprecedented rigor of research was gradually offset with the researchers' commitment to the highest ethics of scholarly investigation. The use of a triangulation of data collection methodology proved helpful, namely surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions or FGDs. A total of 595 surveys were conducted with different minority groups. FGDs provided additional tool for introspective analysis and to adequately capture views of community leadership at a higher level. There were 50 FGDs that were conducted in the study site of the identified nine provinces. Experts included academics, civil society actors, peace experts, law experts, and religious scholars. These interviews were tape-recorded and conducted separately with the study participants, but they had the same format of having an introduction, consent statement, and opening and main questions. The HREVO's guidebook entitled: "Achieving an inclusive peace in Afghanistan: A Guidebook" served as the key foundation and motivation for the conversations.

In order to overcome the shortcomings of the National Statistic and Information Authority (NSIA), the center of the targeted provinces was mapped including two districts: Shibar district in Bamyan and Wakhan district in Badakhshan. All required information were collected for all the project activities, including the estimated population of each minority group, their primary occupation, some critical challenges in their life, contact details of the informants, general security situation of their

residence, and some other information about the minority community. This pool of information was collected from four sources: 1) the provincial directorates of the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs (MoBTA), 2) provincial office of the central statistics, 3) representatives of provincial councils, and 4) some ethnic group associations.

Stratified random sampling was used in getting the survey participants. This probability sampling helped identify the right group for the study. Overall, 595 individuals were selected for this investigation to represent the non-dominant minorities and express their opinions about peace and the peace process. Based on the estimated minority population, the stratification was done proportionately on each stratum of minorities, as well as within each minority group, based on their population in different districts. After defining each stratum, the survey respondents were identified through the simple random sampling technique. The household was identified beforehand, and then selected the first or second decision-maker/head of the household to be interviewed.

To ascertain the integrity of the study, all the necessary protocols were observed and followed from the information, orientation, actual conduct of the research to data analysis including the confidential treatment of participants and their identities. The results of the investigation will be reported to the legitimate scientific bodies and academic communities for research contribution in the disciplines of interest.

This research was subject to some limitations: First, the exact number of Afghan minorities were not statistically known. Therefore, the research team selected the sample size based on the estimated population of these groups that were found during the mapping. Moreover, it was not feasible to go to the areas where anti-government elements such as the Taliban is controlling. The research team was aware that there are minorities in such places and their perceptions regarding the peace efforts may be different but due to safety and security reasons, these groups were henceforth not included in the study.

III. Key Findings

This section presents the significant findings of the study on the minority's expectations, and concerns regarding the peace process in Afghanistan as presented below.

III.I. Minorities' Concerns in the Peace Process

Generated in the investigation is a broad and extensive range of ideas and perspectives on non-dominant minorities' concerns about Afghanistan's peace process as well as their demands ensuing from it. Overall, members of the minority communities are concerned about the lack of attention towards their rights, opportunities, and political participation in the Afghan peace process. The chart below is drawn from the survey with 595 respondents indicating 79.1 percent of the respondents said they have not been part of any peace-related initiatives.

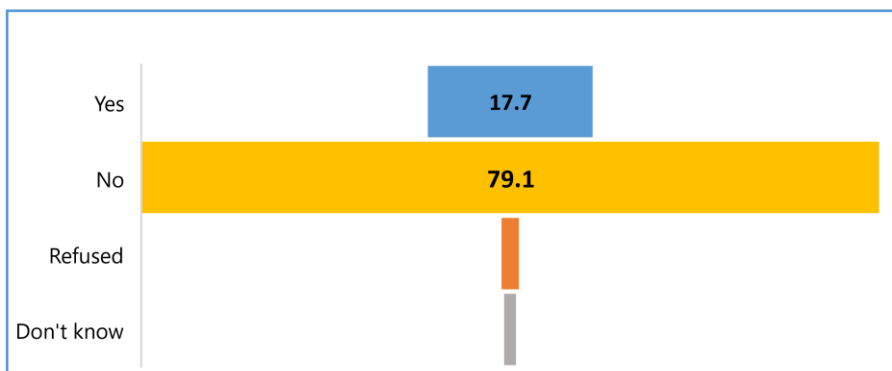


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents involved in the peace process

When sought of their perception about whether they, the respondents or their communities are represented in the peace process, most of them said they are not represented.

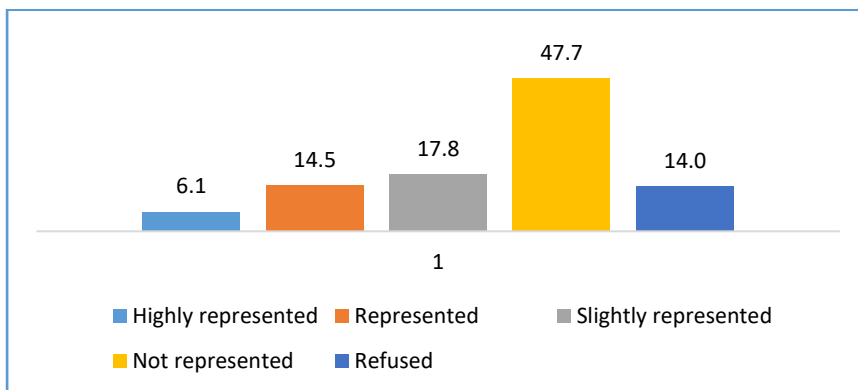


Figure 2. Percentage of respondents' communities involved in the peace process

While 80 percent of the survey respondents wanted to be approached regarding the peace process, the necessity of their engagement was likewise echoed in the FGDs. For instance, *“whenever there is a national process, every person’s voice, especially that of minorities should be heard. All people who are living in the society must be asked about their needs and demands. There should be a survey conducted that can cover people’s concerns, but so far it has not taken place.”*¹⁰ Or as another respondent said: *“We have not experienced any programs conducted to reflect on ethnic minorities’ concerns and problems.”*¹¹ Besides these sentiments, other pertinent concerns of the minorities in regard the Afghan peace process were observed in the duration of the study and which the researchers clustered in the following categories:

A. Minorities’ general concern regarding the peace process in Afghanistan

The culled and collated qualitative data of the study revealed that there are several common concerns related to minorities’ rights and privileges as citizens and individuals in Afghanistan. These issues are in relation to their general fears, insecurities, and sufferings from the overall turbulent

¹⁰ FGD-Bamian-Mix-13-08-2020

¹¹ FGD-Ghor-Male-16-08-2020

atmosphere of political unrest before and during the peace negotiations. They include restrictions and/or removal of freedom of expression, an increase of civilian victims and casualties, as well as worries about the Taliban's actual commitment to a real peace and reconciliation process. In other words, in this category of concerns, most of the research participants from the minorities worried about losing their civil, political liberties, and freedoms as citizens of Afghanistan. Losing access to public services such as education, security, and health services is an example of major and pressing issues that survey respondents were worried about and should be advocated for in the peace negotiations. Nonetheless, as a citizen-oriented approach, this category also raises concerns with the power structure and elite politics that arbitrarily exclude citizens and thus cause the creation of minorities along with other issues of suffering for them. Some of the concerns under this category are as follows:

1. **The center-periphery model of distribution of and access to facilities and opportunities.** This for ethnic minorities is a hurdle ahead of their civil and political participation in the country. Qualitative data reveals that minority groups who are residing in rural areas and villages of Afghanistan can barely get a chance to know what is happening in the capital with the governance and politics. They also claimed of not having a representative to care about them in the capital. They fear to talk about politics and political participation in their own communities because dominant leaders in the center or at the lead of those communities might get an intention of rebellion or conflict with the raise of such discussions. As participants of an FGD expounded on this: *"those leaders pretend to be their representatives while people do not see themselves represented, but they are using force and pressure to continue the situation as it is."*¹² Security, which the minorities cannot find a solution for is another indication that adds to the issue of access to the center. People from unsafe areas find it extremely hard to get to the capital.¹³ Such sentiments on access to information, protection, and security are valid and legitimate rights of any member of society, individual or collective, in this case, minority groups.

¹² FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-05-07-2020

¹³ FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-05-07-2020

2. **Talibans' treatment of minorities.** The qualitative data shows that minorities are concerned about certain threats directly affecting them. As articulated in one of the FGDs, *"if the Taliban would demand Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan and current Afghan government removed, they will not be able to work, study, in a better environment, and that a series of limitations will be set for them that will further decrease their chances to benefit from public services."*¹⁴ Also, they stated that the Taliban may deny giving the rights and chances to minorities in Afghanistan and may not fulfill their current promises. They are afraid of the Taliban returning to their previous terms' practices of 1996-2001 when they added the variable of a certain type of *ideology* to other factionalism and dividing factors of the country.¹⁵ These fears must be addressed if Afghanistan is indeed in the road to genuine and long-lasting peace. The Afghan diaspora in the shared sentiments of the non-dominant minority groups must be given political attention to mitigate its counterproductive effects in the general picture of the country's peace process impacting on economic returns and stability. Shared power necessitates political will and cooperation of all the stakeholders.

3. **Overlooking at the achievements of the last two decades.** Data reveal a common pattern, indicating a chief concern regarding the achievement of the last two decades. As articulated in an FGD, *"our main concern is returning to the past. We fear that we will lose this relative stability."*¹⁶ *"We fear that we will not be able to live a better life, that we will not be able to study, work, and we will have to go under certain restrictions. In such a case, minorities will face more harm because neither now have minorities received their rights and deserving privileges."*¹⁷ Constitution, human rights, women and children's rights, education, and the offshoots of republic values were among post-2001 Afghanistan's achievements that the research participants referred to. It is noteworthy to say that such claims and sentiments are

¹⁴ FGD-Balkh-Mix-20-07-2020

¹⁵ FGD-Kabul-Mix-20-07-2020

¹⁶ FGD-Balkh-Mix-20-07-2020

¹⁷ FGD-Balkh-Mix-20-07-2020

indeed genuine articulations of deprived voices in the prevailing Afghan societal experience.

B. Minorities' specific concerns regarding the Afghan peace process

In the previous category, focus was on the general concerns of minorities in the Afghan peace process, however, in this category, specific minority-related concerns in the Afghan peace process are presented.

While research participants largely raised the issue of prejudice and discrimination as an issue in Afghanistan, their concern was that it may worsen if socio-cultural diversity is neglected and the minorities' voice is not heard in the peace talk.¹⁸ Data also revealed a minority's concern regarding the language, symbols, and models of their culture. They are, for instance, concerned about their mother-tongue being neglected even further and their cultural and religious values not respected.¹⁹

Minorities were also concerned with the power-sharing claiming that *"the past 19 years, power and administration was shared between the dominant minorities. However, non-dominant minorities benefited the least. This is to say that if the future deal is going to form a similar structure like the ones in the past two decades, minorities again will be in a similar or much worse situation of marginalization, exclusion, and prejudice."*²⁰

Additionally, the absence of representatives of non-dominant minorities in the peace negotiations was another concern. The majority of the FGD participants believed that lack of advocacy and representation of minorities in the negotiating team(s) is a critical problem that has directly marginalized them from the whole peace process. They claimed of not having a specific agent or advocate to raise their concerns in the decision-making processes. Moreover, they argued that when not all ethnic groups' concerns count, it indicates a gap that will lead to exclusion of minorities. Apparently, the chosen representatives at the negotiating team are not representing minority communities. Given the lack of representatives,

¹⁸ FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-15-07-2020

¹⁹ KII-Kabul-09-09-2020

²⁰ FGD-Bamian-Mix-27-07-2020

minorities claimed more deteriorations in the aftermath of the non-inclusive peace deal. The research participants further argued that their representatives are not present in the process, and their rights and demands are not represented and defended. They also expressed worries that if such a minority-exclusive peace deal proceeds, they will be deprived of their rights and privileges even more.²¹ Remarkably, the minority groups who participated in the study articulated very clearly and strongly their disappointments, fears, and anxieties as well as their demands and wishes in the on-going peace negotiations and discourses.

The minorities’ concerns on the Afghan peace process were further threshed out in an open-ended question in the survey tool. Results showed a wide range of concerns. The chart below presents the top-10 concerns of the respondents.

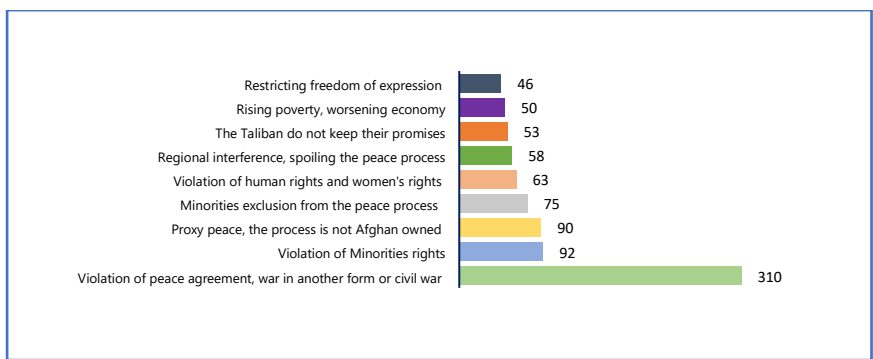


Figure 3. Minorities’ top 10 concerns about the peace process

III.II. Minorities’ Demands and Priorities in the Peace Process

The minority’s demands derived from the FGDs and KIIs are clustered into two general and specific categories.

²¹ FGD-Bamian-Mix-22-07-2020

A. Minorities' general demands regarding the peace process in Afghanistan

A. Preserving the Achievements of the Post-2001 Afghanistan

In general, research participants from the Afghan vulnerable minorities demanded the protection and preservation of post-2001 Afghanistan's achievements such as the right to education and work for men and women, freedom of speech, free media, human rights and values, the constitution, democracy, children's rights, civil and political rights, and equality against the law. Referencing the Taliban era, research participants widely responded that they are not willing to compromise any of the above-mentioned values unless they are forced to. Respondents from minorities especially stressed the freedom of expression asserting that the news and media not to be censored during and after the peace process, and that all details of the process should be publicly shared.²² In view of these perspectives and beliefs of the study participants, the objectives of the investigation to gather and describe the general opinion of the non-dominant minority groups in the peace process of Afghanistan and propose a framework for reforms were adequately achieved especially in terms of the articulation for recognition of basic human rights and participation in the peace process.

The research participants also believed that in the aftermath of the peace deal, in order to assure the preservation of the last two decades of achievements, a potential post-peace agreed-upon political settlement would need to support the public institutions particularly those in the sector of education as well as security and defense forces, all of which have played major roles in improving the quality of lives of minorities and all people of Afghanistan. Such a consensus from the study participants is both keen and sound as the continuity of committed efforts, legislation, and action is the winning formula for long-term peace and stability which are exemplified in history by great civilizations.

²² FGD-Balkh-Mix-16-08-2020

These all together will help strive towards building a diverse society that is void of discrimination, and potentially would contribute to building a peace conducive environment.

B. Supporting Civil Society

In the view of the research participants, *"civil society has played an important role in reflecting minority issues in bridging the people with the government."*²³ Thus, members of minority groups in various instances in their FGDs expressed support for civil society representatives to continue their advocacy and activism in protecting and supporting minority rights. In particular, the respondents demanded that civil society activists be given much support in their crusade and likewise, further strengthened. According to the study participants, these actions and moral support to civil societies all together will help towards building a diverse society that is without of discrimination, and which would potentially contribute to building a peace-conducive environment for Afghanistan.

C. Leadership of the Peace Negotiations

Another category of demands stated by the research participants is related to the issue of ownership of peace by the Afghan government and the Afghan people. Data revealed that there was a widespread assumption among research participants that *"Afghan war is a proxy, and so might be the peace."*²⁴ In line of this sentiment, minorities demand that special care should be given to the key external spoilers; otherwise, the peace effort will remain fragmented. This concern is remarkably a collective criticism of other contexts which are similarly situated as Afghanistan in relation to achieving genuine peace and stability highlighted by social and political scientists in the international scene.

D. International and Regional Cooperation

Although FGD participants from minority groups demanded an Afghan-owned, Afghan-led peace process, they also said that to guarantee the inclusion and support for minorities in the peace process, along with the

²³ FGD-Kabul-Mix-11-09-2020

²⁴ FGD-Balkh-Mix-20-07-2020

efforts of the Afghan government's negotiating team, there is an urgent need for international assistance and regional cooperation so that an actual and inclusive peace would be realized and can be sustained. The research participants unanimously opined that external actors can create conditions which can encourage parties to come and remain to the table, to reach an agreement, and attract wider public support. They stressed that such external actors do play critical roles in developing conditions for a long-lasting peace. For instance, *"pressure on the ceasefire to be the first step forward. We want the Taliban to put an end to the war."*²⁵ Given such a scenario, even if the peace agreement leads to the formation of a new government, inclusiveness in the peace process and in the formation of the subsequent government must be prioritized and guaranteed by both the negotiating parties. All the necessary key players in the dialogues must therefore be given their voices, including their respective sociocultural spaces.

E. Inclusive Post-Peace Political Settlement

The respondents from the minority groups as well as several experts had a similar demand as elaborated in the FGDs in Kabul and many other provinces, that the *"administration of the post-peace government needs to be elected by the people or at least through people's representatives in order to create an accountable administration."*²⁶ They asserted the belief that all peace-related governmental institutions need to be provided widespread support, which will automatically lead to the isolation of anti-government elements, but to achieve this goal, post-peace government agencies need to be representative enough. At the same time, a common conviction or sentiment among all the FGD interviewees was that post-peace political and administrative settlement must ensure meritocracy as they claimed that any labeling and ethnic-based division of power and administration may negatively influence the non-dominant minorities and the overall national harmony.

²⁵ FGD-Balkh-Mix-16-08-2020

²⁶FGD-Kabul-Mix-11-09-2020

B. Minority's Specific Demand regarding the Minorities in the Afghan Peace Process

A. Broader Public Participation

Data revealed that Afghan non-dominant minorities want broader public participation in the peace process rather than only involving the belligerent groups who do not necessarily represent the diverse constituencies. Blaming the Taliban, especially minorities, has put forward the question of why the Taliban alienated vulnerable groups such as women, minorities, and youth from the peace process while trying to be part of the future political settlement in Afghanistan?²⁷ Literature indicates that larger public participation in the peace process will help "produce broadly legitimate peace agreements," "widen the range of issues addressed," and "strengthen the capacity for inclusive political participation in future governance."²⁸ Such observations, demands, and concerns from among the study respondents more than sufficiently laid down the framework for a more inclusive Afghan peace dialectic.

Experiences of the Bonn Agreement in 2001, which was intended to build the State of Afghanistan are widely reflected in the responses of the study participants. They argued that it was because of the ethnocentric structure of power-sharing in the Bonn agreement that led to the exclusion of minorities from taking part in such an important process, and as a result, until today minorities have not benefited much to be able to improve their lives as well as in socio-political participation. In light of this, the respondents argued that the peace process should be inclusive, and minorities' demands should be taken into consideration. Also, they demanded that non-combatant groups including women and minorities should have their own role in the peace negotiations and dynamics. Furthermore, the respondents claimed that people's representatives

²⁷ FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-15-07-2020

²⁸ Catherin, Barnes. *Owning the process: Public participation in peacemaking*, Conciliation Resources.

should be introduced by the people and should not be assigned by dominant groups, as it has been a practice traditionally.²⁹

B. Developing Discourse on Minorities

Responses from the research participants emphasized the fact that there is no majority ethnic group in Afghanistan, and thus the country remains a state of minorities. This general perspective as gathered in the investigation is a critical mindset of the populace that explicitly confirms an existing need and pressing problem in the Afghan society, the issues of exclusion and inclusion in the conduct of affairs like in the peace process. Minorities expect and stress to address the issue of Afghan minorities at national and international levels to develop a mainstream and dominant minority discourse. Followed by this and equally important is the issue of recognition and respect for minorities' identity. Thus, given the ethnic diversity of the Afghan society, minorities also demanded official recognition and protection of their ethnic, racial, and religious values and differences.³⁰ Noteworthy indeed were the expressed insights and sentiments of the respondents in the survey and FGDs along the continuum of progressive and radical discourse frames towards Afghanistan's success in achieving genuine and enduring peace, and these were all in concordance with equal representations of all minority groups, with no one left behind, and no more silent voices. Time and again, the vital role of a well-represented negotiating panel is the key to any sincere action towards peace.

C. Positive Discrimination

This study has also shown that in order to open a space for the inclusion and integration of minorities across the country's politics and administration where ethnic, religious, and racial differences of non-dominant minorities are respected, positive discrimination must be upheld. Several interviewed experts for this study said: "there is a need to enact and follow the positive discrimination approach to make sure underprivileged and marginalized groups also have a chance to enjoy their

²⁹ FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-20-07-2020

³⁰ KII-Kabul-15-07-2020

individual and group rights and privileges, compared to the dominant groups.”³¹ It is in such conditions that minorities will benefit and enjoy their political, civil, and religious liberties. Interestingly, Afghanistan’s endemic socius is an elaborate and colorful fabric of an authentic diverse and pluralist nation just waiting to be recognized in the whole gamut of socio-political and economic affairs and agenda, most importantly, in the peace process and discourse.

D. Socio-Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion

The issue of religious/sect diversity is another factor that minorities overwhelmingly articulated in the survey and FGDs that should be given attention and priority for state protection and preservation. Moreover, they claimed that every minority’s culture, beliefs, and traditions, which are in fact protected in the constitution, have to be respected, rights of religious freedom for Shia Muslim minorities and likewise for Ismaili communities, Hindu and Sikhs for example.³² Referring to several historical tensions, including Afghanistan’s civil war in the 1990s and the Taliban’s era in 1996-2001, participants in several FGDs considered the exclusion of one’s social and religious differences as the underlying cause of conflict.³³ The peace process and its agreed-upon outcomes should acknowledge the ethnic, language, and religious/sect diversities. Fourteen ethnic groups are mentioned in the Afghanistan Constitution, and there are several more. Besides, in the diverse Afghan society over 40 languages are spoken.³⁴ Thus, neglecting one’s language, ethnicity, or religion, ultimately means neglecting one’s identity which triggers more societal conflicts. Indeed, it is for these reasons that minorities demand a pluralist and diverse space where minorities with different backgrounds can live together in peace and harmony. Such insights, concerns, and demands of the Afghan minority groups are well in the way to a truly sound and long-lasting peace in Afghanistan, with every ethnic population fully and totally embraced in the overall picture considering the history and geographical location of the country being in the crossroads of civilization in Central Asia. Afghanistan

³¹KII, Kabul,

³² FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-05-07-2020

³³ FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-05-07-2020

³⁴ Lewis et al., 2013

as a melting pot in the region must take cognizance of the contributions of the different ethnicities throughout the ages and move towards globalization within this framework as it addresses and resolves its internal conflicts for the attainment of peace.

E. Forming A Coalition/High Council for Non-Dominant Minorities

Respondents strongly stated a fact that minorities do not enjoy or have a specific address which can reflect their concerns and demands. They, for instance, claimed that parliament while formally stated to be the representative of the people, but addressing the minority-related issue has not been on their agenda of discussion so far.³⁵ Therefore, one of their top demands was to form a minority coalition where representatives of all marginalized minorities come together through a legitimate agreed-upon mechanism for the following causes: 1) to take the position of minorities and lobby for the protection and support of their rights in each political development, 2) to share the concerns and demands of minorities with peace stakeholders, and ensure their inclusion, 3) to advocate for minority's broader inclusion in politics and administration.³⁶ Whether and how these needs will be fulfilled by the government or other stakeholders need further investigations. Members of minority communities did not have a solid idea of how and what specific mechanism the government must think of, while the study shows that they want the government and development agencies to contact the heads of associations and councils.³⁷

F. Inclusive Peace Process

Respondents from the minority groups were concerned with the fact that their share and participation in the peace process are not sufficient, because they claimed that they were not only excluded with no role in the process by the Taliban, but also the government has paid minimal attention to them. It was said, *"as a minority group, even if symbolic, we have not been included in the process."*³⁸ Quite a valid and legitimate concern by the minorities as non-inclusion automatically means

³⁵ FGD-Badakhshan-05-07-2020

³⁶ FGD-Balkh-Mix-20-07-2020

³⁷ FGD-Balkh-Mix-20-07-2020

³⁸ FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-15-08-2020

marginalization and deprivation in the socio-political spectrum and as such this state of disequilibrium is counterproductive to any peace process or peace talks. Therefore, their participation in the conversations and dialogues must not be ignored. Since inclusiveness may require a process based on multi-level and multi-actor consultations, it was told that minorities need to consider sequential processes in the peace process. To facilitate this process, one way is that minorities raise their concerns through district councils in rural areas and villages and then must proceed it in provincial levels and higher authorities. The second way is to facilitate their large assembly so that their concerns and problems are raised in an appropriate way.³⁹

The fact that minorities are not included in the politics of the Afghan society does bring up the issue that opportunities and social welfare are distributed unjustly, and therefore minorities are demanding equal treatment and fair distribution of opportunities and resources among all including being in the three pillars of the state.⁴⁰ This is to say that they also want this equality and justice to be enforced during the peace process.⁴¹ Such dialectic cannot be ignored if the Afghanistan peace talks are to be successful both in the long run and in the current status quo of an open climate for societal reform and national development.

In view of the aforementioned observations, the research participants put forward in very specific terms several advantages that an inclusive peace process might have: 1) Inclusion of minority will guarantee their rights after a peace agreement, 2) The underlying causes of conflict, which usually remained untouched, will be addressed and relationships damaged by years of hostilities will be repaired. 3) Since an agreement may forge a relationship between parties, and may result in a review of the constitution, thus the wider public participation will increase the comprehensiveness. And, 4) it will decrease the spoilers of peace.

³⁹ FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-18-07-2020

⁴⁰ FGD-Bamian-Mix-13-08-2020

⁴¹ FGD-Bamian-Mix-19-07-2020

G. Create a Conducive Environment for Peace Making

In order for peace to succeed, and peace agreement to last longer, data gleaned from expert interviews revealed several factors that positively contribute to positive peacemaking efforts. Although the socio-political environment is not conducive to peacemaking that could persuade people to tolerance and non-violence, experts and FGDs altogether pointed out several contributing factors attributed to a conducive peace environment: 1) a consensus on the cost of conflict and road map of peace among stakeholders who represent the Afghan government; 2) public support of peace efforts and peace institutions; 3) regional consensus on Afghan peace; 4) strengthening good governance and fighting corruption since among many other factors, corruption, and failed service delivery of state are considered to be the reasons for conflict; 5) The voice of everyone especially the minorities who paid a high price of exclusion and war in Afghanistan must be heard. There should be a mechanism to involve them in all political processes and agreements; 6) There should be a remedy to address the deep-rooted issue of discrimination towards minorities; 7) The post-peace political settlement and appointees in the state situations should be based on the equal chance to everyone and not on dominant minorities only; 8) Decentralization which transfer power and authority from the national level to *provincial* or *local* levels of government within a country; 9) providing job opportunity for people; 10) DDR and re-integration to enforce a possible peace agreement; 11) equality against the law and ensuring justice; 12) Create a condition where both belligerent groups think that they won. A win-win strategy not zero-sum.⁴²

H. A Guarantee for Lasting Peace

Minorities have raised specific concerns followed by relevant expectations about the actual commitment of the warring parties, specifically the Taliban as one of the two signatories of the peace agreement. Since most of the Taliban's released prisoners have joined the battle back, members of the minority groups demand more accountability and commitment to peace and peacemaking as a whole from the Taliban. This demand is also supported and backed by their sufferings from the Taliban in the past, and thus, they ask the international donor community and partners of the

⁴² KIs in Kabul, Balkh, Jawzjan- 12-15-07-2020

Afghan government to pressure the Taliban on fulfilling their commitment and promises to real peace and peacebuilding.

The minority groups' demands were also probed and asked in the open-ended question in the survey tool. Survey results showed a wide range of demands. The chart below presents the top-10 of these articulated demands.

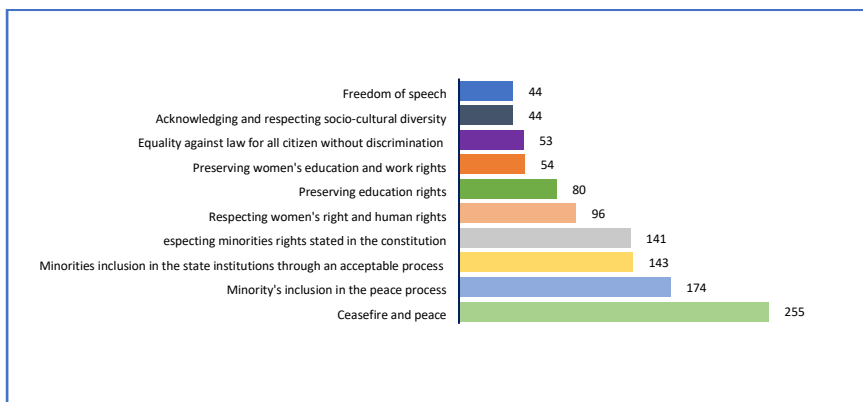


Figure 4. Minorities' top 10 Demand on the Peace Process

III.III. Minority Inclusion Mechanism: Research Participants' Suggested Ideas

Following are data-driven crucial steps needed towards the inclusion of minorities in the Afghan peace process. The rest of the mechanisms are tackled in the recommendations.

A. Establishing a Coalition/High Council of Minorities

The takeaways from the data show that there are various strategies which can be used to include minorities in the peace process. One is to give them an opportunity through forming and supporting a coalition/high council of minorities through which they can raise their voices, concerns, and demands. Given such an opportunity, the minorities will feel more confident that their concerns are properly addressed and therefore

assured of the government's recognition of their communities in the dynamic and polity of the peace talks. Indeed, this platform can effectively play a crucial role in advocating and lobbying for minorities' interests and rights. Moreover and relevantly, participants suggested that a decree by the president or the national reconciliation council's head could ratify the official position and facilitate participation of minorities in the peace process.⁴³

B. Civil Society and Social Media Activism

Additionally, civil society also can play a critical role in connecting minorities and raising their concerns with those in charge, specifically with the government organizations, by having an advocacy role and liaising between minority and government. Minorities have also suggested that a prospective way for inclusion and advocacy is *"to raise their voices and share their concerns through social media in a peaceful and civic way, which will help them compete with other groups."*⁴⁴ Mobilized use of social media was claimed to be a useful way as well in the activism or advocacy for minority rights; *"we can engage in the peace talks and negotiations through social media channels and civil society representatives."*⁴⁵ Further, it was also brought up in the FGDs that minorities believe they can help shape the discourse surrounding peace if there were more forums and venues for the dissemination of information like writing and publishing articles/position papers in the local and national media outlets. Indeed, this articulated willingness for evident dynamic participation in the on-going Afghan peace process eloquently projects the minorities' genuine desire and clamor for national and societal inclusion and membership in an advancing Afghanistan. With their recognition of the role of the civil society in mediating for them and their concerns with the state, the minorities are likewise showing keen interest for authentic collaboration with the critical social institutions, a very encouraging and positive perspective towards national solidarity and progress.

⁴³ FGD-Jawuzjan-Mix-18-07-2020

⁴⁴ FGD-Balkh-Mix-20-07-2020

⁴⁵ FGD-Badakhshan-Mix-05-07-2020

C. Strengthening the Capacity of Independent Institutions to Support Minorities

It is important to strengthen the observing body to take the record of the actions taken and aimed at including voices of minorities in the peace process and in the government body. As an example, an independent body such as the Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) or any other relative national or international organizations can help improve and put light on the transparency and efficiency of such mechanisms and advocacy-purposed meetings.⁴⁶

In addition, there are also serious demands from the AIHRC, on assigning a special commissioner on minority issues. In the AIHRC, there are commissioners who are assigned for specific issues. However, there is no specific commissioner for the rights of minorities. Therefore, it is proposed that AIHRC either assign a commissioner missioned to the study, protection, and support of the rights of vulnerable minorities or set up a special desk to review all matters related to minorities and their rights. This special unit on minorities is needed to function continuously and collaboratively with the government and other non-government agencies in providing administrative and technical support for the inclusion of minorities (political and economic) in the Afghan government and society. Such institutions can reach out to these minorities and inform them of their citizenship and democratic rights.

Recommendations

Overall findings of the study as mentioned above provided sufficient grounded bases for the following recommendations:

The Afghan government and the international community must pay close attention to these identified key recommendations:

- **Minority Right Approach to the Peace Process:** even though minorities' rights and freedoms are respected under international

⁴⁶ KII-Kabul-13-09-2020

conventions, it is highly important to the Afghan state, international community, and the Taliban to employ a minority rights approach to peace talks taking into account the international Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities, 18 December 1992, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, 1981.

- Inclusion of minority groups' interests, concerns, and aspirations must be a cornerstone of the ongoing peace talks and post-peace settlement.
- A future revision of the Constitution must be inclusive of all groups, in particular minorities in the country. The constitutional framework should include representation from minority groups including those of 'stateless' minorities.
- Support the establishment of a coalition of minorities at the national level which could function as the platform to lobby for voices of minorities.
- There is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of independent institutions such as the AIHRC to offer the best possible support to the inclusion of demands, concerns, and priorities of marginalized minorities in the peace process since the AIHRC has no specific unit for minority issues and this can be applied to the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission as well.
- National Reconciliation and Justice: in the post-peace settlement while there is a need for a multi-level engagement of Afghans to the peace process, support is needed to establish an independent entity under Afghanistan's Judiciary unit to conduct investigations and observe justice on crimes against humanity and war atrocities. Transitional justice is deemed necessary for the rights of victims of war as well as long-lasting peace.

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Annex I. List and Description of Minorities Included in This Study

Ethno-religious identities

Turkmans. Located largely in northern Afghanistan, the Turkmans of Afghanistan originated in the Turkic tribes of Central Asia.⁴⁷ While their exact number is uncertain due to shortcomings of the central statistics office, the estimated number of them according to the Minority Rights Group is around 3 percent of the population.⁴⁸ Their socio-political representation in the country is yet to be investigated. Turkmen are Sunni Muslim of Hanafi Tradition and their language is Turkmani which among several other languages are given the status of “third official language”⁴⁹ in the area of their dominance.

Ismaili. Ismaili Shia Muslims includes several ethnicities that include Tajiks, Hazaras, and Pamiris. Members of this group might be categorized as mixed identity-holders. The Shi’a Ismaili community has its base to the immediate north and northwest of the Salang Pass, which takes the main Kabul–Mazar-i-Sharif highway over the Hindu Kush range. A significant number of them live in the extreme northeast of the country.⁵⁰

Baluch & Brahwi. Nasim Jawed provided an approximate figure for the Baluchis and Brahwi population which is around 300,000. They reside in the pastoral lands of the southwest and south. They practice Sunni Islam, and their languages are Baluchi and Brahwi.⁵¹ They like many other micro-minorities are among marginalized ethnic groups, who were subject to discrimination. For instance, in reaction towards their language, they

⁴⁷ Peter Marsden, Peter. “Afghanistan: Minorities, Conflict and the Search for Peace.” In *Minority Rights Group International Report*, p10.

⁴⁸ Minority Rights Group <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/uzbeks-and-turkmens/> (accessed Nov 25, 2020)

⁴⁹ The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Article 16.

⁵⁰ Jawad, Nassim. “Afghanistan A Nation of Minorities.” In *Minority Rights Group International Report*, Manchester Free Press, 1992.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.12

needed to speak Pashtu during Taliban rule in Afghanistan rather than their mother tongue.⁵²

Nuristanis. The Nuristanis live in particularly isolated valleys to the south of Badakhshan in eastern Afghanistan, each with its own language and culture, and can trace their ancestry back to the armies of Alexander the Great.⁵³ They were forcibly converted to Islam from their previous polytheism by Amir Abdur-Rahman in the late nineteenth century, when Kafiristan, as it was known, took on the name of Nuristan. They survive primarily on goat herding.⁵⁴ Their population is estimated to be 100,000. They reside mainly in the east – between the Pashtun tribes of Kunar, the Kalash in Pakistan’s Chitral, and the Tajiks of Badakhshan in the north.⁵⁵ They speak Nuristani.

Qizilbash. The Qizilbash is one of the small minorities of Afghanistan who are Twelver Shi’a Muslims. Most of them used to live in urban areas, where they worked in senior bureaucratic and professional posts. Qizilbash in Afghanistan live in Kabul, Herat, Logar, Kandahar and Mazar, as well as in certain villages in central Afghanistan. Qizilbash is Dari speaking community.⁵⁶

Kyrgyz. The Kyrgyz nomads in Afghanistan are living in Wakhan District of Badakhshan Province. They practice Islam as their religion and their population is estimated to be 2000⁵⁷. They speak Kyrgyz.

Aimaq. While the exact number of Aimaq population in Afghanistan is not known, they are estimated to be about 800,000 living in the west and

⁵² Sadr, Omar. “Afghanistan, The vulnerabilities of Minorities.” In *South Asia State of Minorities Report 2016, Mapping the Terrain*. Action Enterprise, Bangalore, India, 2016. P69.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Marsden, Peter. “Afghanistan: Minorities, Conflict and the Search for Peace.” In *Minority Rights Group International Report*., p34.

⁵⁵ Jawad, Nassim. “Afghanistan A Nation of Minorities.” In *Minority Rights Group International Report*, Manchester Free Press, 1992, p12

⁵⁶ Qizilbash in Afghanistan, <https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14498/AF> (accessed Dec 01, 2020)

⁵⁷ Kazimi, Sayed Reza, On the roof of the world: the last Kyrgyz in Afghanistan, 2012 <<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/context-culture/on-the-roof-of-the-world-the-last-kyrgyz-in-afghanistan/>> (accessed Nov 20, 2020)

north-west of the country.⁵⁸ Aimqaqs are Dari speaking and practicing the Sunni Branch of Islam.

Hindus and Sikhs. Sikhs and Hindus are one of the most marginalized ethnoreligious groups in Afghanistan who have been particularly discriminated against and oppressed. One major reason for their exclusion and discrimination is their race and secondly their belief. Based on Tolo News' research released in June 2016, the Sikh and Hindu population nearly 99 percent of them left the country in three decades. The number of them was 220,000 in the 1980s. That number dropped to 15,000 in 1990s when the mujahideen was in power. The number decreased to 1,350 as of 2016⁵⁹ and continued.

Pashai. One of the minorities of Afghanistan is Pashai also Pashayi, who speaks Pashai that contains 4 dialects, and sometimes to bridge the dialect difference, they use Pashto as their language. They practice Sunni Islam and mostly live in Nangarhar, Laghman and Kapisa provinces.

Wakhi. In Afghanistan, they are found in small, remote villages in the lower altitudes in the Wakhan Corridor and upper Badakshan. They mostly reside in 64 villages on the left bank of the Panj River in the Wakhan Corridor. Kirghiz lives in the high mountain valleys of the area, while the Wakhi lived in the lowlands areas. They are mainly Ismaili Shi'a Muslims. Some, however, are Imami Shi'a and Sunni. Their population is estimated to be 21000 and their language is Wakhi.⁶⁰

Gujur. The Gujurs are comprised of three very closely related people groups that are known collectively as the "Gujur Rajasthani." They are located in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and several states in northeastern India. Most of the Gujurs in Afghanistan are nomadic groups who earn their living as tinkers (traveling menders of household goods), musicians, tradesmen, or fortune-tellers. Gujur groups speak Gujuri, an Indo-Aryan

⁵⁸ Jawad, Nassim. "Afghanistan A Nation of Minorities." In *Minority Rights Group International Report*, Manchester Free Press, 1992, P.14

⁵⁹ Tolo News, 2016 <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/nearly-99-hindus-sikhs-left-afghanistan-last-three-decades> (accessed Dec 04, 2020)

⁶⁰ Wakhi in Afghanistan https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/18693/AF

language. The Gujur of Afghanistan also speak Pashto and/or Dari. They are Muslim.⁶¹

Arabs. Arabs in Afghanistan are living in Kunduz, Takhar and Baghlan provinces. Smaller groups settled in scattered communities as far west as Maimana, Faryab Province. They are practicing the Sunni branch of Islam and Bilingual in Dari and Uzbeki, but speaking no Arabic, they continue to identify themselves as Arab although they have had no contact with the Arabs of the Middle East since the late fourteenth century.⁶²

Sadat ethnic group. One of the minorities in Afghanistan who are spread over the country among other ethnic group and practicing Sunni, Imami Shi'a, and Ismaili. They especially come to the spotlight in May 2018 when they called on the government to insert Sadat ethnicity in new Electronic Identity Cards.

Non-citizens and Stateless minorities

Jogis and Jats. Afghanistan's ethnoreligious minorities also include the country's stateless people. One of the popular stateless communities across Afghanistan is the Jogi also affiliated with the Chori Frosh community- a sub-group of the community. Reportedly, Jogi and Chori Frosh are semi-nomadic communities belonging to the larger Jat ethnic minority who trace their origins to Tajikistan and Pakistan, respectively, and have historically engaged in seasonal migration around Afghanistan and into neighboring states. Like for any other ethnic community, there is no exact data on the number of Jogis in Afghanistan yet estimates suggest that they make up around 20-30 thousand people. It is said that the Jogis are Sunni Muslims and speak Dari.⁶³

The fact that they have not received ID cards so far and remain excluded might by itself show the level of marginalization, however, despite the commonalities that this group has with other ethnic groups based on the

⁶¹ Gujar in Afghanistan, <https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/17549/AF>

⁶² <http://countrystudies.us/afghanistan/44.htm> (accessed Nov 25, 2020)

⁶³ Minority Rights Group, 2017, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/jogi-chori-frosh/> (accessed Nov 10, 2020)

language and sect issues, are discriminated against because of their ancestors coming from “other” land.

According to a 2011 UNICEF study, in 80 percent of this group’s population surveyed in Mazar e Sharif and Kabul, no one is registered or has any form of identification. Some of the journalistic reports highlighted that of those of Jogis who do have ID cards (Tazkera), 83 percent are marked as Kuchi which is a different community. Generally, this is a huge confusion among scholars to differentiate types of non-citizens, because stateless people are not migrants, may not be Kuchis as a *qawm* (tribe), or even not an asylum seeker. They will be placed at the bottom of the list of non-citizens.

Annex II. Data Collection Instruments

Annex 2.1. Focus Group Discussions Guideline

Introduction & Informed Consent

My name is _____ and I work as a *Researcher* with the Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization (HREVO).

The objective of our project is to incorporate the non-dominant minorities’ voices, demands and concerns for an inclusive peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

As part of this project, we are conducting a comprehensive study to understand the situation of minorities, their understanding of their rights and responsibilities under the 2004 Constitution, and their knowledge of the current peace process as well as their views and demands in the peace process. Findings from this research will be used to advocate for incorporating voice of the non-dominant minority groups in the peace process.

We are conducting FDG with members of the non-dominant minority groups and would like to know your experience and views on the ongoing peace process and its impact on vulnerable groups and minorities. Your inputs and recommendations will help us prepare a policy brief and advocate for the inclusion of ethnic and religious minority groups in the peace process.

Before we start, I need to discuss a few ethical issues with you regarding this research. Please note that your participation in this interview is:

- Voluntary - you can withdraw from the interview process at any time you wish to.
- Your views are confidential and HREVO will not disclose any of the discussion notes/information with a third party.
- HREVO will not use your name in any publication linked with the information and views you share here.
- You allow us to record this conversation. This recording will not be used for any purpose other than those stated above and will be saved in a secure drive within HREVO's data management system.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleagues if you have any additional comment or concern. This is my contact information:

Researcher's phone number:

Researcher's email:

Research manager's email.....

Do you have any questions for me before we start the interview?

Data Management Information

Name of the FGD moderator:

Date of discussion:

Province:

District:

Personal details of FGD participants:

Phone number of one of the participants _____

Number	Name	Age	Sex	Education		Ethnicity	Occupation	Sect/religion ⁶⁴
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								

Questions

I. Ongoing Peace Process

1. Tell us about your overall thoughts on the ongoing peace process? (On the spot follow up questions depending on the answer.)
2. Based on the presentation, what would an ideal peace process look like for you as a non-dominant minority?
3. To what extent do you, as a non-dominant minority see yourself involved in the ongoing peace process? (**Follow ups:** How? Describe your involvement? Based on our presentation, give me examples of your involvement in terms of the level of engagement)
4. Do you perceive such an involvement adequate? (**Follow ups:** How? What factors do you think hinders the inclusion of you as a non-dominant minority? What needs to be done to mitigate those hindrances?)
5. What are your demands and concerns in the ongoing peace process?
6. What are the main priorities for you as a non-dominant minority to be taken into consideration in the peace agreement? (**Follow ups:** What do you, as a non-dominant minority, expect to be included in the peace agreement?)

⁶⁴ Do not ask if you find it sensitive

- II. Stages of Peace Process (pre-negotiations/ negotiations and post/negotiations)
 - 7. Do you think peace talk between the United States and the Taliban and then the Afghan government and the Taliban lead to sustainable peace? (**Follow ups:** Why? In your opinion as a non-dominant minority, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the process?)
 - 8. What must be done after a peace agreement to keep the peace sustainable?
- III. Actors in Peace Process (National, provincial, district and village level)
 - 9. Of the key actors presented in the presentation, who are the most important ones at the national level? District? Why?
 - 10. Where do you fit in these groupings of actors presented?
 - 11. What has been your engagement with these actors to share your concerns and advocate for your demands, so far?
- IV. Advocacy Framework: Concerns, Demands, and Tools
 - 12. From the advocacy tools presented in the presentation, what tools can be effective to advocate for incorporating the rights, concerns, and aspirations of you as minorities into the Afghan peace process? (**Follow ups:** what other tools do you suggest that might work for the Afghanistan?)
 - 13. Give us examples of activities that you (or someone/group you know) have done to influence the ongoing peace process?
 - 14. Give us examples of best practices that have worked in your province/district in resolving conflict (or other issues) that we could use for peace?
- V. Involvement Mechanisms: Lessons learned from other peace process
 - 15. Given the discussions we have had about the peace process in other countries, what are the most effective approach to make you feel, as a non-dominant minority, included in the peace process (representation, decision-making, and etc.)? Why?

16. Why do you think x, y, z (approaches) will not work in Afghanistan?

Note for field researchers: Approaches were: Direct representation, observer, consultations, public participation, public decision making, mass action.

Thank you for participation, and time. It is been very helpful. Before ending this discussion, apart from what I have asked so far, do you have anything related to our conversation to share with me?

Annex 2.2. Key Informant Interview Guide

Introduction & Informed Consent

My name is _____ and I work as a *Researcher* with the Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization (HREVO).

The objective of our project is the incorporation of non-dominant minorities' voices, demands and concerns for an inclusive peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

As part of this project, we are conducting a comprehensive study to the situation of minorities, their understanding of their rights and responsibilities under the 2004 Constitution, and their knowledge of the current peace process as well as their views and demands in the peace process. Findings from this research will be used to advocate for incorporating voice of the non-dominant minority groups in the peace process.

We are conducting interviews with peace experts and actors and would like to know your experience and views on the ongoing peace process and its impact on vulnerable groups and minorities. This conversation will take around one hour. Your inputs and recommendations will help us prepare a policy brief and advocate for the inclusion of ethnic and religious minority groups in the peace process.

Before we start, I need to discuss a few ethical issues with you regarding this research. Please note that your participation in this interview is:

- Voluntary - you can withdraw from the interview process at any time you wish to.
- Your views are confidential and HREVO will not disclose any of the interview notes/information with a third party.
- HREVO will not use your name in any publication linked with the information and views you share here.
- You allow us to record this conversation. This recording will not be used for any purpose other than those stated above and will be saved in a secure drive within HREVO's data management system.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleagues if you have any additional comment or concern. This is my contact information:

Researcher phone number:

Researcher email:

Research manager's email:

Do you have any questions for me before we start the interview?

DATA MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Name of interviewer:

Date of interview:

Province:

Name of interviewee:

Age:

Sex: Male / Female

Occupation / Position:

Ethnicity:

Job Affiliation: Government / Non-government

QUESTIONS

- I. [Ongoing Peace Process](#)
 1. Tell us about your overall thoughts on the ongoing peace process? (On the spot probing questions depending on the answer).
 2. What would an ideal peace process look like for you?
 3. How confident are you that a peace deal with Taliban will end the Afghan war? Why?
 4. So far, has the peace process been an inclusive one, inclusive for the dominant and non-dominant minority? (**Follow ups:** How? Give me an example of such involvement. If not, what factors hinder the inclusion of non-dominant minority in the peace process? What needs to be done to mitigate those hindrances?)
 5. What should be the main priorities for non-dominant minority to be taken into consideration in the peace process?
 6. What are their concerns in this peace? What changes should be introduced for non-dominant minority to make them feel included in the peace agreement?
- II. [Stages of Peace Process pre-negotiations/ negotiations and post/negotiations](#)
 7. Do you think peace talk between the United States and the Taliban and then the Afghan government and the Taliban lead to sustainable peace? (**Follow ups:** Why? In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the process for non-dominant minority?)

8. What must be done after a peace agreement to keep the peace sustainable?
- III. Actors in Peace Process (National, provincial, district and village level)
 9. Who are the international-regional-national, sub-national, and local actors of peace in Afghanistan?
 10. How much do you consider ethnic and religious minorities part of these actors?
(Follow up: What has been their engagement with these actors to share their concerns and advocate for their demands, so far?
- IV. Advocacy Framework: Concern, Demand and Tools
 11. What advocacy tools can be effective to advocate for incorporating the rights, concerns, and aspirations of minorities into the Afghan peace process?
 12. Give us examples of activities that non-dominant minorities have done to influence the ongoing peace process?
 13. Give us examples of best practices that have worked in provincial and district level in resolving conflict (or other issues) that we could use for peace?
 14. To make the ongoing peace process more inclusive, what mechanisms/approach should be in place to ensure that vulnerable groups and minorities are engaged in the peace process? **(Follow up:** What can they do themselves? What can others, such as civil society, media, human rights, and else can do for them?

Thank you for participation, and time. It is been very helpful. Before ending this interview, apart from what I have asked so far, do you have anything related to our conversation to share with me?

Introduction & Informed Consent

My name is _____ and I work as a Researcher with the Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization (HREVO).

The objective of our project is the incorporation of non-dominant minorities' voices, demands and concerns for an inclusive peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

As part of this project, we are conducting a comprehensive study to the situation of minorities, their understanding of their rights and responsibilities under the 2004 Constitution, and their knowledge of the current peace process as well as their concerns and demands in the peace process. Findings from this research will be used to advocate for incorporating voice of the non-dominant minority groups in the peace process.

We would like to know your experience and views on the ongoing peace process and its impact on vulnerable groups and minorities. Your answers will help us prepare a policy brief and advocate for the inclusion of ethnic and religious minority groups in the peace process.

Before we start, I need to discuss a few ethical issues with you regarding this research. Please note that your participation in this interview is:

- Voluntary - you can withdraw from the survey at any time you wish to.
- Your views are confidential and HREVO will not disclose any of the interview notes/information with a third party.
- HREVO will not use your name in any publication linked with the information and views you share here.

Do you have any questions for me before we start the survey?

Guide for the researcher:

- At the beginning and end of each question, you are given instructions inside the parenthesis (), which are only for your information to ask the question correctly. Please do not read them to the respondent.
- All questions without specific instructions at the beginning should be asked from all.
- To select the answer to the questions, you must circle the number in front of each option.
- All questions without special instructions have only one answer.

- Questions with instruction of multiple answers could have more than one answer.
- No question is acceptable without an answer, and if it should not be asked, circle the "Not Asked" option.

Demographic Questions

D-1 Respondent's gender: [Do not read out]

Male	1
Female	2

D-2 Age of Respondent: *[If respondent is not sure of his/her age or refuses to answer, make a guess and record your guess below. Write the age in numerals, not words.]*

		Years
--	--	-------

D-3 What is your level of education? [Do not read out below options]

Never went to a school	1
Informal schooling at home or at a literacy class	2
Islamic education at a Madrassa	3
Primary School, incomplete (classes 1 to 5)	4
Primary School, complete (finished class 6)	5
Secondary education, incomplete (classes 7 to 8)	6
Secondary education, complete (finished class 9)	7
High School incomplete (classes 10-11)	8
High School complete (finished class 12)	9
14th grade incomplete (class 13)	10
14th grade complete (finished class 14)	11
University education incomplete (have no degree diploma)	12
University education complete (have degree diploma)	13
Postgraduate/ PhD	14
Refused	98
Don't know	99

D-4 What is your employment status? [Do not read out below options]

Retired	1
Housewife	2
Student	3
Farmer (own land / tenant farmer)	4
Farm laborer (other's land)	5
Laborer, domestic, or unskilled worker	6
Informal sales/ business	7
Skilled worker/artisan	8
Government Office - Clerical worker	9
Private Office - Clerical worker	10
Government Office – Executive/ Manager	11
Private Office – Executive/ Manager	12
Self-employed Professional	13
Small business owner	14
School Teacher	15
University Teacher	16
Military/ Police	17
Unemployed	18
Other (specify) _____	96
Refused	98
Don't know	99

D-5 Are you married or single? [Do not read out the options]

Single	1
Married	2
Widower/Widow	3
Divorced	4
Refused	98
Don't know	99

D-6 Which ethnic group do you consider yourself as a member? [Do not read out below options]

Turkmeni	1
Baloch	2
Qirqiz	3
Nuristani	4

Aimak	5
Arab	6
Pashaye	7
Sadat	8
Qezelbash	9
Bayat	10
Gujar	11
Pamiri	12
Hindu	13
Sikh	14
Jogi	15
Other (specify)_____	96
Refused	98
Don't know	99

D-7 What is your sect/religion? [do not ask if you found it sensitive]

Sunni Muslim	1
Shia Muslim	2
Ismailia Shia Muslim	3
Hindu/ Sikh	4
Other (specify)_____	96
Refused	98
Don't know	99

Q. Survey Questions

Q-1 Please tell us what you know about the current peace process? [do not read the options, listen carefully to the respondents, and circle the options. multiple responses.]

US-Taliban Agreement	1
Release/exchange of prisoner	2
Government's Peace Institutions (Authority)	3
Taliban's Office in Qatar	4
Inter-Afghan Peace Talk	5
Ceasefire/Reduction of violence	6
Negotiation team	7
Negotiation venue	8

Other (specify)_____	96
Refused	98
Don't know	99

Q-2 How optimistic are you that the ongoing peace process will result in sustainable peace in Afghanistan?

Very optimistic	1
Somehow optimistic	2
Neither optimistic nor pessimistic	3
Somehow pessimistic	4
Very pessimistic	5
Refused	98
Don't know	99

Q-3 How happy are you with the peace process with the Taliban so far?

Very Happy	1
Somehow Happy	2
Neither happy nor unhappy	3
Some how unhappy	4
Very unhappy	5
Refused	98
Don't know	99

Q-4 How do you think a peace agreement with the Taliban will affect your living conditions?

Improve it	(Go to Q-4-A)	1
No change	(Go to Q-4-A)	2
Worsen it	(Go to Q-4-A)	3
Refused	(Go to Q-5)	98
Don't Know	(Go to Q-5)	99

Q-4-A Why?

.....

Q-5 Have you ever participated in any program related to peace?

Yes	(Go to Q-6)	1
No	(Go to Q-7)	2

Refused	(Go to Q-7)	98
Don't Know	(Go to Q-7)	99

Q-6 Yes, who had organized the program?

National government	1
Local government	2
High peace council	3
Provincial peace council	4
Non-government organization	5
Local shura	6
Council of minority groups	7
Peace Consultative Loya Jirga	8
Other (specify) _____	96
Not Asked	97
Refused	98
Don't know	99

Q-7 Do you feel you or your community are engaged in the peace process?

Actively engaged	1
Engaged	2
Slightly engaged	3
Not engaged at all	4
Refused	98
Don't know	99

Q-8 Do you feel you or your community are represented in the peace process?

Highly represented	1
Represented	2
Slightly represented	3
Not represented	4
Refused	98
Don't know	99

Q-9 Do you want to be consulted about the peace process?

Yes	(Go to Q-9-A)	1
No	(Go to Q-9-A)	2
Refused	(Go to Q-10)	98
Don't Know	(Go to Q-10)	99

Q-9-A Why?

.....

.....

.....

Q-10 As a minority, how satisfied are you with the current political system?

Very Satisfied	(Go to Q-10-A)	1
Rather satisfied	(Go to Q-10-A)	2
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	(Go to Q-10-A)	3
Rather not satisfied	(Go to Q-10-A)	4
Very dissatisfied	(Go to Q-10-A)	5
Refused	(Go to Q-11)	98
Don't Know	(Go to Q-11)	99

Q-10-A What needs to change? If no change is needed, (Go to Q-11).

.....

.....

.....

Q-10-B Do you want these changes to reflect in the future negotiation with the Taliban?

Yes	1
No	2
Not Asked	97
Refused	98
Don't know	99

Please ask the importance of the following statements and circle one of the answers in each row:

Questions	Very significant	Significant	Not significant at all	Refused	Refused
Q-11 The agreement should guarantee the right to vote for all citizens.	1	2	3	98	99
Q-12 The peace agreement should ensure protection of the culture and language of all ethnic and religious minorities.	1	2	3	98	99
Q-13 The peace agreement should recognize all languages spoken in Afghanistan as national languages.	1	2	3	98	99
Q-14 The peace agreement should guarantee distribution of government positions along ethnic lines.	1	2	3	98	99
Q-15 The post-peace government should ensure education in mother tongue for all.	1	2	3	98	99
Q-16 The peace agreement should include provisions for citizens to elect local government authorities.	1	2	3	98	99
Q-17 The peace agreement must ensure access to health and education services for all.	1	2	3	98	99

Q-18 What are three main priorities for you as a member of minority to be taken into consideration in the peace process?

- a)
- b)
- c)

Q-19 What are your top three concerns in the ongoing peace process?

- a)
- b)

- c)
- Q-20 What must be done after a peace agreement to keep the peace sustainable?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)

Surveyor Conclusion

We would like to thank you for the time you gave and answers you provided us. The information you have provided us will stay confidential and will be analyzed to prepare a policy brief and advocate for the inclusion of ethnic and religious minority groups in the peace process.



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از پروسه صلح افغانستان
د افغانستان د سولې څخه
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