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EUPOL Afghanistan mission member from April 2008 – October 2015

Last Position: Head of Mission Support

Ambassador Andreas von Brandt
Head of the EU Delegation to Afghanistan

Endangerment of EUPOL local staff after the withdrawal of the international NATO troops

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

the withdrawal of international NATO troops from Afghanistan is in full swing and will be completed in the near future.

EUPOL Afghanistan was part of the European Union External Action Service (EEAS). It was one of the EU's civilian Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions and was set up in 2007 to assist the Afghan government in reforming its police service. In May 2010, the Council of the European Union extended the Mission's mandate until May 2013, and in November 2012 again by another 18 months. In December 2014, the Council decided to extend the mandate until December 2016. EUPOL Afghanistan was headquartered in Kabul and had field offices in different provinces (Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz, Fayzabad, Meymaneh, Herat, Chagcharan, Bamyan, Pol-e Khumri, Logar, Tarin Kot and Lashkar Gah). Both the headquarters in Kabul and all field offices employed Afghan local staff, and each local staff member had an employment contract with the Mission, and worked as interpreters, program staff or administrative staff. 122 local staff were still working for EUPOL Afghanistan in 2016. After the Mission, they worked for Afghan institutions, international organizations and national embassies. A few local staff were able to leave the country officially thanks to their previous contracts with the United States and individual European Union member states organizations; some came to Europe as part of the waves of refugees since 2015/16 and have been recognized as refugees or are being temporarily tolerated. Based on the recognized risk that they are facing as employees of international organizations, they now live in the USA, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Norway, among others. In the last few weeks and days, many of the former EUPOL Afghanistan local staff have turned to their direct superiors pleading desperately for assistance or have started public calls via Facebook/LinkedIn.

EUPOL Afghanistan management had paid a lot of attention to the problem of the direct endangerment of local workers since 2013 and previously turned to CPCC Brussels with request for possible asylum and migration support to EU countries. Unfortunately, this could not be granted because the responsibility for questions of asylum and migration lies within the member states, according to CPCC.

Around 70 former EUPOL Afghanistan interpreters and administrative staff are currently looking with their families for a safe location, especially in Europe.

Some actions are now being taken by individual states that previously provided seconded employees to EUPOL Afghanistan:

United Kingdom: The organization Sulha-alliance is campaigning for the rights of Afghan former interpreters who served with the British armed forces. The organization has confirmed that so far no EUPOL Afghanistan local staff have been given protection under the UK's Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). Those interpreters who can show a clear working relationship with the UK's former EUPOL Afghanistan contingent can make an application to ARAP (contact: localstaff-afghanistan@mod.gov.uk or on 0792 907 303). However, so far the applications from EUPOL interpreters have been rejected on the grounds that they have not been directly employed by the Government of the United Kingdom.

Netherlands: The Dutch have started, very slowly, to accept relocation requests from EUPOL Afghanistan interpreters who can show a clear link working with the Dutch contingent. They can apply for the resettlement programme by sending an email to the Dutch embassy in Kabul: kab-ca@minbuza.nl. In this e-mail they must include as much information as possible, e.g. employment dates, contract, photos, names of Dutch personnel with whom they worked.

Germany: In May 2021, German Afghanistan experts and numerous initial signatories addressed German government agencies and the public with a call to "bring Afghan local staff to safety". Under the leadership of the "Afghan Local Forces sponsorship network (Patenschaftsnetzwerk Afghanische Ortskraefte)," the "Center for Political Beauty (Zentrum fuer Politische Schoenheit)" is funding a safe house in which 45 affected people and their families have already sought protection.

Dear Ambassador, we respectfully ask you to please take this matter up and put it on the agenda in Brussels. Instead of individual actions, there should be a joint and coordinated action by the European Union! Former Afghan local workers who worked for EU organizations and are now at risk with their lives should urgently experience our support!

The President of the United States, Joe Biden, put it as follows: "Our message to those women and men is clear: There is a home for you in the United States, if you so choose. And we will stand with you just as you stood with us. "

Such a statement and relevant actions should also come from the European Commission and the member states!!

Thank you for very much in advance for your commitment and actions!

Sincerely, I remain in anticipation of your positive answer with my best wishes,

Andrea Thies

