



Association for  
**Iranian  
Studies**

AIS-CAF Statement on Recent Events in Afghanistan  
September 6, 2021

The Association for Iranian Studies (AIS) and its Committee for Academic Freedom (CAF) remain deeply concerned about the state of academic freedom and the right to education for women, ethnic minorities, scholars, students, and journalists in Afghanistan. The deterioration of civil and human rights in the country is evident after the rise of the Taliban to power on 15 August 2021. We call upon the AIS members and colleagues in other Persianate academic organizations to join us in supporting the academic freedom of Afghan citizens by helping to host displaced scholars at their institutions.

AIS is a private, non-profit academic society founded in 1967 to support and promote scholarship and research on Iran and the Persianate world at the international level. As an independent, non-partisan, non-political, multidisciplinary international community, the association publishes *Iranian Studies*, the principal journal in the field. AIS membership includes over 500 scholars, students, academic and other professional researchers. We are committed to encouraging the free exchange of ideas and academic freedom of speech, both within and beyond the geographical boundaries of Iran. The Association's Committee on Academic Freedom has been following the concerning news of the recent events in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has been and will remain an integral part of the Persianate world. It is also a multi-ethnic and religious society, and no political, religious, or ethnic force can ignore its diversity and dynamism. Regrettably, however, the battle for hegemony in Afghanistan among the global and regional powers, as well as the militant Islamists rivalry for establishing a repressive theocracy, have exacerbated the violation of civil and human rights, including academic freedom in the country.

Caught between two regressive forces of religious extremism and external powers, women, ethnic-religious minorities, independent scholars, students, and journalists have been the most vulnerable sectors of Afghan civil society over the past few decades. Their academic freedom, right to education, and freedom of expression have been constantly violated by structural, cultural, and physical violence. The recent return of the Taliban to power has led to the deterioration of their living conditions and has intensified the repression, marginalization, and exclusion of the Afghan subaltern in its entirety.

After decades of foreign interventions in the context of the Cold War followed by the "global war on terror", Afghanistan remains a war-torn country. Wars and its humanitarian catastrophes have been the fertile grounds for the rise and revival of extremist ideologies with no respect for civil and human rights. The "war industry" and the failed policies of the "global war on terror" have profoundly contributed to the current crisis. Hence, the world, including Afghanistan's neighbors and the West, in particular, have a moral responsibility not to abandon displaced Afghan citizens who have lost their livelihoods in a short span of time. Afghanistan needs global support for comprehensive economic and political development to break the vicious circle of war, violence, poverty, extremism, and the violations of civil and human rights. More immediately, however, the international society, including academic

institutions throughout the world, must act urgently to support Afghan citizens who are either in immediate danger inside Afghanistan or displaced in refugee camps across the globe.

The Association for Iranian Studies (AIS) and its Committee for Academic Freedom (CAF) have been closely collaborating with various organizations to help evacuate Afghan scholars, students, journalists, artists, and their families and will continue its mission in the future. Members of CAF and AIS Council have leveraged our contacts and networks since August 15 to secure academic hosts for our Afghan colleagues at risk, and have served as an information clearing house for various universities and our institutional members. We hope AIS members and colleagues in other academic organizations will join us in supporting the academic freedom of Afghan citizens and taking immediate action through their institutions to help those whose life and security have been compromised as a result of this unfolding tragedy.