



International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism

"Surviving Terrorism: The Power of Connections" High Level Event

20 August 2021, 9.00 a.m. – 11.00 a.m. EDT (online)

Statement by H.E. Mr. Ghulam M. Isaczai

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism

Thank you, Ambassador Santos Maraver,

Excellency, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres,
Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov,
Distinguished delegates, victims and their loved ones, participants, and representatives of
Victims Associations,

It is my honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism. In 2017, Afghanistan tabled Resolution 72/165 which designated the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism because we believe that when discussing terrorism, we should not just mention casualty figures and other statistics but pay tribute to the memories and aspirations of the innocent lives taken, severely hit and changed by this menace. We understood the importance and the power of honoring and protecting the real faces and stories of everyone who suffers from this brutality and horror of terrorist actions, and we are proud to see how Members and non-Members of the Group share this vision.

Excellencies,

As the representative of the Republic of Afghanistan, I must briefly touch upon the unfolding events of the past weeks in my country, which cannot be disconnected from international terrorism. Thousands of Afghan lives have been impacted by terrorists' use of crude tactics such

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as large-scale suicide and car bombings, mines and IED attacks, and targeting killings to achieve their goal of reaching power.

On behalf of the Group of Friends, I would further like to stress that the Taliban now in power must abide by their promises and international commitments to ensure the rights of women, children, minorities and victims of terrorism and their families. They must protect the safety and security of all Afghan and international citizens and respect international human rights and humanitarian law. They must cease their support of international terrorist groups and honor their commitments to prevent Afghan territory from being used to attack or threaten any country.

Today is a day to remember the victims that we have lost and those who have survived, pay tribute to them express empathy to grieving families, and recognize all people who continue to suffer from their horrific experiences. We are especially reminded to acknowledge the people of Afghanistan and remember the impact and longstanding suffering caused by terrorism, which disproportionately affects women and children. Above all, it is a day to stress that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations should be strongly and unequivocally condemned without reservations. All acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, where and when they occur, and who commits them. No homage to victims of terrorism is complete unless perpetrators of these heinous terrorist acts are brought to justice, and in this regard, we urge Member States to fulfil their obligations.

Preventing and combating terrorism requires strong international cooperation. It should bring together Member States, the United Nations system, and all relevant stakeholders - including victims of terrorism who must play a central role in all our counter-terrorism efforts. This is why the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism was established and as such, we remain firmly committed to expand our efforts to raise awareness and solidarity on the need to promote and protect the rights of victims of terrorism, mainly women and children, and provide them with the support and assistance, with gender considerations, and to amplify their messages to counter the narrative of destruction and intolerance promoted by terrorist groups. Our collective work to combat terrorism will only be effective and sustainable when we seek to understand and respond to the root causes of violence, embed human rights and gender informed approaches into our work, and draw on good practices and lessons learned. Empowering victims to have their voices heard must be at the heart of these efforts.

Since the formation of the Group of Friends in 2019, we have observed growing momentum towards the full recognition of the vital role of victims as essential stakeholders in our counter-terrorism efforts. This past June, the UN General Assembly successfully adopted the seventh review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that effectively promotes and protects the needs of victims of terrorism and the role victims can play in countering terrorism. We have also seen the creation of platforms such as the upcoming Global Congress of Victims of

Terrorism which will, for the first time, bring together victims in a forum that puts their stories and experiences on the agenda.

But regardless of our progress, terrorism remains an ever-evolving threat. Despite the call for a global ceasefire by the Secretary-General and the UN Member States, the world has witnessed horrific terrorist attacks throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Around the globe, particularly in conflict zones, we have seen how terrorist groups have continued to cause death, despair, and destruction. They have cut off access to essential life-saving resources, including healthcare and humanitarian assistance.

This is why this year's theme on "**connections**" is so important. It is a theme that reflects the importance of solidarity and the need for the international community to promote a joint message against the actions of terrorists and those who seek to spread fear and hatred. It is a call for Member States to redouble their efforts to ensure nobody is left behind and that victims are provided with assistance and support during their difficult experiences.

As the Group of Friends of the Victims of Terrorism, we will continue to discuss ways to institutionalize a comprehensive voluntarily programme to support Member States in developing their national plans to assist victims of terrorism. We will base this programme on recommendations in the Secretary-General's report titled "Progress made by the United Nations system in supporting Member States in assisting victims of terrorism" (A/74/790). This programme will ensure the availability of vital resources and expertise and it will also send a strong message that the United Nations system recognizes the roles of victims of terrorism and is committed to helping them overcome their trauma and rebuild their lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a lot of work left to be done, but I believe that our joint global expertise and experience will help us take concrete steps towards countering terrorism and ensuring that victims are heard, valued, and provided the opportunity and global platform to share their views and stories.

Thank you very much.