



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

Ms N. Sturgeon MSP
First Minister
Scottish Government

LF/KN/Sturgeon211221
21 December 2021

By email

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I am writing to you in regard to the critical situation that has been unfolding in Afghanistan and asking you:

- 1) To support efforts to eliminate all barriers to girls' and women's participation in education in Afghanistan, and the rights of women and girls.
- 2) To enhance efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people who are undergoing great hardship and call on all parties to allow safe, unhindered access to the United Nations and its agencies.
- 3) Actively welcome and support Afghan refugees fleeing violence and facilitate family reunification of Afghan refugees already living in their country, including the rescue and resettlement efforts of teacher trade union activists from our Education International member organisations who are under threat.

The Taliban, which seized power earlier this year, is reversing decades of educational and human rights' progress and targeting schools and educational institutions to hinder girls' education and erase women's participation. From 1996 to 2001 it barred girls and women from almost all work, the right to vote and to access education. Despite recent assurances from the Taliban, Education International (EI) member organisations in Afghanistan are reporting that the situation is getting worse for women teachers and students, especially girls.

The international community needs to act to ensure that the right to education for all is safeguarded and particular attention is given to decisions and policies impacting on girls and women in Afghanistan. The safety and security of all students and educators, especially girls and women are severely threatened. The Taliban government recently barred girls and women from attending secondary schools (grades 7 to 12). Due to a severe drought, the security situation and the harsh winter, half of the country's population (39 million), mostly women and children, face starvation and need urgent humanitarian assistance.

The EIS supports colleagues in Afghanistan; the National Teachers Elected Council (NTEC) and the Afghanistan Teacher Support Association (ATSA) are both affiliated to Education International (EI). A letter to the Education International Executive Board from NTEC stated that teachers and other public workers have not received their salaries for over 5 months and that hunger and desperation is increasing by the day. They are requesting urgent and immediate support.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Larry Flanagan
General Secretary