

# CLAWS Newsletter



Afghanistan Khabar Pana | Volume I | No. 5

by Akashika Mate

## **DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS**

### **1. Taliban Defends Public Executions as Islamic Law Amid Global Dissent ([Daily Times, April 11](#); [AP News, April 13](#))**

In a grim display of the Taliban's interpretation of justice, four men convicted of murder were publicly executed across three Afghan provinces on April 11—the highest number of executions carried out in a single day since the group returned to power in 2021. The executions, held in sports stadiums in Badghis, Nimroz, and Farah, drew large public crowds. Witnesses in Badghis described the event as both emotional and disturbing, with victims' relatives firing the fatal shots, a practice the Taliban has revived from their first rule in the late 1990s. The Taliban Supreme Court said the men were given due process under what they call "precise and repeated" trials. In keeping with their interpretation of Islamic law, families of the victims were given the option to pardon the accused but declined. Human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, have condemned the executions as cruel, inhuman, and in violation of international legal standards.

In a speech released on April 13 via Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, Akhundzada defended the executions, stating that enforcing divine punishment is a religious obligation. "Islam is a complete system," he said. "It is not just rituals—it includes every divine command, including enforcement of punishment." The executions come at a time when the Taliban are attempting to re-engage with the international community. Despite international outrage, the Taliban show no signs of reversing course, reaffirming their commitment to a rigid interpretation of Islamic governance and the consolidation of absolute authority.

### **2. Taliban Expands Ban on Visual Media; Outcry Over Press Freedom ([Kabul Now, April 11](#))**

In yet another blow to Afghanistan's shrinking media landscape, the Taliban has extended its ban on broadcasting images of living beings—including people and animals—to three additional provinces: Jowzjan, Zabul, and Parwan. The move, announced by the Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC), brings the total number of provinces affected by the restriction to 13. The ban, enforced by the Taliban's Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, is reportedly part of the regime's broader implementation of its so-called 'Vice and Virtue' law,

signed by supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada in August 2024. Under this law, Taliban morality police have sweeping powers to censor content they deem un-Islamic. According to the AFJC, the directive has already led to the shutdown of at least one local state-run television station in Parwan. While the orders were issued in writing in Jowzjan, journalists in Zabul and Parwan report receiving them verbally—underscoring the often arbitrary and opaque nature of Taliban enforcement.

The ban, which prohibits any visual representation of living beings, has disrupted programming for TV broadcasters and further constrained radio and digital outlets already operating under strict limitations. Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, over 20 directives have been issued to restrict media activities, forcing more than half of the country's media outlets to shut down. Many journalists have fled the country or gone underground. Female journalists, in particular, have faced intensified repression, ranging from bans on broadcasting their voices in some provinces to enforced gender segregation in newsrooms. The AFJC has condemned the latest ban as a “grave threat to press freedom” and urged the Taliban to reverse their decision and uphold Afghanistan's media law. As the regime continues to tighten its grip, calls are growing for the international community to support Afghan journalists and protect the last vestiges of independent media in the country.

### **3. Tensions Surface Within Taliban Leadership Amid Humanitarian Concerns ([Amu TV, April 12](#))**

In a rare internal meeting, Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban's acting interior minister, sat down with Abdul Kabir, the group's refugee minister, to address the growing political and humanitarian pressures facing Afghanistan. The Ministry of Refugees reported that the two leaders focused on the mass deportation of Afghan migrants from Pakistan and called for improved coordination between security agencies and the refugee ministry to support the reintegration of returnees. The discussion takes place against a backdrop of rising tension within the Taliban's top ranks. Haqqani has voiced concerns over the increasingly authoritarian governance style of the Taliban's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada. During a recent meeting in Kandahar, Haqqani reportedly warned that Akhundzada's rigid centralisation of power risks pushing senior leaders to the margins. Further fuelling the internal discord was Haqqani's controversial trip to the United Arab Emirates, which took place without formal leave from his post. His extended absence from public appearances for nearly two months

added to speculation over a growing rift. Although reports suggest some Taliban officials have intervened to facilitate his return, no official statement has been issued regarding his reinstatement. These developments unfold as the Taliban faces mounting international pressure over its human rights record, governance practices, and strained regional ties.

#### **4. Afghan Government Encourages Diaspora Engagement in National Development ([Kabul Times, April 13](#))**

Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa, Afghanistan's acting Minister of Information and Culture, has called on Afghans living abroad to return home and contribute to the country's development and reconstruction efforts. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of a township for returnees in the eastern Kunar province, Khairkhwa assured that the Islamic Emirate supports investments aimed at rebuilding the nation. The ceremony, which was attended by several prominent officials, including Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi and Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mullah Najibullah Hayat Haqqani, highlighted the importance of national unity and development through the active participation of the Afghan diaspora.

In a separate development, Mullah Najibullah Haqqani condemned the mistreatment of Afghan nationals in neighbouring countries, stressing the importance of their legal return to Afghanistan. This sentiment was echoed by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, which has set up a temporary camp for Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan in the Surkhkan area of Laghman province. The camp is fully equipped with essential services, including water, transportation, and other necessary supplies, with local authorities collaborating with partner agencies to support the returnees. The government's ongoing efforts to provide assistance to returning refugees highlight the commitment to reintegrating displaced Afghans and fostering the country's long-term stability and growth.

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **1. Torkham Trade Halted as Technical Glitch Cripples Key Border Crossing ([Dawn, April 03](#); [Kabul Now, April 03](#))**

Commercial activity at the vital Torkham crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan had come to a standstill following a technical breakdown in the scanning system, according to officials and media reports. A Taliban official at the site, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that the scanner had been non-operational for over a week, effectively halting cross-border trade. Engineers have reportedly been dispatched to resolve the issue, and trade is expected to resume shortly. Pakistani media also verified the disruption, noting that only empty trucks stranded on the Afghan side were being allowed to cross. This latest setback follows a tense period earlier this year when the Torkham border was closed for nearly a month due to military clashes between Taliban forces and the Pakistani army. That closure cost Afghan traders up to \$500,000 in daily losses, with thousands of trucks left immobilised on both sides. Torkham, alongside the Chaman crossing, remains a flashpoint in Taliban-Pakistan relations. The breakdown underscores the fragility of trade logistics and the economic toll of diplomatic and technical disruptions along this strategic route.

### **2. Afghanistan Urges Global Support on International Mine Awareness Day ([Amu TV, April 04](#); [Tolo News, April 15](#))**

Marking International Mine Awareness Day, Afghan officials and humanitarian agencies have called for urgent international cooperation to address the country's ongoing landmine crisis—one of the deadliest legacies of its decades-long conflict. At a special event held in Kabul, Nooruddin Rustamkhil, head of the Mine Action Coordination Authority, revealed that over 1,150 square kilometres of land in Afghanistan remain contaminated by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs). While 103 sq km have been cleared in 2024 alone, the challenge remains vast—with mines still being a major cause of civilian deaths, especially among children. Nick Pond, UN Mine Action chief in Afghanistan, warned that 79% of victims over the past year were children and that looming budget cuts in 2025 could shrink demining personnel by two-thirds, severely hampering ongoing efforts.



Returnees are another concern. As Afghanistan prepares to receive an estimated 6,00,000 to 1.4 million returnees in 2025, experts stress the need for explosive ordnance risk education and swift response teams to prevent tragedy in newly resettled areas. Acting NDMA Director Nooruddin Turabi emphasised the need for “extensive cooperation from the international community” and reassured mine action organisations of official support. Echoing this, Deputy Minister of Economy Abdul Latif Nazari highlighted mine clearance as a driver of economic growth and job creation, not just a humanitarian need. With over a thousand square kilometres still at risk, Afghanistan’s call for help is urgent, not only to protect lives but also to lay the groundwork for recovery.

### **3. Italy Announces Plans to Resettle 700 Afghan Refugees Amid Global Displacement Crisis ([Khaama Press, April 08](#); [Vatican News, April 08](#))**

Italy has launched a new humanitarian initiative to resettle 700 Afghan refugees as part of a broader European effort to support displaced individuals from Afghanistan. The announcement follows the ongoing challenges posed by the political turmoil in Afghanistan, particularly after the Taliban’s return to power in 2021. The ‘Humanitarian Corridor’ agreement, finalised on April 08, 2025, aims to provide a safe and dignified resettlement process for Afghan refugees. This initiative involves the collaboration of the Community of Sant’Egidio, various Italian ministries, and international organizations to facilitate the relocation of Afghan nationals. As part of the program, the first group of 338 refugees has already arrived in Italy, with an additional 362 individuals expected to be resettled by July 2025. The program will allow the relocation of 8,200 Afghan refugees across Europe, with Italy playing a pivotal role in offering a secure refuge to those who have endured significant hardship since fleeing Afghanistan. Marco Impagliazzo, president of the Community of Sant’Egidio, described the program as a beacon of hope for those who have faced uncertainty since the Taliban's resurgence. With the broader European focus on addressing global displacement, this program marks a critical step in ensuring vulnerable Afghan nationals can find stability and contribute to their new communities.

### **4. Debunking Disinformation: Bagram Air Base Remains Under Taliban Control ([AFP Fact Check, April 11](#))**

Recent claims circulating on social media have sparked confusion, with reports suggesting that the United States has regained control of Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. The viral headline “*The Taliban Hands Over Bagram Air Base to the United States*” appeared across multiple platforms, leading to widespread speculation about the situation. However, multiple sources, including both US and Taliban officials, have firmly denied these claims, clarifying that there has been no such handover. The Bagram Air Base, which was a central hub for US and NATO military operations before the 2021 withdrawal, has been under Taliban control for more than three years. It is reported that the Taliban seized significant military equipment left behind by US forces during their departure.

The confusion began earlier in April when several outlets reported the sighting of a US C-17 military aircraft over Afghan airspace. These reports, based on the aircraft’s flight path, did not confirm any landing or military presence at Bagram. Further speculation arose from an article posted on Medium, which alleged that CIA Deputy Chief Michael Ellis had visited Bagram in a C-17 transport plane. However, the image used in the article, which showed a US Air Force transport plane landing at Bagram, was later debunked as being from July 2021, not a recent event. CIA Director of Public Affairs Liz Lyons also publicly refuted the claims, stating on April 11 that Ellis had not travelled to Bagram. Likewise, Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban’s chief spokesperson, dismissed the reports as “propaganda,” reinforcing the Taliban’s stance that Afghanistan does not require a foreign military presence.

Despite these official denials, the conversation surrounding Bagram has gained attention in the context of former President Donald Trump’s interest in stationing a small contingent of American troops at the airbase. [In a February 2025 cabinet meeting](#), Trump suggested that a US presence at Bagram could help counterbalance China’s growing influence in the region. However, no concrete actions have been taken, and reports of a US military return to the base remain unsubstantiated. As it stands, Bagram remains under Taliban control, and the US has not re-established its military presence there.

## **5. Trump Administration Ends TPS for Afghan Nationals ([Kabul Now, April 12](#))**

The Trump administration has announced the termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Afghan nationals, a move that has sparked widespread concern about the deportation of thousands. The decision, confirmed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on April

12, will end TPS for around 14,500 Afghans in May. TPS, granted due to ongoing security threats in Afghanistan, has provided protection from deportation and allowed access to work permits. The decision follows a review of Afghanistan's conditions by DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, who concluded that Afghanistan no longer meets the statutory requirements for TPS. Originally designed to protect nationals of countries experiencing armed conflict or disasters, TPS for Afghanistan was first granted in 2022 and renewed in 2023, given the instability under Taliban rule. The announcement has drawn strong criticism from advocacy groups and veterans involved in Afghan resettlement efforts. Many Afghans currently in the US arrived following the 2021 American military withdrawal, and with TPS and temporary humanitarian parole now set to expire, the future of these individuals remains uncertain. This policy shift aligns with broader immigration tightening measures under the Trump administration, which has vowed to carry out mass deportations and limit refugee resettlement. Nationals face an uncertain future and potential deportation.

## **6. Taliban Tighten Security in Kandahar After Deadly Airstrike ([Amu TV, April 12](#))**

The Taliban, despite originally denying the attack, have significantly ramped up security in Kandahar province following a deadly airstrike on April 10, reportedly targeting members of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Baloch Liberation Movement (BLM). Local sources confirmed that the group has increased its presence around the provincial capital and installed multiple checkpoints along the Spin Boldak-Kandahar route. The newly erected checkpoints are closely monitoring cross-border movement from Pakistan. Individuals lacking valid identification are being detained by Taliban forces, as part of a broader clampdown amid growing tensions in the region. Although the Taliban claimed the explosion was caused by unexploded ordnance, multiple sources suggest the incident was an airstrike that resulted in at least 12 fatalities. Notably, this is the first reported airstrike in Kandahar since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. However, it comes amid rising friction between the Taliban and Pakistan over militant activity along the shared border.

While the Taliban have longstanding ties to the TTP, analysts say those connections have hampered efforts to control the group's activities. The expansion of TTP operations into Kandahar signals a troubling shift and could further destabilise the region. "There are many



issues and problems in Afghanistan. The TTP is one of them. Controlling it is not always easy or possible,” said Pakistani journalist Tahir Khan. This latest development highlights the fragile security dynamics along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border and the Taliban’s increasingly complex role in regional geopolitics. As Kandahar grapples with the aftermath, all eyes remain on how both countries will navigate this latest flashpoint.

## **7. Bagh Dara Project Gains Momentum ([@MJAMAynak/X, April 13](#); [AVA Press, April 15](#))**

On April 12, senior Afghan officials, including Acting Minister of Water and Energy Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor, the Governor of Parwan Province, and the Deputy Governor of Kapisa, conducted an on-site inspection of the Bagh Dara Hydropower Project—a major energy initiative set to reshape Afghanistan’s power landscape. Spearheaded by MCC-JCL Aynak Minerals Company Ltd. (MJAM), a subsidiary of the Chinese firm MCC, the project is expected to generate 240 megawatts of electricity. It is a strategic pillar in meeting the power demands of the Aynak Copper Project, one of Afghanistan’s most significant mining ventures. The [MoU between the Ministry and MCC-JCL](#) for feasibility, geophysical, and geotechnical studies for the Bagh Dara hydropower dam was signed on December 01, 2024.

The Acting Minister praised MJAM’s technical capacity and reaffirmed the government’s full support for the project, while provincial leaders pledged to ensure security and emphasised the positive impact on local communities. MJAM President Mr. Song Wenbing reaffirmed the company’s commitment to the project and its broader social responsibility. “During the construction stage, 1,500 job opportunities will be created for local people,” he noted, also highlighting the focus on local employment and skills development. Ma Chenguang, the Consular of Economic and Commercial Affairs at the Chinese Embassy, described the hydropower initiative as a critical investment, symbolising growing bilateral cooperation in infrastructure and energy.

## **8. Iran Equips Afghan Border Wall with Advanced Weaponry and Surveillance Tech ([Khaama Press, April 13](#); [Tasnim News, April 13](#))**

In a significant step to reinforce its eastern frontier, Iran has begun outfitting its border wall with Afghanistan with cutting-edge weaponry and surveillance systems, according to senior military officials. The initiative, led by the Iranian Army Ground Force, aims to bolster national

security and curb illicit cross-border activities such as drug smuggling and illegal migration. Commander of Iran's Army Ground Force, Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari, outlined the plan at a recent press briefing, calling it a "technologically advanced security barrier." Rather than a mere physical fence, the four-meter-high wall integrates a wide array of modern defensive tools and monitoring systems, designed to respond to evolving regional threats. The project spans the 900-kilometre border between the two countries and is scheduled for completion within three years—one year ahead of its original four-year timeline. So far, 30 kilometres of the wall have been completed, with 50 more nearing readiness. The fortified border initiative comes as Iran faces increased security challenges following the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Armed confrontations have erupted sporadically along the frontier, and the influx of Afghan refugees—driven by deteriorating conditions and restricted access to essential services—continues to place pressure on Iranian infrastructure. Officials say the new border fortifications are designed not only to prevent illegal crossings but also to deter terrorist movements and narcotics trafficking—issues that have intensified in the region since the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

## **9. End of Tenure: EU Envoy Concludes Mission on Afghanistan** **([@tomas niklasson/X, April 13](#))**

Tomas Niklasson, the European Union's special envoy for Afghanistan, officially concluded his tenure on March 1, bringing to a close a mission that began in 2021 during a pivotal chapter in Afghan history. Appointed shortly after the Taliban's return to power, Niklasson played a key role in shaping the EU's engagement with Afghanistan. His work was particularly focused on promoting human rights—especially those of women and girls—and ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance amid the country's evolving political and social landscape. In [a statement shared on X](#), Niklasson expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve during what he described as a critical period. He thanked the Afghan people, his colleagues, and international partners for their collaboration and constructive feedback throughout his mission. While stepping down, Niklasson made clear that the EU's commitment to Afghanistan remains steadfast. He affirmed that future engagement will be shaped by the EU Council's directives. Until a new special envoy is appointed, Niklasson's responsibilities will be overseen by Deren Derya, who heads the EU External Action Service's division for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

## **10. Dialogue with Pakistan on Closer Trade Cooperation ([Kabul Times, April 14](#))**

In a recent meeting in Kabul, Nooruddin Azizi, Afghanistan's Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, sat down with Obaidur Rahman Nizamani, the chargé d'affaires of the Pakistan Embassy, to explore ways to strengthen bilateral trade ties. The discussion focused on improving coordination around trade and resolving persistent challenges in the transit of goods between the two neighbouring countries. Both sides highlighted the importance of facilitating smoother trade routes and enhancing joint efforts to streamline existing processes. "Trade and transit between Kabul and Islamabad are fundamental not only for the economic prosperity of both countries but also for regional stability, growth, and cooperation," Azizi stated. In the midst of ongoing diplomatic fallout and regional uncertainties, this engagement signals a rare but important continuation of dialogue—one that prioritises economic pragmatism and cross-border collaboration.

## **11. American Weapons Used in Jaffar Express Attack: Report ([The Washington Post, April 14](#); [Dawn, April 14](#))**

An investigation by The Washington Post has confirmed that weapons left behind by U.S. forces during their 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan were used in the recent Jaffar Express train attack in Balochistan. The March 11 ambush, carried out by Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) militants, resulted in a two-day operation by Pakistani security forces, leaving 33 terrorists dead. Among the arms recovered was a US-made M4A1 rifle, traced back to American supplies originally meant for Afghan national forces. Pakistani authorities, concerned about the growing presence of advanced US weaponry in militant hands, say this is part of a wider trend. Militants including the TTP are reportedly using the 2,50,000+ rifles and 18,000 night-vision goggles that were reportedly left behind in attacks across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. While US officials acknowledge that over \$7 billion worth of equipment was left behind, they maintain that once transferred to Afghan forces, it was no longer under US control. Analysts warn this influx of arms is fuelling a dangerous resurgence in regional terrorism, with little hope of recovery.

## **12. Transport Cooperation with Moscow ([Tolo News, April 14](#))**

In a recent meeting between the Russian ambassador and the acting minister of public works in Kabul, discussions centred around the enhancement of economic and trade ties—particularly in infrastructure. The agenda included key projects such as the repair of the Salang Highway tunnel, the construction of a new tunnel along the same route, and collaboration on the development of Afghanistan's railway system. According to Ministry spokesperson Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas, the two sides explored the supply of equipment and railway components from Russia, alongside modernisation plans for Afghanistan's rail network. Economic experts have welcomed Russia's involvement, with analyst Lal Zazai noting that Afghanistan's strategic location between Central and South Asia could become a regional transit hub—provided the necessary investment in rail infrastructure is made. In the past week alone, the Ministry of Public Works reported the movement of over 76,000 metric tons of trade goods via major railway lines including Hairatan, Khaf-Herat, Torghundi, and Aqina, highlighting the growing importance of cross-border connectivity in the country's economic revival.

### **13. Agriculture Diplomacy with Uzbekistan ([Kabul Times, April 14](#); [Pahjwok Afghan News, April 14](#))**

During his visit to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Mawlavi Ataullah Omari, Afghanistan's acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, held pivotal talks with Uzbekistan's Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Energy and Water. The discussions focused on expanding bilateral cooperation in agriculture, irrigation, and livestock sectors. Key topics included enhancing irrigation systems, fortifying the Amu River basin, and tackling the impact of climate change on water resources. Both sides agreed on the importance of technical exchanges and capacity-building for Afghan staff. Uzbekistan's Agriculture Minister, Ibromkhon Abdurakhmonov, expressed his country's readiness to offer training and expertise to Afghan farmers and agricultural professionals. Omari also highlighted investment opportunities and the importance of collaboration in boosting Afghanistan's agricultural production, particularly in addressing domestic needs and contributing to global food security. He emphasised the urgent need for agricultural technology and expertise to improve Afghanistan's agricultural output. Uzbekistan expressed strong interest in expanding agricultural trade, noting the demand for Afghan products such as cotton, rice, fruits, and vegetables. Both countries pledged to enhance cooperation in plant quarantine and animal health, particularly at border crossings, to facilitate the trade of perishable goods.

#### **14. Qatar Employment Deal Offers Hope for Afghan Workers Amid Rising Unemployment ([Tolo News, April 14](#))**

As unemployment continues to weigh heavily on daily life in Afghanistan, workers across Kabul have voiced frustration over the persistent lack of employment opportunities and essential wages. Despite long hours spent seeking work, many return home empty-handed. In response, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has announced that a preliminary agreement has been reached to send Afghan workers to Qatar. Ministry spokesperson Samiullah Ebrahimi confirmed that talks are ongoing to finalise the draft agreement, which would allow for legal labour migration under a formal bilateral framework. Economic analysts say the affordability of Afghan labour may attract Gulf nations looking to reduce costs. “Cheaper labour reduces production costs, which can be appealing to employers abroad,” explained Abdul Zahoor Mudaber, an economic affairs expert. While over 1,14,000 work permits were issued last year for roles in both public and private sectors, the demand for employment continues to far outstrip supply. As Afghanistan’s economic instability deepens, securing international labour agreements may become a lifeline for thousands struggling to survive.

#### **15. Thousands of Afghans Deported Back Across the Border from Pakistan ([Arab News, April 15](#); [Tolo News, April 15](#))**

Since the start of April, nearly 60,000 Afghans have been forced to leave Pakistan, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This sudden spike in returns follows a Pakistani government deadline requiring some 8,00,000 Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders to exit the country by early April. Families have been gathering at major crossings like Torkham and Spin Boldak, many of them once again uprooted after decades in Pakistan. Officials stated that the Islamic Emirate has extended a range of support to returnees, including the provision of food, medical supplies, temporary shelter, financial aid, essential household items, and assistance for their reintegration into their home regions.

The UN estimates around three million Afghans live in Pakistan, many having fled conflict or the Taliban’s return to power in 2021. Humanitarian organisations now warn of a rising need for support—both at the border and in communities unprepared to absorb such large numbers of returnees. With displacement crises continuing across the region, this is a stark reminder of the human cost behind geopolitical decisions.



## **16. France Condemns Taliban Executions Amid Rising Human Rights Concerns ([Khaama Press, April 15](#))**

France has strongly denounced the recent public executions carried out by the Taliban in Afghanistan, calling them a grave violation of human rights. On April 15, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement condemning the execution of four individuals in the provinces of Farah, Nimroz, and Badghis. These actions, France said, add to the growing list of abuses under the Taliban regime and reflect a further erosion of basic rights in the country. The French government also stressed the worsening impact on Afghan women and girls, already subject to severe restrictions and systemic discrimination. The European Union also echoed this condemnation, underscoring broader international concern over the Taliban's increasing disregard for human rights and international law. As global outcry intensifies, these executions serve as yet another stark reminder of the urgent need for sustained international attention and advocacy to protect the rights and dignity of the Afghan people.

## **17. Afghanistan–Kazakhstan Ties Signal a Shift Toward Regional Cooperation ([Tolo News, April 15](#))**

In a significant diplomatic move, Afghanistan and Kazakhstan have taken steps to deepen their bilateral relationship—a development seen by many analysts as a promising avenue for both regional stability and economic recovery. During a recent visit to Kabul, a high-level Kazakh delegation, led by the head of the Institute of Strategic Studies, met with Afghanistan's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. The discussions focused on boosting trade, political engagement, and cooperation across key sectors like infrastructure, agriculture, industry, and digital governance. Muttaqi described Kazakhstan as a “close ally”, expressing hopes for broader ties that move beyond economics and into long-term political partnership. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also highlighted Kazakhstan's growing interest in Afghan affairs, crediting the Kazakh President's attention to the issue for the warm tone of the talks. Analysts have welcomed this rapprochement. Political commentator Moeen Gul Samkani noted that Kazakhstan's strategic weight, historical ties with Afghanistan, and regional positioning—especially amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war—make this relationship a mutual opportunity. Astana, too, appears committed. In earlier remarks, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Kazakh Embassy stressed that Afghanistan's stability is essential for Central Asian security, with Kazakhstan prioritising development cooperation over isolation.

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