

Call for Input from Civil Society

Supporting the Operationalization of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan (IIMA)

Background

The establishment of the **Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan (IIMA)** by the United Nations Human Rights Council marks a historic milestone in advancing accountability for serious human rights violations and international crimes committed in Afghanistan. This achievement is the direct result of nearly three years of sustained advocacy by Afghan civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and victims' and survivors' groups, who have consistently and tirelessly called for the establishment of such a mechanism. Their leadership in this process must be recognized as foundational to the IIMA's creation and must guide its operationalization.

The IIMA has the potential to play a transformative role in preserving evidence, advancing investigations, supporting future criminal proceedings, and contributing to the broader justice agenda for victims and survivors. Its effectiveness, however, will depend not only on its mandate and institutional capacity but also on meaningful and sustained engagement with Afghan civil society, victims, survivors, and documentation initiatives that have worked to document violations under extremely challenging circumstances.

Over the past two decades — and particularly since August 2021 — Afghan civil society organizations, human rights defenders, victims' groups, women's rights organizations, journalists, and documentation initiatives have gathered invaluable information, preserved evidence, supported victims, and maintained documentation efforts despite significant risks. Their experience and expertise should inform both the establishment and the long-term work of the IIMA.

It is important that the relationship between the IIMA and Afghan civil society be reciprocal. While civil society will continue to provide documentation, information, and analysis to support the IIMA's mandate, the mechanism should also establish meaningful channels for consultation and participation of civil society and victims/survivors regarding its working methods, outreach strategies, priorities, and engagement with affected communities. This engagement should not be ad hoc or occasional; rather, the IIMA should develop a clear, dedicated policy that institutionalizes civil society engagement, ensuring predictable, structured, regular and sustained channels of consultation rather than one-off or discretionary interactions. Such a two-way relationship will strengthen the effectiveness, legitimacy, and accessibility of the mechanism while ensuring that its work remains responsive to the needs of victims and survivors.

To support the operationalization of the IIMA, CSHRN / HRD+ with its partners will convene a series of civil society consultations culminating in a **Civil Society Forum on 6 September 2026 (TBC)**, a day before the UN Human Rights Council Session. Recognizing that operationalization of the IIMA is a broad process largely outside the direct control of civil society,

this Call for Input, the consultations, and the Forum are designed with the following specific objectives:

- To develop civil society guidance on consultation protocols between the IIMA and CSOs;
- To produce a baseline assessment of victims' and survivors' priorities regarding accountability, investigations and broader justice objectives;
- To map the information, evidence, and documentation currently held by civil society organizations that could support the IIMA's work; and
- To consolidate civil society perspectives on investigative priorities the IIMA should consider.

The recommendations gathered through this Call for Input will directly inform these consultations and contribute to a set of collective civil society recommendations on engagement with the IIMA.

We invite Afghan civil society and international organizations working on Afghanistan, victims' and survivors' groups, women's rights organizations, minority rights organizations, documentation initiatives, human rights defenders, and to share their views and recommendations.

Questions for Submission

1. Civil Society Engagement with the IIMA

(How civil society organises itself and engages with the IIMA)

- How should Afghan civil society organize itself to coordinate, engage and cooperate effectively with the IIMA — e.g., through one coordinated platform/coalition, several thematic or regional networks, direct engagement by individual organizations, or another model? What are the advantages and challenges of your preferred approach?
- What model, structure or approach the IIMA should consider to best institutionalise would best facilitate effective, inclusive, secure, regular and sustainable engagement?
- Please share any practical recommendations or examples.

2. Victims, Survivors, and Affected Communities

(Ensuring the IIMA's work is centred on those most affected, wherever they are)

- How should the IIMA ensure that its work is genuinely victim- and survivor-centred?
- How should the IIM-A ensure meaningful victim participation across its operations - through consultations, representation via a permanent advisory body, awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, other mechanisms, or a combination of these approaches?
- What measures should be adopted to safeguard dignity, security, confidentiality, informed consent, and well-being?

- How should the IIMA engage with Afghan diaspora and refugee communities (e.g., in Pakistan, Iran, and Europe) who may hold important documentation or represent victim populations, alongside those inside Afghanistan and in remote areas?
- What protection protocols should the IIMA adopt to safeguard civil society actors, human rights defenders, and documenters — not only victims and survivors? What specific risks (digital security, exposure, retaliation against individuals or families) should the IIMA account for, and what measures would help mitigate them?
- How can civil society support victims/survivors and affected communities in their efforts to organise and voice their demands.

3. Documentation, Evidence, and Data Standards

(Strengthening how information is gathered, shared, and made usable)

- How can Afghan civil society strengthen coordination in documenting human rights violations and, where applicable, international crimes committed in Afghanistan? (Please indicate whether your response addresses violations inside the country, international crimes with cross-border dimensions, or both.)
- What practical arrangements would improve secure information-sharing, reduce duplication, strengthen documentation standards, and facilitate cooperation with the IIMA?
- What technical or evidentiary standards (e.g., chain of custody, secure storage, data protection) should the IIMA adopt so documentation collected by civil society can be used in future legal proceedings? Are there existing protocols (e.g., Berkeley Protocol, Murad Code) the IIMA should adopt or reference?

4. Justice, Accountability, and Complementarity

(How the IIMA fits within the broader justice and accountability landscape)

- How can the IIMA's evidence-gathering mandate contribute to broader justice and accountability efforts for Afghanistan — including preventing individuals responsible for serious violations from holding or returning to positions of power (e.g., vetting, lustration)?
- How should the IIMA's evidence-gathering relate to accountability processes — the ICC's ongoing investigation, universal jurisdiction cases, or potential future hybrid/ad hoc tribunals? What safeguards should govern evidence-sharing (chain of custody, confidentiality, victim consent)?
- How can the IIMA and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan complement one another, and what practical measures could strengthen coordination while preserving each mandate's independence?

- Given decades of conflict, what time period should the IIMA prioritize in its evidence-gathering and investigations (e.g., since August 2021, since 2001, or earlier)? Please explain your reasoning.

5. Institutional Design and Support

(What the HRC and Member States should do to make the IIMA effective)

- What should civil society recommend to the IIMA and Member States regarding resourcing, staffing, and transparency obligations and other operational matters?
- What composition should the IIMA have to ensure legitimacy — e.g., gender balance, Afghan expertise, linguistic capacity (Dari/Pashto), and representation across ethnic and religious communities? What recommendations do you have on the appointment process for investigators, senior staff and leadership?
- What is needed to ensure adequate, sustained funding and continued political support from Member States? Are there lessons from comparable mechanisms (e.g., Myanmar's IIMM, Syria's IIIM)?

6. Priorities and Additional Recommendations

- What do you believe should be IIMA's priorities during its operation? Please identify up to **five priority areas** and briefly explain why they should receive particular attention. Examples may include:
 - Evidence preservation
 - Civil society engagement
 - Victim and survivor participation
 - Gender persecution and crimes against women and girls
 - Crimes against ethnic and religious minorities
 - Arbitrary detention
 - Torture
 - Enforced disappearances
 - Freedom of expression and attacks against journalists
 - Accountability for international crimes
 - Outreach to affected communities
 - Other priority areas
- Please share any additional recommendations regarding the establishment, priorities, working methods, engagement strategy, or outreach of the IIMA.

Participation in the September Civil Society Forum

Are you interested and available to participate in the Civil Society Forum?

Please note: We are currently unable to cover travel, accommodation, or other participation costs for attendees. We encourage organizations that have available resources to support the participation of their representatives through their own funding where possible. We nevertheless welcome expressions of interest from all organizations, as participation modalities may evolve depending on available partnerships and available resources.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you have any other initiatives that are similar to this Forum or call for input?

Submission of Inputs

We welcome submissions from civil society organizations, victims' and survivors' groups, documentation initiatives, women's rights organizations, minority rights organizations, human rights defenders, and international organizations working on Afghanistan.

The recommendations gathered through this Call for Input will inform our consultation meetings on the operationalization of the IIMA and will contribute to the recommendations presented during the Civil Society Forum on the margins of the September session of the UN Human Rights Council.

Together, these consultations aim to strengthen coordinated civil society engagement with the IIMA and contribute to an independent, effective, victim- and survivor-centred accountability mechanism that responds to the needs and aspirations of the people of Afghanistan.

Submissions may be made in Dari, Pashto, or English, and confidential or anonymous responses are welcome given the sensitivities involved.

The deadline for submissions: 10th of August 2026

We prefer the submissions to be sent via Google Form: <https://forms.gle/PXjBUBZaLun6wP8Z9>

You are also welcome to email us your submission through: info@cshrn.org