



PRESS STATEMENT

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Press contact: spokesperson-UNAMA@un.org

UNAMA WELCOMES *DE FACTO* PRISON AUTHORITY COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR DETAINEES, AND ENSURE CONTINUED PRISON ACCESS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TEAMS

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has welcomed discussions with Afghanistan's *de facto* Office of Prison Administration which demonstrated a firm commitment for continued cooperation and dialogue towards improving the conditions for detainees in its custody, and access for UN human rights teams to prison facilities.

"Human rights monitoring and reporting is an essential part of our Security Council-mandated work in Afghanistan, and I welcome the OPA's continued commitment to ensure our human rights teams have the necessary access to prison facilities across the country, including those housing female detainees," UN envoy and UNAMA head Roza Otunbayeva said. "All prisoners have fundamental rights and we have a common interest to ensure that those rights are respected to the fullest extent."

In talks with the *de facto* OPA Director-General Mawlawi Sahib Mistry on Tuesday, Otunbayeva also raised multiple concerns, including the absence of adequate legal aid services for vulnerable prisoners, especially women, the need for greater professionalization of the prison service so that the basic rights of prisoners are better protected, and how other challenges in the criminal justice chain – including the high volume of arrests and lengthy custodial sentences imposed by the *de facto* judicial authorities - place unsustainable pressure on prison facilities.

The talks also included a visit to Pul-e-Charki prison in Kabul, home to more than 5,000 inmates. Otunbayeva was informed that the prison population was increasing, with more detainees admitted daily than are released.

"I also appreciated the opportunity to visit with women detainees and hear their problems related to their cases firsthand, including a lack of legal aid assistance. More needs to be done to uphold detainee rights in the justice system, including legal assistance, prompt trials, and alternatives to imprisonment. I hope we can make further progress on this area of our broader engagement work in Afghanistan," Otunbayeva said after the talks. "We must also focus efforts on tackling the root causes of over-incarceration."

Otunbayeva also heard OPA requests for greater UN assistance to prisoners, especially in the areas of healthcare and nutrition, and education and vocational training to improve the prospects of livelihoods.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General cautioned that despite the obvious humanitarian needs, international donor support for Afghanistan was decreasing, in large part because of the *de facto* authorities' continued restrictions on women and the [recent promulgation of a law on the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice](#) which imposes far-reaching restrictions on personal conduct.

UNAMA is mandated by [Security Council Resolution 2626 \(2022\)](#), which includes engagement with all stakeholders in the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans, including monitoring of places of detention and the promotion of the rights of detainees. The mandate was last extended under Resolution 2727 (2024).

UNAMA continues to engage with other *de facto* authority entities to seek unrestricted access to all places of detention, including lock-ups under the authority of the *de facto* Ministry of Interior (MOI) and *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI).

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