

Save the Children calls on EU governments to guarantee the rights of Afghan children and families in Europe

Brussels, 31 August – Save the Children is outraged by the EU’s failure to commit to guarantee shelter, safety and the right to ask for asylum for Afghans including children fleeing their country, after discussions held today during the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting on Afghanistan.

Instead of agreeing to unconditionally support Afghan refugees coming to Europe and to protect their human rights, EU-delegations focused mainly on keeping people fleeing for their lives out of Europe.

“While all support to the region is welcome, Europe should not outsource the protection of Afghan asylum seekers to Afghanistan neighbouring countries. They already host the largest Afghan refugee communities, and are already struggling to provide safety, food, shelter and an education for Afghan children and their families. As a result, too often children are forced to skip school and go to work, to help provide for their families. Girls often end up abused and victims of child marriage,” said Anita Bay, Director of Save the Children Europe.

“The EU has the resources and capacity to help people from Afghanistan, in full respect of European laws and values,” said Bay. “We urgently need ministers to open safe channels for Afghan children and their families in search of protection in Europe. They need to make haste with resettlement at scale, speed up family reunification procedures, and ensure visa procedures are swift and remotely accessible. Safe channels are not a pull factor, on the contrary they are important to prevent children and families to embark on dangerous journeys and be abused by criminal networks. We are looking forward to seeing substantial commitments during the upcoming High Level Resettlement Forum announced by Commissioner Johansson”

The JHA Council meeting fails to address right of Afghans to claim asylum in Europe, Save the Children said, including at external borders. Save the Children has repeatedly denounced violent pushbacks and the widespread violence against hundreds of children and families at EU borders, especially in the Balkan region.

“We cannot accept any more fences, pushbacks or other human rights violations at EU borders”, said Bay. “The EU is built on the imperative that it will provide protection to those who have been forced to flee their country in fear of their lives, and who rely on Europe for a safe future for their children and themselves.”

Save the Children is also concerned about the conditions of thousands of Afghan children and families already in Europe.

In the last 12 years, the EU and associate countries denied asylum to 290,000 Afghans asylum seekers, of which 46,000 were less than 14 years old (almost half were girls) and 25,000 were 14-17 years old.

“As the situation has changed, all Afghan nationals who had their asylum claims rejected or who are scheduled for deportation have the right to have their cases reviewed without delay,” said Bay. “We urge all EU members to review their asylum classifications in recognition of the dramatic change in the security and political situation, particularly for Afghan women, children and LGBTQI+ children and adults.”

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.