

MEDIA STATEMENT
Afghanistan Transitional Justice Coordination Group (ATJCG)*



ATJCG Calls for Justice and Accountability Regarding Alleged War Crimes by British Special Forces in Afghanistan

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Afghanistan Transitional Justice Coordination Group (ATJCG) expresses its deepest concern over recent revelations from the BBC Panorama investigation about alarming allegations of war crimes by UK Special Forces during their deployment in Afghanistan. These allegations include the execution of civilians, children, and detainees, and planting weapons to fabricate combat situations.

These findings suggest the existence of systematic criminal conduct, falsified military reporting, failures of command responsibility and political oversight, and a lack of regard for Afghan lives by UK Special Forces. The conduct in question spanned several years and, according to testimonies, may have been known to senior military and political figures, including former Prime Minister David Cameron. These revelations necessitate independent, comprehensive investigations that extend to the highest levels of command.

If substantiated, these acts may constitute breaches of the Geneva Conventions, war crimes under the Rome Statute (Art 8), and violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art 6, the right to life). The UK is obliged under international law to investigate, prosecute, and punish war crimes and to provide effective remedies and reparations for victims. According to UN Basic Principles on Remedies and Reparation (2005), victims have a right to truth, justice, prompt reparations, and a guarantee of non-repetition. Moreover, the UK also has legal responsibility under SOFA agreements, signed by Afghanistan and NATO, to investigate and prosecute these allegations.

Justice is specifically vital for Afghanistan as its people have suffered for nearly half a century of armed conflict, marked by impunity and repeated cycles of violence. They have endured extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances, persecution and enforced displacement. With every shift in power, new actors emerged, but the suffering, pain and trauma of victims persisted. For far too long, these harms have gone unacknowledged and unaddressed.

In light of these traumatising revelations, ATJCG calls for the following:

- *Full Accountability:* The UK's ongoing public inquiry into special forces conduct must be expanded to include all allegations of unlawful killings committed by the UK forces in Afghanistan during their deployment. The investigation must cover systemic practices, command responsibility and the potential suppression of evidence.
- *Independent Oversight:* An impartial, international body should oversee investigations to guarantee transparency and credibility, given concerns about transparency and conflict of interest in the internal investigations.
- *Victim Support and Recognition:* Establish a channel of communication with the families of victims and survivors of these crimes, providing updates on the progress made in the investigation to deliver justice, accountability, including compensation and reparations, to families affected by these alleged crimes.
- *International Action:* We reiterate our demand that the International Criminal Court (ICC) should investigate not just the former Afghan government and the Taliban forces, but also include all NATO forces, including the UK, in its investigation into alleged war crimes in Afghanistan. This is especially important as most international military forces lack accountability mechanisms and independent oversight.
- *The UK Ministry of Defence* must declassify all relevant documents and fully cooperate with the investigative processes.
- *NATO members* who contributed forces must review and investigate the conduct of their troops during their entire period of presence in Afghanistan to reveal the truth and provide justice, reparation and redress to victims.

ATJCG condemns these horrifying crimes and other crimes committed by different parties to the 45-year armed conflicts and firmly stands in solidarity with victims' families, survivors, human rights advocates, and whistleblowers.

We also thank BBC Panorama and members of the UK Special Forces, politicians, whistleblowers and other concerned individuals who testified and refused to stay silent in the wake of these war crimes.

*Afghanistan Transitional Justice Coordination Group (ATJCG) is a group of individuals and organisations that have been working with victims, their families, and survivors of war, advocating for justice, truth, and accountability since 2009 in Afghanistan.

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