

## **CALL TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF JUDGES, IN PARTICULAR WOMEN JUDGES, IN AFGHANISTAN**

The Global Judicial Integrity Network is an international platform “of judges for judges” committed to strengthening the rule of law, judicial integrity and combating judicial corruption. The existence of the rule of law requires respect for human rights and an independent judiciary that is secured from any form of interference. This entails ensuring the physical protection of members of the judiciary.

Having regard to the recent events in Afghanistan, we, the members of the Advisory Board of the Global Judicial Integrity Network, express our deep concern over the escalating situation in Afghanistan and the possibility that the core values underpinning the work of our Network and the basic human rights of Afghan judges would be violated.

We urge the international community to engage in efforts to safeguard the human rights of our Afghan judicial colleagues and, in particular, we call for urgent action to protect women judges whose safety and lives are at risk and who might need assistance in leaving the country. Women judges face an increased danger, not only due to their gender but also to the real risk of retaliation from the persons whom they have previously sentenced and who have been released from prison.

It is of paramount importance that the achievements of women judges in Afghanistan in upholding the rule of law and access to justice, and the commitment and courage they have demonstrated over the years, be preserved and continued.

The Network has always been a forum to raise awareness about emerging challenges to judicial integrity and independence, and to provide support to judges in difficult times. In a situation of this gravity, we cannot be silent; we need to speak with one voice in support of our colleagues who need help. The international community cannot and must not abandon the women judges whose courageous efforts have contributed to securing and strengthening justice and the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Advisory Board of the Global Judicial Integrity Network