

Foreword

Mohammad Kareem Khalili

His Excellency Mohammad Kareem Khalili is Chairman of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan. HE Khalili served as Vice-President of Afghanistan from 2002–14 during both the Interim Administration and then under elected President Hamid Karzai.



Portrait of His Excellency Mohammad Kareem Khalili in Kabul, Afghanistan.

The country known as 'Afghanistan' has been burning in the fire of war and violence for nearly forty years now. These destructive wars have inflicted all kinds of injury on every aspect of the country. From the widespread and largescale slaughter of our people, to the destruction of housing and economic infrastructure, to the degrading of the natural environment, to the traumatised psychology of the war-affected. From the violation of the rights and freedoms of women and children, to the crumbling of the rule of law. And from the emergence of all kinds of negative phenomena in the domain of social relations, to the damage to the nation's cultural life. These are all consequences which the continuous wars have inflicted on the people of Afghanistan. Therefore, to extricate the country from this horrendous, bitter state requires a transformational approach. This approach is peace and understanding! Only peace offers a sustainable and fundamental solution to the Afghan crisis.

The necessity of achieving peace is one issue on which there is no difference of opinion. Over the past ten months the Afghanistan High Peace Council has conducted broad-based consultations about peace across the political spectrum and at all levels of society. These consultations have involved national figures, the leaders of political parties, religious scholars, civil society activists, women's rights defenders, media figures and people from other parts of Afghan society. The point on which all of these figures reached a consensus was the necessity of achieving peace in Afghanistan. They all emphasised the point that any solution to the problems of Afghanistan depends upon peace and understanding.

Of course, questions remain as to the conditions under which peace can be achieved. But despite these questions, Afghanistan's political class is confident that peace offers the best way to escape the current crisis without precipitating a new one.

Undoubtedly, peace in Afghanistan is intimately linked to international peace. The problem of conflict in Afghanistan is a manifestation of contemporary global conflict. Therefore, progress towards peace in Afghanistan will not just save the residents of this country from the evils of war, it will also contribute to the solution of a global problem. Accordingly, while the peace process in Afghanistan is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, it requires the clear and committed support from the countries of the region and at the international level.

In 2001, the international community achieved a rare unity of action with regard to Afghanistan. It was thus able to transform positively the lives of millions of our people and turn a new page in the life of the country. That page is titled 'peace' and 'an end to war'.

I want to express my appreciation for the unstinting efforts of the international community and the international partners of Afghanistan in the quest for peace. I am hopeful that this cooperation will reach even higher levels and become stronger and more effective.

The peace process faces multiple challenges. These challenges are not restricted to the practical domain.

Indeed, we must also continue our work in the theoretical and conceptual domain. On the other hand, we already know that peace is not just a political phenomenon and does not merely imply an absence of war. Peace spans social, cultural, legal, psychological and economic dimensions. We can only talk of peace having taken hold in a society when the members of that society properly comprehend the nature of peace, when peace is accorded due respect as a universal human-social value and when the structures required to facilitate and strengthen peace have been duly established.

The compilation of this volume required the dedication of a team of intellectuals, possessed of profound knowledge of Afghan affairs with a deep familiarity and a determination to elucidate the Afghan issue for today's audience. I am grateful for the efforts of the contributors, who have approached the issue of peace in Afghanistan in such a scholarly and professional manner. Such endeavours are required to facilitate the peace process, to nurture new perspectives, broaden our horizons and stimulate our people towards fresh political and practical initiatives.

I am pleased that the peace process in Afghanistan, which since 2010 has been headed by the High Peace Council, has achieved important and promising results. Now this process is following a clear road map. Furthermore, structures and institutions have been established at the national and provincial level, which are competent to cooperate with national and international forces and ensure that the pursuit of peace is a fundamental approach and permanent obligation.

The compilation and publication of this significant volume can build upon the successes and achievements of the peace process. It can help to attract the international attention to this important process, which we so clearly require.

With hope for the realisation of a sustainable peace in Afghanistan.