

EUROPEAN SCHOOL STUDENTS DEMAND MEASURES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF AFGHAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), a body representing school student organisations all over Europe, expresses its concerns over the recent political development in Afghanistan and wishes to underline the most significant and immediate aspect of the situation: **generations of young Afghan citizens, especially women and girls, are continuing to pay the price for decades of war and civil conflict, of military occupation, and of violations of human rights.**

In accordance with its core values, OBESSU expresses the utmost urgency in striving to **ensure that all Afghan children and youth have universal access to education**, regardless of the political context. The lack of access to education has been a prevalent issue in the region long before the usurpation of power by the means of – as well as for the cause of – religious extremism; with UNICEF recording an estimated 3.7 million out-of-school children, 60% of them being girls. The stance on equality of access to education is key in determining the honesty behind the very questionable new face of the Taliban, with its supposed willingness to accede to a loosening of its new regime within the framework of the Shari'a.

OBESSU commits to supporting trade unions, social organisations, NGOs, and other bodies that back the effort to relieve the strain and suffering imposed on the Afghan people. OBESSU shares the core values presented in Education International's call for the implementation of its *Declaration on Schools as Safe Sanctuaries*, and voices one of the collective demands that our organisation has adhered to: **"Education should be protected in times of conflict, and schools should be respected as wones of peace where children, youth and adults can build healthy communities"**, regardless of the political situation in the given country.

At the same time, OBESSU urges the public servants of EU countries, viewing said countries as co-responsible for the US military occupation, not to downplay, conceal, or delegate to third parties the governance of migratory flows, the size of which will inevitably increase. **We shall be committed to developing a transnational pressure on both EU Institutions and Member States, in order to ensure that they keep their borders open to refugee students and young asylum seekers, and that they undertake the steps necessary to ensure family reunification of those Afghans, which are already a part of the education systems of Europe.** Each such country ought to implement constructive measures to tackle the subsequent wave of populism and political fear-mongering, rather than to exploit it by employing anti-immigration rhetoric in an attempt to reach a self-beneficial political end.

The said countries are also to recognise that Afghan women in fear of their social achievements being negated, and Afghan men falling from Western planes departing from Kabul are only the latest display of a disaster, the culmination of which these very countries have been bearing witness to from its beginning. **Failing to act with the interest of relieving the crisis amounts to violating International Law and Humanitarian Principles. We remind decision-makers all across the EU that human rights are universal and unalienable.**

The answer to suffering can never be indifference.