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International hostages taken by the Taliban

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Topic: International reporters taken hostage by the Taliban

Chair: Maya Hanly

Position: President Chair

Introduction

Following years of mounting tension in Afghanistan, the Taliban are demanding legitimacy. They have captured a group of about 15 American and French reporters and are being held hostage. However, when the Taliban found the reporters they also found that they were carrying illegal arms which the Taliban have banned. In exchange for the reporter's freedom, the Taliban want the international community to recognize their legitimacy as the Afghanistan government.

In 2021 the Taliban took over much of Afghanistan and are claiming to be their official government as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Most of the international community does not recognize them and instead recognizes the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan which fell following US withdrawal.

Definition of Key Terms, Countries, and Organizations Involved

United States Of America

The Taliban had been harboring al-Qaeda which meant that following 9/11 the USA led an invasion into Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban. After this, the Taliban became a strong insurgent force fighting against American rule. However, in 2021 the US troops pulled out of Afghanistan which then quickly fell to Taliban rule. Since then the USA has still not recognized the Taliban as the leaders of Afghanistan and relations between them are tense.

France

The French government has been instrumental in aiding the Afghani civilians, sending over supplies, and sending NGOs to aid. Moreover, due to their participation in NATO, they were also part of the forces which invaded Afghanistan. Because of this, the Taliban feels much animosity in their relationship. France no longer has an embassy in Afghanistan due to the Taliban's takeover, and the French government has condemned the actions of the Taliban multiple times.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been through many changes of power in the past 50 years. They were invaded by the USSR who were supporting the national socialist political movements. They were then taken over by the Taliban who imposed harsh Islamic law. Then following 9/11 they were invaded once again by the USA who finally relinquished power in 2021. Following this, the Taliban once again took over. Currently, in Afghanistan, the population is suffering widespread poverty as well as the devastating result of natural disasters. The Taliban's implementation of harsh Islamic law has also affected human rights in this region. The Taliban carry out public executions and floggings for the smallest discrepancies. Furthermore, since the Taliban has taken over women's rights have been heavily restricted and taken away. Because of the ongoing conflict and issues going on in the region, many reporters go to Afghanistan to share the atrocities going on there with the world. And despite Afghanistan's open door policy on allowing foreigners to come to visit it is not recommended by many countries and Afghanistan does not allow foreigners to have weapons.

Pakistan

Following the US takeover of Afghanistan, the Taliban fled to Pakistan where they were given safety until they were able to return to their country. Pakistan has also allegedly been aiding the Taliban during the US invasion militarily and monetarily. Following the US withdrawal, it is theorized that Pakistan is continuing to aid the Taliban however they have repeatedly denied it.

Islamic Law

Islamic Law which is also known as Sharia is the way in which Islam governs everyday life. Typically this issue is discussed in the context of the legal framework derived from the religious texts and traditions of Islam which the Taliban has implemented.

Taliban

The Taliban, a Pashtun movement, was thought to have been formed in religious seminaries following the USSR withdrawal. They follow strict Sharia law and so use implement extreme measures of justice such as public executions of convicted murderers and adulterers, as well as amputations for those found guilty of theft. They currently have control over Afghanistan however they are not recognized by any State.

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is the group that carried out the 9/11 attacks on the US and was being shielded by the Taliban leading up to the attacks and until the US invasion when they fled to Pakistan. Because of this the US has been strongly opposed to the Taliban, and the Taliban have been trying to rid the region of western influence ever since they regained control.

Mujahideen

Mujahideen are similar to those who fight on behalf of the Muslim community. It refers explicitly to anyone who is fighting for jihad, which the Taliban define as defensive warfare against foreign invaders.

General Information

Further details on the situation

The Reporters were a group who were focused on revealing the hardships faced by Afghanistan nationals due to Taliban rule. They were found to be carrying automatic weapons, allegedly intended for protection, which is illegal for foreigners to have according to the Taliban. Because of this the Taliban feel justified to publicly execute them should the recognition not come through. They have also put pressure on the international community because they sent their video, which outlined their terms, to many international media outlets that have publicized it. Because of this, many governments are facing pressure from the public to deal with the situation swiftly.

Context

The Taliban have been ruling Afghanistan strictly since 2021 when they took back over. They have implemented harsh regulations and laws, especially on women. Due to the many in which they gained power and the ways in which they ruled. China has put out some diplomatic ties due to the benefit they would get in their belt and road initiative should Afghanistan become an ally. The only countries that recognized Afghanistan were the UAE, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. However, nowadays none of the international countries recognize the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan.

Similar situations

The Taliban are known to capture international hostages however none are usually of such a size as this. And as they are openly admitting to capturing them and threatening them this is a unique situation. Typically westerners are captured in order to negotiate a hostage exchange and to reach the Taliban's goal of removing Western presence.

Possible Solutions

Negotiation for Aid

The Taliban could agree to allow countries to send aid for their citizens due to the hardships they are facing, such as medical equipment or food. It is still being determined whether the Taliban would value this above their recognition.

Negotiation for hostage exchange

The Taliban may allow an exchange of hostages seeing as some countries may have Taliban hostages who they can exchange and they have done so in the past.

Embargo

Afghanistan relies heavily on its trade with neighboring countries, Pakistan, India, China, and the UAE, to stimulate its economy. Thus the threat of not allowing Afghanistan exports into international trade and cutting off trade ties would put pressure on the Taliban considering the widespread poverty in the nation.

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