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**Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development**

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**Protection of NGOs, schools and health centers****4<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

ACBAR wishes officially to reiterate its disapproval of any attack, intimidation, violence or threats against NGOs working in Afghanistan. We appeal to all parties to the Afghan conflict **to respect the neutrality of NGOs** and the work they do with the aim of helping people of Afghanistan without implication of the ongoing conflict.

NGOs – both local and international -- play a critical role in providing relief and development aid to needy people in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan; often in areas where other services providers have limited or no access.

Any attack, intimidation, violence or threat against NGO interests, beneficiaries or assets will ultimately result in delays in aid implementation, which will in turn have a negative impact on the welfare of the rights holders – the people of Afghanistan – and particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

We, as Non-Governmental Organizations working in Afghanistan, are asking all parties to the conflict and among them the Government of Afghanistan and the international community supporting the election process, to protect NGOs staff, the access to healthcare and education facilities.

Voter registration and voting in healthcare facilities are endangering both the health personnel and the patients and their families, while in schools, it undermines the right of the Afghan children to receive an education and endanger them and their teachers.

We would like to restate that NGOs in Afghanistan are committed to respect humanitarian principles; the general principles which we adhere to are listed below. **As such, the work of NGOs should be respected and protected by all parties.**

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***Humanitarian Principles***

***Humanity:*** Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of Humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.

***Neutrality:*** Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

***Impartiality:*** Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.

***Independence:*** Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

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