

UPF Paris, France Supports Afghan Association at conference

Patrick Jouan
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Paris, France -- UPF was represented at a conference at France's National Assembly about the situation of Afghans.

About 60 people attended the meeting held on May 24, 2023, which was sponsored by **Hubert Julien-Laferrière**, a member of parliament and the president of the France-Afghanistan parliamentary friendship group.



UPF Ambassador for Peace **Reza Jafari**, the president of Children from Afghanistan and Beyond and a campaigner for refugees' rights, organized the meeting with UPF cooperation.

Mr. Jafari, who brought with him a diverse group of Afghans, described the actual situation of the population in Afghanistan, who are living under oppression and in desperate situations, such as no education for girls, no jobs for women.

Mr. Julien-Laferrière expressed his support for the population, as did several VIPs: two former MPs, a secretary of the Paris City Hall, and specialists from different fields. One Afghan female youth athlete received a certificate of honor from the Afghan association.



Next, three UPF Ambassadors for Peace, who are knowledgeable about the situation in Afghanistan, offered their insights:

- **Patricia Lalonde**, a former member of the European Parliament who has written two books about Afghanistan, belongs to an association of Afghan women, and has visited the country a few times, said that the situation of women under the Taliban is worse than that in Iran, since they no longer can receive an education and cannot work;
- **Emmanuel Dupuy**, president of the Institute for European Perspective and Security, who is very knowledgeable about Afghanistan, spoke about the lack of hope in newspaper reports, since there is a total disregard for international human rights and the absence of a free economy, whereas the Taliban point to the absence of war, even if inside the country there are factions that are rebelling and fighting;
- **Ali Rastbeen**, the president of the Paris Academy of Geopolitics, painted a somewhat pessimistic picture, speaking about the invasion and subsequent withdrawal of Russia and the United States and the influence of some of the neighboring countries.

A former MP and former inspector of national education, **Françoise Hostalière** expressed her support but wondered what can be done to help, as there is no obvious conflict.

Patrick Jouan, vice president of UPF-France, spoke about the vision of UPF to bring reconciliation and peace through interdependence, mutual prosperity and shared universal values, as well as its activities to strengthen families and its interreligious work to restore dignity to women. He explained how UPF works through its constituent associations and with its affiliated organizations. Through this message he hoped to give hope and to inspire the Afghan group by suggesting new ways to achieve peace.

Although Mr. Julien-Laferrière had to leave quickly, quite a few people stayed on to discuss their impressions, and they decided to meet again and go further. A final picture was taken.

Note: Reza Jafari, the Afghan leader, attended the World Interfaith Harmony Week commemoration at the U.N. in Vienna on February 3, where he received the certificate of Ambassador for Peace from UPF-Austria leader Peter Haider.