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*President*

January 17, 2012

His Excellency Hamid Karzai  
President  
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan  
Kabul, Afghanistan

Dear President Karzai:

I write to express deep concern about the removal of Ahmad Nader Nadery, Ahmad Fahim Hakim, and Moulawee Ghulam Mohamad Ghareb from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

As you know, Mr. Nadery has steadfastly championed human rights in Afghanistan for many years. He has spoken out against the killings of civilians by both NATO and Taliban forces, against land grabs by well-connected Afghans, and against election fraud. He was about to complete a report that exhaustively documents atrocities committed in Afghanistan over the past three decades of war. Mr. Hakim and Mr. Ghareb were equally outspoken in criticizing human rights abuses and collaborated with Mr. Nadery on the report about past atrocities.

The removal of these three Commissioners raises serious concerns about your administration's commitment to human rights. It undermines efforts to hold the perpetrators of human rights abuses to account and sends a disturbing message to the Afghan people that their demands for justice will be ignored. Afghanistan cannot expect to make progress toward a better future unless it deals seriously with ongoing human rights violations and addresses the abuses of the past. Freedom House urges you to reinstate Mr. Nadery, Mr. Hakim, and Mr. Ghareb to the Human Rights Commission.

The work of Human Rights Commissioners puts them in danger of physical attack, as evident in the assassination last January of Hamida Barmaki. They challenge the abuses of powerful individuals in their efforts to bring justice to their fellow citizens. Mr. Nadery has already received death threats. We therefore call on you to guarantee the safety of Mr. Nadery, Mr. Hakim, and Mr. Ghareb.

We also urge you to adopt a transparent and consultative process of appointments to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and to ensure that future Commissioners will be genuinely independent experts who are committed to the protection of human rights.

Respectfully yours,

David J. Kramer  
President