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Human Rights

20 years of advancing health, dignity and justice

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December 19, 2008

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

Your Excellency:

I am writing respectfully to urge you immediately to request assistance from ISAF to protect the mass gravesite at Dasht-e-Leili. Recent reports reveal that the remains of as many as 2,000 prisoners who surrendered to the forces of General Abdul Rashid Dostum and U.S. forces following the fall of Kunduz to the Northern Alliance in 2001 have been removed from Dasht-e-Leili, reportedly by General Dostum. Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) discovered the site in 2002, and hand delivered a letter to you on March 1, 2002, urging you to protect the mass gravesite. In August 2002, your Cabinet made a commitment to "investigate and uncover the facts" relating to the Dasht-e-Leili grave. At that time, your Cabinet stated that it was ready to work with any international agency to pursue such an investigation. We were greatly encouraged by the response of your government and intention to pursue an investigation. Six years later, especially in light of recent events, protection of the site remains critical. We call on you to ensure that both evidence at the mass gravesite at Dasht-e-Leili and witnesses to the alleged massacre are afforded protection. UNAMA has echoed this call by expressing its commitment to ensuring that the site is protected.

PHR has heard reports that there is a new willingness for ISAF to provide assistance in protecting the site if the Government of Afghanistan requests it. PHR is deeply dismayed to have seen the destruction of the site. In the interest of peace and stability in Afghanistan, we respectfully urge you make such a request. PHR is convinced that protection and eventual examination of the site will assist, immeasurably, in the progress towards peace and justice in Afghanistan.

PHR is an organization of health professionals, scientists, and concerned citizens that uses knowledge and skills of the medical and forensic sciences to investigate and prevent violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. We have investigated and reported on human rights and health in Afghanistan for a number of years. This call for protection is consistent with our ongoing support for the people of Afghanistan and their reconstruction effort. We look forward to communicating with you and your representatives as this situation continues to develop.

Sincerely,



A. Frank Donaghue, CEO