

Strengthening Representation – Enabling Participation: The Role of Media and Civil Society in the Context of Afghan Refugees

Policy Brief

Berlin Forum for Afghanistan – May 2025

For over four decades, the Afghan diaspora has been part of German society. Yet their voices remain largely unheard in media, politics, and public discourse. The 5th exchange of the *Berlin Forum for Afghanistan*, held on May 15, 2025, brought together representatives of the Afghan civil society, journalists, academics, and political actors to discuss media representation, structural barriers, and ways to enhance participation.

This policy brief summarizes key insights and recommendations from the forum. The focus lies on the question of how to create a public sphere that is sensitive to discrimination – through stronger inclusion of Afghan communities, fair media coverage, and sustainable support for civic engagement.

Overcoming Invisibility – Dismantling Structural Exclusion

Although over 400,000 Afghans live in Germany, their perspectives remain underrepresented in the media and politics. Contrary to journalistic standards, media reports disproportionately emphasize the nationality of non-German suspects in crime coverage and the nationality of Afghan refugees is often instrumentalized in political discourse, a dynamic that contributes to their increased vulnerability. At the same time, the positive contributions of people with Afghan migration backgrounds are often left untold.

Access to employment and participation in society is hindered by slow recognition of qualifications, rigid structures, and a lack of political representation. Civil society engagement does exist, for example in associations and local initiatives, but it rarely receives institutional support. Migrant self-organizations (MSOs) face bureaucratic hurdles, limited resources, and a lack of visibility.

International and national organizations, public authorities, and media institutions have a responsibility to create spaces where representation is not merely symbolic but structurally anchored. An inclusive democracy thrives on diverse perspectives. The Afghan diaspora is ready to contribute – it must be heard, supported, and included.

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