

20 March 2012

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To whom it may concern

Reference for Mr Niamatullah Ibrahimi, Research Associate at International Crisis Group 2003-2005

I'm writing to commend the work of Mr Niamatullah Ibrahimi, one of the brightest young Afghan analysts of his generation. Not only has Mr Ibrahimi demonstrated outstanding research, analytical and writing skills but for the last decade has proven an articulate and tireless advocate on often forgotten issues of human rights despite challenging circumstances for such work in Afghanistan.

Already known for his work for the Afghan Professional Alliance for Minority Rights, Ibrahimi was hired as a research associate for the International Crisis Group's new Kabul office in 2003. I was President and CEO during the time Ibrahimi was employed by Crisis Group. During two and a half years service he undertook field work around the country – fearlessly travelling from Kandahar to Kunduz and many places in between – where he proved resourceful in locating original contacts and sensitive in working with men and women of diverse backgrounds. Together with primary research of the highest standards, his grasp of analytical frameworks, ability to place raw data in a broader context, and linguistic skills meant he was able to produce material – in English – of publication-ready standard.

All of Ibrahimi's work analysed the drivers – and potential mitigators – of conflict, and he specifically made significant contributions to seven Crisis Group reports:

- Political Parties in Afghanistan, June 2005
- Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track, February 2005
- Afghanistan: From Presidential to Parliamentary Elections, November 2004
- Elections and Security in Afghanistan, March 2004
- Afghanistan: The Constitutional Loya Jirga, December 2003
- Disarmament and Reintegration in Afghanistan, September 2003
- Peacebuilding in Afghanistan, September 2003.

As a researcher and analyst, Ibrahimi has demonstrated a rigor and maturity that would be impressive anywhere. His commitment to cultivating contacts across a range of political and ethnic backgrounds has enabled him to reflect competing narratives and to assess how they impact upon ongoing conflict. Ibrahimi's analysis is correspondingly rich, with insights drawn not only from his own research but also from expertly chosen source materials in Afghanistan's national languages. His work, above all, benefits from his wide-ranging intellectual curiosity: it integrates almost uniquely the recent political past with a deep understanding of Afghanistan's religious and social institutions, as well as of its local economies.

We were sorry when Ibrahimi left Crisis Group to assume a position with the London

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School of Economics. However that position has allowed him to further his academic credentials and offered him greater scope for individual research. The four papers that were published under his own name through LSE's Crisis States Programme represent groundbreaking work on the politics and political economy of Afghanistan's historically marginalized Hazarajat region. Despite deteriorating security conditions, he has also continued to be a prominent member of local civil society as a founder of the NGO Afghanistan Watch and a board member of the Open Society Foundations office in Afghanistan.

As with many other Afghans of his generation, formal academic work had previously been sacrificed amidst the decades of conflict. While dedicated to the rebuilding of his country and with a young family to support, that Ibrahimi has succeeded in securing a long-distance undergraduate degree is a considerable achievement. His former Crisis Group colleagues were delighted to assist in his then securing a visiting fellowship with the Free University in Bonn. I believe that further post-graduate work will not only benefit Ibrahimi but that any institution will be fortunate to secure this remarkably gifted individual.

Yours sincerely,

GARETH EVANS
President Emeritus of International Crisis Group

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

It is a pleasure to be able to write a reference for Mr Niamatullah Ibrahimi in connection with his application for admission to a PhD program at the Australian National University. Mr Ibrahimi, currently a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Development Studies at the Free University Berlin, is exceptionally well positioned to undertake doctoral studies; indeed, I would expect him to produce an outstanding thesis.

Mr Ibrahimi has completed a BSc degree with Honours in International Relations from the University of London. What makes this unusual is that he completed his degree by distance study from Afghanistan, which bespeaks a degree of discipline and commitment that is remarkable in itself. He pursued his tertiary studies while successively performing two arduous day jobs, first as an analyst with the International Crisis Group, and second while working as a Research Officer in the Kabul Office of the Crisis States Research Unit of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

In the course of his work with the Crisis States Research Unit, Mr Ibrahimi authored a number of outstanding Working Papers dealing with the complexities of Afghanistan's internal political environment. He has now been contracted by the London publisher Hurst & Co. to weave these into a book, and this is one of his main preoccupations while in Berlin. He also took part in a seminar in July 2011 in Australia hosted by the Asia-Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence, and the chapter that he wrote for that workshop should be published later in 2012 as part of a book edited by Dr Susanne Schmeidl and myself.

In summary, Mr Ibrahimi is one of the brightest young Afghans of his generation, and widely recognised as one of the most insightful, critical observers of contemporary Afghan political life. It would be hard to think of anyone better placed to make the most of a PhD program, or more deserving of a scholarship to support such studies.

William Maley

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