AFGHANISTAN:
Women’s Rights are Non-Negotiable

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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AFGHANISTAN: Women’s Rights are Non-Negotiable
Activist Guide

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‘WE CANNOT GO BACK... WE EXPECT TO BE HEARD’
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Women’s Rights in Afghanistan

When the U.S. and its allies entered Afghanistan in 2001, one of the stated goals of the mission was to ensure the protection of human rights, including women’s rights. Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell stated that, "The recovery of Afghanistan must entail a restoration of the rights of Afghan women, indeed, it will not be possible without them.”

However, Afghanistan’s current security transition is putting women and girls’ human rights at risk. In 2001, women and girls in Afghanistan faced a dire human rights situation. In the years when Afghanistan was under the control of the Taliban, women had little freedom of movement and were, in effect, confined to the home. The Taliban banned women from seeking employment, obtaining an education, or leaving their home unaccompanied by a male relative. They enforced these restrictions through beatings, whippings, and other forms of humiliation and torture.

Since then, there have been modest gains, including the constitutional right to equality for both men and women and the passing of the 2009 law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Today, over 2 million girls go to school, whereas under the Taliban, women and girls were denied education.

Women and girls have better access to health services. Roughly ten percent of all prosecutors and judges are women, whereas there were none under the Taliban. In addition, according to a report from the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations in 2010, 80% of health care facilities now have a skilled, trained women’s health care provider, compared to virtually none under the Taliban.

"The story of the Afghan woman is the story of survival. During the Taliban period, women were not allowed to work and could not even go out of their homes unless accompanied by a male family member. The Taliban burned down girls’ schools and carried out horrible abuses, such as acid burnings or even cutting a woman’s face with impunity.

Yet we survived the Taliban era, most of us vanishing into our homes, leaving our jobs and education; others living in poverty as refugees in neighboring countries. Emerging from those dark days, we have fought hard to win back our basic rights."

Afghan women’s human rights activist
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Women’s Rights in Afghanistan (...continued)

However, violence against women remains pervasive. Attacks on schools for girls continue. Amnesty International’s Annual Report 2013 on Afghanistan states that despite the passage of the Elimination of Violence and Women Act in 2009, law enforcement and judicial officials failed to properly investigate violence against women and girls and bring perpetrators to justice. Women and girls continued to be beaten, raped, and killed. They were targeted and attacked by armed groups, and faced discrimination by the authorities and threats within their own communities and families. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission documented more than 4,000 cases of violence against women from March 21, 2012 to October 21, 2012 – a rise of 28% compared with the preceding 12 months, reportedly due to increased public awareness. The actual number of incidents was likely to be still higher given the continuing stigma and risk of reprisal associated with reporting such violence.

The following are a few examples of the extreme violence that women experienced in 2012:

- In May, an appeals court in Kabul upheld prison sentences of 10 years each in the case against the in-laws of an Afghan girl. The girl had been severely abused by them after being forced to marry at the age of 13.
- In July, an Afghan woman, named in media reports as 22-year old Najiba, was shot dead on “charges” of adultery, reportedly by a Taliban insurgent.
- On September 16, a 16-year-old girl was publicly flogged in the southern province of Ghazni for an “illicit relationship”. The girl had been sentenced to 100 lashes, following a verdict issued by three mullahs in the Jaghori district.
- On December 10, Nadia Sidiqi, the acting head of the Department for Women’s Affairs in Laghman province, was killed by unidentified gunmen while on her way to work. Her predecessor, Hanifa Safi, was killed and her family injured by a remote-controlled explosive device on 13 July. No one claimed responsibility for either incident.

Today, more than 11 years after the U.S. military and its allies entered Afghanistan, Amnesty International is extremely concerned that the negotiations between the US government, the Afghan government, and insurgent groups may put women’s rights at risk. Amnesty International continues to call on both the Afghan and U.S. governments to ensure women’s human rights. Security for all people, regardless of gender, will allow all Afghans to enjoy their basic human rights.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 clearly states the importance of including women in the “prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building,” and stresses “the importance of their equal participation and full involvement” at all decision-making levels; national, regional, and international. President Karzai set up the High Peace Council, consisting of individuals from various ethnic and political groups within the country, to try to negotiate with the Taliban. To date, only nine women were included on the High Peace Council out of a total of 70 members, and they have largely been shut out of discussions related to the transition process.

The lack of full inclusion of women at the May 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago and the Tokyo Donors’ Conference only further prove that women’s issues, and Afghan women themselves, have been left out of the process. The United States, Afghanistan, the Afghanistan International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and other participants in the reconciliation process must unite behind a clear plan to protect women’s human rights in the years to come.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Getting Involved from an Amnesty International Perspective

ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL:

Founded in 1961 and celebrating its 52nd Anniversary this year, Amnesty International—a Nobel Peace Prize winner—is now the world’s largest grassroots human rights organization, with 3 million members, supporters, and activists in more than 150 countries and territories, including 250,000 supporters in the United States. Bringing together millions of people around the globe to shine a light on human rights abuses, we strive to protect the rights of all people to live with dignity, free from violence and injustice.

Our global movement of determined and compassionate individuals has mobilized for more than 50 years to free the unjustly imprisoned, end torture and ill treatment, abolish the death penalty, and establish laws that will protect people from brutality, hold human rights abusers accountable, and combat injustice. Amnesty International investigates and exposes human rights abuses, educates and mobilizes the public, and works to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth, and dignity are denied by campaigning for human rights worldwide.

For more information, or to join the movement, please visit www.amnestyusa.org.

Amnesty members are encouraged to participate in coordinated actions with other organizations to express solidarity and support for the women of Afghanistan. In this respect, there are a few points to consider before committing yourself to being involved.

Amnesty International is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest, or religion. We do not support or oppose any government or political system, nor do we necessarily support/oppose the views of those whose rights we seek to protect.

Amnesty does not take a position regarding NATO’s presence in Afghanistan. Amnesty generally takes no position on the use of armed force or on military interventions in armed conflict, other than to demand that all parties must respect international human rights and humanitarian law. Amnesty International is focused on the importance of strengthening human rights and the rule of law in the country, including the right of women in Afghanistan to participate in political decisions that will impact their lives.

Please exercise caution when supporting or organizing events related to NATO and make sure to focus on Amnesty International’s messages and the overall human rights framework when participating.

Amnesty International relies on its independence and impartiality to maintain utmost integrity and credibility in the global human rights movement and beyond. Therefore, Amnesty activists should be careful when sharing any public platform, making joint public statements or jointly organizing events. Focus on neutrality and human rights. When in doubt about whether an event is a good fit, or how to engage with a particular situation, please get in touch with your Field Organizer or with the Afghan Women Team. The Afghan Women Team can be reached at aiusaafghanistan@yahoogroups.com.
Amnesty does not take a position regarding NATO’s presence in Afghanistan. Amnesty takes no position on the use of armed force or on military interventions in armed conflict, other than to demand that all parties must respect international human rights and humanitarian law. Amnesty International is focused on the importance of strengthening human rights and the rule of law in the country, including the right of women in Afghanistan to participate in political decisions that will impact their lives.

- The United Nations concluded in 1999 that there was “official, widespread and systematic violations of the human rights of women in Afghanistan.” Women were “subject to grave indignities in the areas of physical security and the rights to education, health, freedom of movement and freedom of association.”

- Under the Taliban’s rule from September 1996 until October 2001, women were banned from seeking employment, obtaining an education, or leaving home unaccompanied by a male relative. As of 2001, only 5,000 girls attended school.

- Since the end of Taliban rule, women have made some progress. Today, over two million girls attend school. Maternal mortality and infant mortality have declined.

- However, Afghanistan’s current security transition is putting women and girls’ human rights at risk. Women’s human rights have taken a backseat as the U.S. and its allies negotiate an exit.

- Our research reveals a resurgence of violence against women. Despite President Karzai’s endorsement of the Elimination of Violence Against Women law in 2009, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission documented more than 4,000 cases of violence against women from March 21, 2012 to October 21, 2012 – a rise of 28% compared with the preceding 12 months, reportedly due to increased public awareness. The actual number of incidents was likely to be still higher given the continuing stigma and risk of reprisal associated with reporting such violence.

- U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 clearly states the importance of including women in the “prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building,” and stresses “the importance of their equal participation and full involvement” at all decision-making levels: national, regional, and international. To date, only nine women were included on the High Peace Council out of a total of 70 members, and they have largely been shut out of discussions related to the transition.

- The U.S. and Afghan governments must unite behind a clear plan of action for the women of Afghanistan. This plan must include gender parity in all negotiating teams and ensure that any peace or reconciliation agreement affirms the constitutional guarantee of equality for men and women.

- The U.S. government should support programs to strengthen and reform the criminal justice system, including comprehensive training of the judiciary and police, in order to implement international law and standards which promote and protect the rights of girls and women.

- Tell the U.S. government that women’s human rights must not be traded away in the reconciliation.
Amnesty International’s CALL TO ACTION

Key Actions Needed on Behalf of Afghan Women

Included in this toolkit are five key actions that Amnesty International has identified that can help make a true impact on the lives of Afghan women. As our strength lies in collective action, please make sure to commit to at least one of these actions on behalf of yourself or your group. We need your help to demand that Afghan women’s rights are non-negotiable!

1. Host an event to spread awareness (pages 8-11)

2. Raise media attention (pages 12-14)

3. Contact your legislators to support Afghan women’s rights (page 15)

4. Get involved locally with Amnesty International (page 16)

5. Gather petition signatures calling on the U.S. government to adopt an Action Plan for Afghan Women (pages 19-21)
A lot of time and energy goes into organizing an event or demonstration, regardless of its size. Your event should be well organized and built around a clear and useful purpose.

Here are some useful tips to keep in mind:

1. Try to schedule the event at a time that is convenient for the most number of people and not during a time where events may be competing.
2. Once a location is chosen, call your local police station to find out if you need a permit, or just to inform them that you will be hosting an event.
3. Make flyers and signs. Note that the use of images of women in burqas should be avoided.
4. Use slogans on paraphernalia.
5. If there will be bands or guest speakers, identify who they will be and how will they be heard (podium, speakers, microphones, sound system, etc).

- Get people to come! Create an email group list or Facebook page that includes your community group contacts, appropriate friends, family members, and co-workers. Distribute strategic updates about your event to this group, and encourage them to forward your emails to people they know who'd want to attend. Post flyers around the neighborhood, at community centers, and on school and church bulletin boards.

- One to two weeks before your event, contact media outlets and specific reporters to announce your plans. A few days prior to your event, follow-up with a faxed or emailed copy of your media advisory. (Media advisories are concise “who, what, where, when and why” updates that include information about interview opportunities). Follow-up phone calls are helpful to secure coverage.

- Prepare volunteers. Have them practice Amnesty International messaging, talking points, and help them prepare responses to the question “What is Amnesty?” Be sure your volunteers know what specific actions they are asking people to take. Use AI banners, signs, or shirts to ensure that you are easily identifiable to those who are passing by your event. Clearly marked AI branding and messaging will also help distinguish your group from those who may have contrary messaging.

- Make sure to have sign-up sheets to gather others’ contact information. Be sure to bring plenty of pens!

- Create an area where people can help themselves to Amnesty information, such as membership brochures or printed copies of urgent actions and press releases. Always try to feature an action for people to take.

- Check to see if you need to bring any items yourself such as a table and chairs or water for volunteers.

- Be prepared to clean up afterwards and, most important of all, make sure your activity is respectful of your community’s laws.
**EVENTS - Hosting a Film Screening**

A film screening is a great opportunity to raise awareness and mobilize action in support of our human rights work. Film screenings can be an invaluable way of communicating your human rights messages in a non-threatening, casual, and friendly atmosphere and a fun and energizing way to educate people about human rights! By hosting a film screening, you can help to raise much needed support and awareness for the issue of human rights for women in Afghanistan. All you need is a cool environment, some snacks, and a master plan. Here are some ideas to help you plan a film screening focused on women’s human rights in Afghanistan.

**STEP 1 - PLANNING YOUR PARTY:**

Get as creative as possible when planning your film screening. Some people have them in town recreational centers, dorms, local workshop centers, libraries - or even in their own homes! It can be small and intimate, or large and full of new people. Here are some things to keep in mind when thinking about what you want to accomplish with your screening:

- **Inform:** One purpose of the film screening is to inform your guests about the specific human rights issues surrounding women’s human rights in Afghanistan, outlined in this Activist Guide. Make sure that you are fully versed on the issues outlined in this Activist Guide so that your attendees are informed and prepared to act.

- **Act:** After watching the film and discussing its content, your guests will want to get involved. It is vital to engage this energy in order to promote human rights by offering concrete actions for guests at the party (refer to Page 7 - Call to Action).

**STEP 2 - INVITE & PROMOTE:**

Get your invitations out early! Today there are more ways of getting the word out than ever - don’t depend on just one exclusively.

- **Set attendance goals.** If your goal is to bring 100 people to your film screening, then brainstorm a list of 300 people to invite. *The general rule is that 1 in 3 people will actually attend.*

- **Use various forms of invitations & promotion.**
  
  Send emails to all invites, make phone calls, deliver flyers - and in all cases make sure to include the pertinent information (event location, date/time, and contact information for questions and RSVP). Screenings are a great way to bring new supporters to Amnesty International. You can invite friends, neighbors, and co-workers who might not necessarily be involved in human rights issues, but may have an interest in international affairs. Of course, invite your own Amnesty International colleagues if you are a member or part of a group and guests from other active AI groups in your area. Consider reaching out to different schools (high schools, universities, community colleges) in the neighborhood. Remember especially to use social media outlets for promotion such as Facebook & Twitter.

  Ask friends/colleagues/etc. to join a Host Committee for the event. This co-hosting opportunity allows their name to be included on the invitation and promotional materials. Host Committee members do not need to have obligations or responsibilities with the event planning except to bring 5 (or a designated number) of their personal contacts to the event.

  Identify an organization to co-host the event with you. It can either be an organization with a similar mission or agenda or even an organization with an entirely different focus point but still has an interest in the selected topic. By co-hosting an event with another organization, both groups can reach out to their respective networks to grow attendance. It also presents an opportunity to introduce a new group of people (from the other organization) to Amnesty’s work and potentially gain new members and supporters.

- **Keep good records** of who has been invited and followed-up with already, who has and hasn’t been reached? Who’s a yes, a no, and a maybe? *Reminder calls and follow-up can make a big difference in turn out.*

- **Make personal contact.** If you really want people to turn out, an organizer’s general rule is that invitees should be contacted at least 3 times each through various channels. Personalizing this outreach is a great way to ensure attendance.

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EVENTS - Hosting a Film Screening

STEP 3 - SETTING THE AGENDA:

The best way to have a film screening that flows seamlessly is to think through the agenda from start to finish ahead of time.

- **Arrival of Guests** *(approx time 20-30 minutes)*. Guests arrive, mingle, look over any literature you are able to provide (use this Guide for materials - see Available Materials section on pages 15-19, or contact your Field Organizer for more ideas) and partake in refreshments. Make sure to have all guests write their information on a sign-in sheet so that you can follow-up after the event.

- **Introduction** *(approximate time 10-15 minutes)*. Once everyone has arrived, introduce yourself, talk about the work of Amnesty and then introduce the issue - ask your guests what they know about women’s rights in Afghanistan and why they got involved.

- **Watch the film** *(approximate time: depends on the film)*.

- **Discussion** *(approximate time: 15-20 minutes)*. Prepare thought-provoking questions ahead of time to get the discussion going, and if possible, have one or two group members/friends prepared with their answers beforehand in order to start the discussion.

- **Call to Action** *(approximate time: 30 minutes)*. After discussion the pressing need to ensure women’s rights are protected in Afghanistan, explain the power of collective action - millions of people speaking in one voice do get heard - and urge people to take whichever action you have identified (refer Call to Action information on page 6).

- **Wrap Up Session** *(approximate time: 5 minutes)*. Thank everyone for coming and make sure to announce any other upcoming events.

STEP 4 - HOSTING YOUR SCREENING - THE BIG NIGHT ARRIVES:

Here are some final helpful suggestions and reminders for your film screening, followed by a list of suggested films!

- If you’re holding the screening somewhere other than your home, make sure to scout out the location beforehand, as well as test out the equipment to make sure you feel comfortable running it the night of.

- Food! Can’t have a party without food! With food, the rule of halves applies: *If you invite 50 people, expect 25 to show up; order accordingly.*

- Assign someone to document your event and be responsible for taking pictures - this will help you promote future events!

Please see PAGE 11 for Film Suggestions related to Afghan Women’s Rights

‘WE CANNOT GO BACK... WE EXPECT TO BE HEARD’

AFGHANISTAN: Women’s Rights are Non-Negotiable
Amnesty International USA Activist Guide
FILM SUGGESTIONS
All films available online at www.amnestyusa.org/afghanToolkit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film Title</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Losing Hope</td>
<td>(19:41min)</td>
<td>For a copy of the film, click here (IRIN News); Available Free of Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Value Life</td>
<td>(24:54min)</td>
<td>Directed by Alka Sadat, tells the story of a female public prosecutor in Herat, determined to enforce the law in a highly patriarchal society. For a copy of the film, click here (Vimeo); Available Free of Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemies of Happiness</td>
<td>(9:59min)</td>
<td>Directed by Eva Mulvad, this film follows Malalai Joya’s 2005 parliamentary campaign to her election as a delegate in Wolesi Jirga, or National Assembly. It is the first democratic parliament election in Afghanistan in over 30 years. For an excerpt of the film, click here (YouTube); Available Free of Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Most Dangerous Place in the World to be a Woman</td>
<td>(4:25min)</td>
<td>Reports on the pervasive violence against women in Afghanistan. This film looks at the various issues around women’s rights and domestic violence in Afghanistan. It includes interviews with Horia Mosadiq, Amnesty International Afghanistan Researcher, and Gualay Habib, an Afghan human rights defender. For a copy of the film, click here (YouTube); Available Free of Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Unveiled</td>
<td>(52:15min)</td>
<td>When the U.S. troop surge was announced in late 2009, women in Afghanistan knew that the ground was being laid for peace talks with the Taliban. Part of the five-part PBS series “Women, War and Peace”, “Peace Unveiled” follows three women who immediately began to organize to make sure that women’s rights don’t get traded away in the deal. For a copy of the film, click here (PBS ); Available Free of Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontrunner</td>
<td>(90:00min)</td>
<td>To purchase the film ($24.99), click here (frontrunnermovie.com)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reports on the situation of Afghan women nearly six years after the overthrow of the Taliban regime by international forces.

Directed by Eva Mulvad, this film follows Malalai Joya’s 2005 parliamentary campaign to her election as a delegate in Wolesi Jirga, or National Assembly. It is the first democratic parliament election in Afghanistan in over 30 years.

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This documentary tells the heroic story of Massouda Jalal, a medical doctor and mother of three who ran for President in Afghanistan’s first democratic election – the first presidential bid by a woman since the ouster of the Taliban.
1. KEEP IT SIMPLE

Whether it’s a telephone call, a media advisory, or a letter to the editor, always try to focus on the messages you’ve developed for your event (refer back to the Human Rights Messages & Talking Points page of this guide on page 6). Repeat the information you want to see/hear in the news rather than improvising under pressure.

2. LOCALIZE

Local journalists look for a local angle—stress to them that you represent a local Amnesty International group while pointing out that you are also part of a global organization with more than 3 million members and supporters.

3. MONITOR

Become a local media watcher. Watch local television news, listen to local radio, and read local newspapers with an Amnesty International eye. Analyze which stories work and why. Look out for journalists, including columnists, who cover stories that may relate to our concerns.

4. CONTACT

Keep a record of contacts you make at local newspapers, radio and television stations, and note any journalists who seem particularly interested in Amnesty International’s issues. You will want to contact them at a later date when you are holding events.

Generating Visibility In Your Community

- Look for community event calendars in local newspapers and on television stations’ websites. Ask calendar editors to post the time and location of your Afghan women event on these calendars so that other community members can participate.
- Invite a local radio or television station reporter to cover your event. (A college or local NPR station will probably be the best outlet).
- Focus on local and small-time publications. It is much easier to get letters into and coverage from publications in your community.
- Ask an interested newspaper columnist to report on your Afghan women event. City desk editors may also assign a reporter to cover the event.
- Submit letters to the editor directly to online news sites by emailing them to the email addresses provided on the news outlets’ websites.
- Take pictures of your Afghan women event and post them to your Facebook pages. Encourage other participants at your event to do the same.
- Film your event and post clips to YouTube. You need a YouTube account in order to upload a video but it is an easy process once you have created one at www.youtube.com.
- Tweet about your upcoming Afghan women event. Real time updates are very helpful and it’s important to be active with this. Update your Twitter profile at least 4-5 times per day leading up to and during your event. Use the same kind of real-time updates with your Facebook profile to generate interest and visibility as well.
- Note: Be sure to link each of the above-mentioned social media outlets to each other.
HOW TO WRITE A MEDIA ADVISORY

- A media advisory serves as a “teaser,” alerting journalists to a future event.
- Make sure you start with a headline that is both informative and catchy (but don’t be too clever, or clichéd). Often this is the only part of a media advisory that a journalist will read—they use the headline to decide whether to read on.
- Your first paragraph should always include the “5Ws” so that journalists can get a quick idea of what it’s about without having to read all the way through. The remaining paragraphs should expand on the basic information provided in the first paragraph.
- Always give a punchy quote by an Amnesty International spokesperson. This helps to give the story a more personal feel, and you will notice that newspaper articles always try to include something someone said.
- Remember that the aim of a media advisory is to get media coverage for your event, so don’t cram it full of detailed or unnecessary information.
- Always stress the local angle—make it clear to journalists why your event is something that locals will be interested in.
- If there is a photo opportunity, state this at the bottom of the advisory with dates, times, and contact numbers.
- Always try to find out the name of the editor to whom you will be sending the press release so that you are sending it to a person rather than a title.
  ⇒ Local press: send it to the News Editor (if there is an unusual speaker, the press release can also be sent to the Features Editor for a feature story or profile of the event).
  ⇒ Local Radio: send it to the News Editor / Program Organizer.
  ⇒ Local TV: send it to the News Editor (only if you think it is a very photogenic or very strong story).
- Network with friends, students, colleagues who have experience reaching out to media and getting coverage for an event/topic. Ask the individual to connect you with media contact or reach out on your behalf.

HOW TO DISTRIBUTE YOUR MEDIA ADVISORY

- A media advisory must arrive at news outlets 3-5 business days before the event.
- Most local papers go to print on Monday / Tuesday, and are distributed on Thursday / Friday, so if you want a journalist to come to your event, send it to them the previous week so they have time to put it in the paper’s diary. If you want the paper to include the advisory in order to advertise your event, send your advisory to arrive on their desks the previous Thursday/Friday.
- For radio and TV, send the press release to arrive two days before the event.
- ALWAYS follow up your media advisory with a phone call the day after it arrives on the editor’s desk. Call to make sure that assignment editors and targeted reporters received the advisory, and offer to answer any of their questions. Always be considerate of their time. Try to be brief and call between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM before journalists are on deadline.
- If you would like a listing of local media outlets and their assignment editors in your community, please email a request to media@aiusa.org.
Amnesty International USA [Your Group Name] Hosts Panel Discussion On Afghan Women

Clear heading so journalists know what the press release is about

(City where the event will take place) – On [Date of Event] at [Time of Event] members of Amnesty International USA [Your Group Name] will host a panel discussion at [Location of Event] on the topic of Afghan women to raise awareness about the current situation of women’s human rights in Afghanistan. Women continue to face violence, intimidation and discrimination, and Amnesty International is extremely concerned that the negotiations between the U.S. government, Afghan government, and insurgent groups may put women’s rights at even greater risk. The panel will feature [names and titles of speakers].

The Five W’s – Who, What, Where, When, and Why are in the first paragraph

In Afghanistan, violence against women is rampant and in many areas women are subjected to torture, beatings, and other brutal punishments. Women candidates, politicians, and human rights defenders increasingly are intimidated, threatened, and attacked.

The negotiations between the U.S. government, Afghan government, and insurgent groups may put women and girls at even greater risk of abuses. Our research reveals a resurgence of violence against women. According to Amnesty International’s Annual Report 2013, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission documented more than 4,000 cases of violence against women from March 21, 2012 to October 21, 2012 – a rise of 28% compared with the preceding 12 months, reportedly due to increased public awareness. The actual number of incidents was likely to be still higher given the continuing stigma and risk of reprisal associated with reporting such violence.

If women’s progress cannot be sustained, then Afghan society will suffer. The United States, Afghanistan and other relevant parties must commit to clear, measurable steps to ensure that women’s and girls’ rights are protected and that positive momentum is maintained. Without these safeguards, any peace agreement will represent false progress.

The rest of the press release gives more detailed information.

Cristina Finch, Director of Women’s Human Rights for Amnesty International USA, said: “there can be no just or sustainable peace without respect for women’s human rights. The U.S. must step up and affirm that it should and will help protect Afghan women. Their human rights, their safety, their very lives must not be sacrificed during this transition.”

A quote from an Amnesty International staff or activist member is included, as journalists often like to have a more personal comment to include.

Date, time, and place of the discussion: [Insert date and time of event]
Place: [Insert address of event]

Date, place, and time of the event is repeated at the bottom of the media advisory

For more information, contact [Your Contact Information], and please visit: www.amnestyusa.org

Contact information is repeated at the bottom of the media advisory

Amnesty International is a Nobel Peace Prize-winning grassroots activist organization with more than 3 million members, supporters and activists in more than 150 countries campaigning for human rights worldwide. The organization investigates and exposes abuses, educates and mobilizes the public, and works to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth, and dignity are denied.

Short version of Amnesty International’s mandate is included
Sample Call Scripts

Please use the below sample scripts to call President Obama, your Senators, and your Representative, and ask them to protect the rights of Afghan women and girls.

To reference the full text of AIUSA’s Action Plan for Afghan Women for the U.S. Government, please refer to pages 19-20 of this guide.

CONGRESS:  [You can reach the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202.224.3121]
Hello, my name is ______ and I am calling to urge Representative (or Senator)_______ to ensure that women’s human rights are not forgotten as the U.S. leaves Afghanistan. The U.S. must commit to a plan of action to protect the human rights of Afghan women and girls. I urge you to push for a concrete plan of action that includes gender parity in all negotiating teams and ensure that any peace or reconciliation agreement text affirms the constitutional guarantee of equality for men and women. The U.S. should make clear that human rights, including women’s rights, are non-negotiable and ensure that mechanisms are in place to uphold those rights after any agreement is reached. Thank you.

ADMINISTRATION:  [You can reach the White House at 202.456.1111]
Hello, my name is ______ and I am calling to urge President Obama to ensure that women’s human rights, are not forgotten as the U.S. leaves Afghanistan. I urge President Obama to adopt a concrete plan of action that includes gender parity in all negotiating teams and ensure that any peace or reconciliation agreement affirms the constitutional guarantee of equality for men and women. The U.S. should make clear that human rights, including women’s rights, are non-negotiable and ensure that mechanisms are in place to uphold those rights after any agreement is reached. Thank you.
AFGHANISTAN: Women’s Rights are Non-Negotiable
Amnesty International USA Activist Guide

ON THE WEB

AIUSA’S WEBSITE:

Afghanistan Country Page: www.amnestyusa.org/afghanistan
Women’s Human Rights Page: www.amnestyusa.org/women
AIUSA’s Human Rights Now Blog http://blog.amnestyusa.org
Link to Afghan Toolkit www.amnestyusa.org/afghantoolkit

CONTACT AIUSA’S WOMEN’S RIGHTS COORDINATION GROUP

@AmnestyWomenRts Amnesty International USA Women’s Human Rights Network

CONTACT AIUSA’S AFGHANISTAN COORDINATION GROUP

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AFGHANISTAN: Women’s Rights are Non-Negotiable
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As champions of women’s rights who are dedicated to protecting women’s human rights, we are deeply concerned that the significant gains made by women and girls in Afghanistan may be threatened as U.S. and allied troops leave the country. We urge you to adopt a comprehensive action plan to guarantee that the clock is not turned back on a decade of strides in education, health, security and employment for women and girls. At stake is the future of Afghanistan, after billions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives have been sacrificed. We believe if women’s progress cannot be sustained, then Afghan society will fail.

When the United States and NATO entered Afghanistan in 2001, then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell stated: “The recovery of Afghanistan must entail a restoration of the rights of Afghan women; indeed, it will not be possible without them.”

At the time, Afghanistan was among the world’s worst countries in terms of women’s and girls’ rights. The Taliban banned women from working, going to school or even leaving home without a male relative. They enforced these restrictions through beatings, whippings and other methods of torture. The United Nations concluded in 1999 that there was “official, widespread and systematic violations of the human rights of women.” Women were “subject to grave indignities in the areas of physical security and the rights to education, health, freedom of movement and freedom of association.”

Over the last ten years, the United States and Afghan governments and their allies have invested significantly to improve the lives of women and girls. The United States alone has spent more than $15 billion dollars on development and military programs in Afghanistan. Today, three million girls go to school, compared to virtually none under the Taliban. Women and girls have better access to health services. In addition, according to a report from the US Council on Foreign Relations in 2010, 80% of health care facilities now have a skilled, trained women’s health care provider. Furthermore, ten percent of all prosecutors and judges are women, when there were none under the Taliban.

The United States, Afghanistan, NATO and other participants in the transition process must unite behind a clear plan to protect women’s human rights in the years to come. Their leaders must rededicate themselves to uphold the commitments made at the 2001 Bonn Conference and its agreed-upon goal of “the establishment of a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government.”

The United States, Afghanistan and other relevant parties must commit to clear, measurable steps to ensure that women’s and girls’ rights are protected and that positive momentum is maintained. Without these safeguards, any peace agreement will represent false progress and doom Afghanistan to repeat its repressive past.

The Afghan and U.S. governments and others must take the following critical steps to protect women:

1. Ensure that any peace or reconciliation agreement does the following:
   - Affirms the constitutional guarantee of equality for women and men;
   - Includes a commitment to full implementation the 2005 Action Plan for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation within an agreed upon time-frame; and
   - Contains robust mechanisms to guarantee women’s rights with verifiable benchmarks to monitor progress.

2. Commit to respect Afghanistan’s human rights obligations under international human rights law and domestic law; respect the principles enshrined in the Afghan constitution.

3. Insist that peace talks are transparent, inclusive and reflective of women at the national and provincial levels, and in both the planning stages and the peace talks themselves.

4. Develop and implement a plan and schedule for the convening of local consultations on how to best secure women’s human rights gains.

5. Ensure that negotiating teams involved in peace talks include at least 25 percent women and that their inclusion must be genuine and meaningful and their concerns fully reflected.

6. Create a substantial trust fund to support women’s rights groups in the long term. The trust fund must be administered by women and independent of government.

7. Strengthen the capacity and expertise of local justice institutions to protect and promote women’s rights through training on the implementation of the 2009 Elimination of Violence Against Women law as well as reforms and systematic tracking of the women’s rights-related work of provincial units of Attorney General’s office.

8. Adequately fund the National Action Plan for the women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) to ensure gender mainstreaming in

...list of official signatories on following page...

AFGHANISTAN: Women’s Rights are Non-Negotiable
Amnesty International USA Activist Guide
Signatories to the Letter to Presidents Obama and Karzai in Support of Afghan Women’s Rights

**Madeleine K. Albright**  
Former U.S. Secretary of State (1997-2001)

**Sima Samar**  
Chairperson, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

**Meryl Streep**  
Actress and Human Rights Activist

**Mary Akrami**  
Executive Director  
Afghan Women Skills Development Center

**Samira Hamidi**  
Afghanistan Country Director  
Afghan Women’s Network

**Sandra Day O’Connor**  
Retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice (1981-2005)

**Mahbouba Seraj**  
Director  
Organization for Research for Peace & Solidarity

**Hangama Anwari**  
Executive Director  
Women and Children Legal Research Foundation

**Yasmeen Hassan**  
Global Director  
Equality Now

**Nasima Omari**  
Executive Director  
Women’s Capacity Building and Development Organization

**Hassina Sherjan**  
Founder and CEO  
Aid Afghanistan for Education

**Judge Najla Ayubi**  
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**Khaled Hosseini**  
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Founder, Khaled Hosseini Foundation

**Yoko Ono**  
Artist and Human Rights Activist

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Founder  
World Organization for Mutual Afghan Network

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**Shinkai Karokhail**  
Parliamentarian  
National Assembly of Afghanistan

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**Eleanor Smeal**  
President  
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**Ruqia Azizi**  
Deputy Managing Director  
Organization of Human Welfare

**Zalmai Khalilzad**  
Former U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan

**Zohra Rasekh**  
Vice President  
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

**Sir Patrick Stewart**  
Actor and Human Rights Activist

**Joan Baez**  
Artist and Human Rights Activist

**Stephen King**  
Author

**Steven King**  
Author

**Sting**  
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**Lida Nadery**  
Director of the Gender Program

**Lina Nadery**  
Director of the Gender Program

**Mina Sherzoy**  
Founder  
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Actress and Human Rights Activist

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**Sakina Yacoobi**  
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**Suzanne Nossel**  
Executive Director  
Amnesty International USA

**Jody Williams**  
Nobel Laureate for Peace  
Founder, International Campaign to Ban Landmines

**Wazhma Frogh**  
Cofounder/Executive Director, Research Institute for Women, Peace and Security

**Jan Schakowsky**  
U.S. Representative  
9th Congressional District of Illinois, Democratic Party

**Rose Styron**  
Poet and Human Rights Activist

**Shafiqa Habibi**  
Executive Director  
Afghan Women Journalists Union

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Former Member of Parliament  
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**Jan Schakowsky**  
U.S. Representative  
9th Congressional District of Illinois, Democratic Party
THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF AFGHAN WOMEN ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE!

Brief Description:

When the U.S. and its allies entered Afghanistan in 2001, one of the purported justifications of the mission was to ensure the protection of human rights, including women’s rights. More than eleven years after the overthrow of the Taliban, modest advances have been made for girls and women in Afghanistan but much remains to be done. Peace talks between the Taliban, Afghan government and the U.S. jeopardize even these modest gains as the U.S. searches for a quick exit.

Join us in demanding that the U.S. government take action and adopt an Action Plan for Afghan Women to ensure that their rights are not traded away in the reconciliation process. The U.S. should make clear that human rights are non-negotiable and ensure mechanisms are in place to uphold those rights after any agreement is reached.

Let President Obama know that you expect the United States to keep its promises to the women of Afghanistan and that human rights, including women’s rights, must not be sacrificed during the transition.

This Action Plan for Afghan Women should include these steps:

- The U.S. government must ensure that human rights, including women’s rights, are not traded away or compromised during or after the peace talks with the Taliban and other insurgent groups.
- The U.S. government must work to ensure that human rights, including women’s rights, are guaranteed and monitored in all reconciliation strategies. Both during any process of reconciliation and at its conclusion, all human rights must be respected and protected, and abuses must be promptly and effectively dealt with. All parties to the conflict must both commit to Afghanistan’s human rights obligations under international human rights law and domestic law.
- Gender parity should be sought in all negotiating teams, including peace jirgas (tribal councils) and, at the very least, in line with the Afghan constitutional guarantee for representation of women in parliament, a 25 percent quota for women should be set.
- The U.S. government must ensure that any political agreement includes verifiable benchmarks for the parties’ conformity with their human rights obligations in particular with regards to women; for instance by documenting: trends in school attendance, especially of girls; trends in women’s access to health care; trends in maternal mortality and infant health; the ability of aid workers and civil society activists – including women’s human rights defenders—to operate in areas under the respective control of the parties.
- The U.S. government should provide support, including funding and logistical assistance, for local level and national consultations with women in all provinces facilitated by women’s rights representatives and groups to ensure that their concerns and recommendations are meaningfully incorporated into any reconciliation agreement.

...continued on following page...
Action Plan for Afghan Women (continued):

- The U.S. government should ensure that reconciliation talks do not result in impunity for serious violations of human rights and international criminal law, including war crimes. The 2005 Action Plan for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation should be reinvigorated and its recommended activities fully implemented within an agreed time-frame.

- All international forces, including U.S. forces, whether in the regular military, civilian contractors, or intelligence agencies, must fully investigate all allegations of civilian casualties and harm resulting from international military operations and deliver effective remedies, including compensation before withdrawal of combat troops in 2014 to avoid leaving a legacy of unresolved claims.

- Ensure that long term and adequate financial resources as well as political support is provided to Afghanistan civil society and human rights groups including women’s rights groups beyond 2014.

- The U.S. government should assist the Afghan government to increase female recruitment at all levels of the Afghan National Security Forces, especially for the police force, as well as invest in gender sensitivity training to address the distinct needs of women and girls.

- The U.S. government should immediately determine potential trends, threats of escalating violence and opportunities for mitigating violence against Afghan women and girls in the run-up to and after the proposed withdrawal of ISAF combat troops.

- The US government should support the Afghan government to prevent violence against women in all forms and ensure safety and assistance to survivors, including by supporting NGOs working to provide assistance and shelters to women at risk.

- The U.S. government should continue to urge the Afghan government to guarantee the independence of safe homes, or women’s shelters, so that they can operate without political interference.

- The US government should urge and assist the Afghan government to fully and promptly implement the 2009 law on Elimination of Violence against Women, including by raising awareness of the law among Afghan women and men and within all levels of the government and for the Supreme Court, Ministry of Interior and Attorney General’s Office to instruct all officials to apply the law consistently, and, to further train police, prosecutors and judges on how to apply the law.

- The U.S. government should support programs to strengthen and reform the criminal justice system, including comprehensive training of the judiciary and police, in order to implement international law and standards which promote and protect the rights of girls and women.

Targets:

President Barack Obama
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Copies to:

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Dr. Rajiv Shah
Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
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The Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
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When the U.S. and its allies entered Afghanistan in 2001, one of the purported justifications of the mission was to ensure the protection of human rights, including women's rights. More than eleven years later, peace talks between the Taliban, Afghan government, and other insurgent groups jeopardize women's human rights. In 2012, Congress passed the Afghan Women and Girls Security Promotion Act (AWGSPA), requiring the U.S. government to report on its efforts to promote the security of Afghan women and girls during the transfer of security responsibility to Afghan forces and to train and retain female police officers. We urge the U.S. government to proactively address the conditions of the AWGSPA and adopt an Action Plan for Afghan Women to ensure that Afghan women’s rights are not traded away in the reconciliation process. The U.S. should make clear that human rights, including women’s rights, are non-negotiable and ensure that mechanisms are in place to uphold those rights after any agreement is reached.

This Action Plan for Afghan Women should:

- Push for improved gender parity in all peace negotiating teams.
- Ensure that any peace or reconciliation agreement text affirms the constitutional guarantee of equality for men and women.
- Strengthen and reform the criminal justice system, including comprehensive training of the judiciary and the police, to implement international law and standards which promote and protect the rights of girls and women.
- Fund the National Action Plan for the women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) to ensure gender mainstreaming in Afghanistan’s government institutions.

We will continue to expect that the United States keeps the promises made to the women of Afghanistan. Please do not sacrifice human rights, including women’s rights, during the security transition.

Please send completed petitions to Amnesty International USA, ATTN: Julia Drost at 600 Pennsylvania Ave SE, 5th Floor, Washington DC, 20003; Fax to (202)546-7142; or scan & email to jdrost@aiusa.org