



## 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!

(November 25-December 10 2014)

### Afghanistan:

#### Ensure women's human rights in peace processes!

*As Afghanistan's security transition reaches its final stages, the U.S. and Afghan governments must enable the role of women as equal partners in building a sustainable peace, and ensure protections for women and girls from gender-based violence.*



In the thirteen years that Afghanistan has been in the headlines, several notable human rights advances have been made, particularly in women's rights. However, Afghans continue to suffer the effects of impunity, lack of rule of law, endemic corruption, and a weak and corrupt justice system, of which women are the first and hardest hit.

**Early 2014 saw the highest recorded number of women's and children's deaths from conflict-related violence since 2009**, an indication of its spread to previously safe areas and increased insecurity. Although security is at the forefront of the ongoing transition, lack of accountability and blatant impunity in the armed forces are giving rise to frustrations towards the Afghan government's apparent indifference towards human rights.

There were **more than 2,500 reported cases of violence against women from March to June 2014 alone**, and a noted rise in traditional and cultural violence, including child and forced marriage, honor killings, and sale of women. Despite the 2009 passage of the Elimination of Violence and Women Act, law enforcement and judicial officials frequently fail to properly investigate allegations and bring perpetrators to justice.

**Women's rights are being systematically rolled back.** The quota of seats reserved for women on the provincial council was reduced to 20%, and only nine of the seventy members of the High Peace Council have been women, largely shut out of discussions on the transition process. Female public officials and women's human rights defenders have been attacked and receive death threats. Lawmakers have sought to repeal critical tenets of the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law, and as one official noted, "it means that girls and victims who are victims...are further victimized by the state."

Militarism supports just this kind of impunity for perpetrators and legal laxity about investigation, prosecution, and punishment of crimes of sexual violence. State failure to deliver justice against perpetrators of gender-based violence is a human rights violation. Lack of access to justice and exclusion from public life deepens women's insecurity, and can ensure only an inherently unstable, unrepresentative peace.

Afghanistan's new president, Ashraf Ghani, has pledged to take a strong stance on Afghan women's human rights, but doing so means prioritizing several major changes simultaneously. The United States has pledged partnership in the security transition, but this likewise means integrating a gender agenda into its approach. **Stand with us and Afghan women to call on both sides to put women's human rights first to build a sustainable, equitable peace!**

## **Take Action Now!**

***Write to Afghan and U.S. authorities, calling on them to protect women's human rights in the security transition and prioritize implementation of laws and practices to end violence and discrimination against women. Take action online <http://tinyurl.com/m848zl9> or write a letter directly and mail it today!***

[Salutation],

I urge you to adopt an action plan to ensure that Afghan women's rights are not further jeopardized in the security transition. I ask that the U.S. and Afghan governments ensure that human rights, including women's rights, are protected and that mechanisms are in place to uphold these rights when reconciliation is reached.

This action plan should include the following points:

- Ensure that any peace or reconciliation agreement affirms the constitutional guarantee of equality for women and men; commits to full implementation of the 2005 Action Plan for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation within an agreed upon time-frame; and contains robust monitoring mechanisms for women's rights with verifiable benchmarks tied to international human rights laws and standards.
- Fulfil the constitutional guarantee of at least 25 percent of parliamentary seats for female candidates, and extend the guarantee to other aspects of political participation, including women's appointments to ministerial posts, the High Council of Judiciary, and the High Peace Council.
- Address the low prosecution rate of those suspected of criminal responsibility for gender-based violence, and particularly criminalize honor killings. Ensure prompt, impartial, and effective investigations are carried out into allegations, and that when there is sufficient admissible evidence, they are brought to trial in accordance with international standards of fairness without recourse to the death penalty.
- Ensure that defenders of women's and girls' human rights, especially in rural areas, as well as high-profile women officials, are given effective protection from intimidation and attack.
- Implement UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security and the 2009 Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women, including by increasing female recruitment and retention at all levels of the Afghan National Security Forces, especially in the Afghan National Police, as well as investing in training in gender sensitivity, international humanitarian and human rights law for all ANSF personnel.
- Fund the National Action Plan for the women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) and protect implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women to ensure gender mainstreaming in Afghanistan's government institutions.

I look forward to your prompt and constructive action.

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## **Twitter**

Spread the word on social media! Keep to one hashtag for consistency and to give tweets more chance of trending: #AfghanWomen [tinyurl.com/m848z19](https://tinyurl.com/m848z19)

Sample Tweets:

- Don't roll back #AfghanWomen's rights [tinyurl.com/m848z19](https://tinyurl.com/m848z19)
- I stand with #AfghanWomen [tinyurl.com/m848z19](https://tinyurl.com/m848z19)
- Women's rights are Non-negotiable! #AfghanWomen [tinyurl.com/m848z19](https://tinyurl.com/m848z19)
- Don't trade away the rights of #AfghanWomen [tinyurl.com/m848z19](https://tinyurl.com/m848z19)

## **Website**

Interested in learning more about Afghan women's human rights, how it connects to other issues, and what you can do to maximize lobbying for 16 Days? We have several tools, information, and actions for you on [our website](#).

Questions? Please email us at [whr@aiusa.org](mailto:whr@aiusa.org)!

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