



Feminist Majority

FACTSHEET

Freeing Afghan Women Unfinished Work



Afghan girls go back to school

Taliban Terror Re-Emerging

Since December 2001, the United Nations, the Afghan government, Afghan women leaders, and the Feminist Majority have called for the international community to support expansion of international peacekeeping forces throughout Afghanistan.

The Taliban has re-emerged and continues to gain strength. Taliban attacks, initially only occurring in the southern provinces, are spreading throughout the country and even into the capitol city of Kabul. Women and girls continue to be the focus of violence and intimidation.

Experts estimate a girls' school is burned or a female teacher is killed every day in Afghanistan. Warlord and Taliban restrictions on women and threats against women who dare to exercise their rights continue with impunity. Humanitarian aid workers are facing increasing violence as they are targeted by Taliban and other militia groups.

Recently, Taliban insurgents sprayed 15 girls and teachers with battery acid as they walked to school. Despite the attacks and threats, brave Afghan women are still working to regain their roles as full participants in civil society. **Urge an immediate and full-scale expansion of the size and mandate of international peacekeeping troops to maintain security and protection of women's rights and human rights.**

When the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in 1996, it violently took away the basic human rights of women and girls to education, work, healthcare, and freedom of movement. Afghan women lived under a brutal system of gender apartheid until November 2001.

In January 2004, Afghanistan adopted a new constitution providing equal rights for women and guaranteeing women 25% of seats in the lower house of the Parliament and 12% of the upper house. Even under the new constitution, women's rights and human rights remain vulnerable to extremist judicial interpretation. Women are seeing their rights slip away once again as the failure to adequately expand peacekeeping forces and insufficient funding for reconstruction and governmental institutions have led to the re-emergence of the Taliban.

Rebuilding Afghanistan and Women's Lives

Afghanistan is still waiting for the Marshall Plan that was promised in April 2002. **Urge the Obama Administration to support adequate reconstruction funding.**

In 2002, women's organizations, led by the Feminist Majority, succeeded in having Congress authorize \$60 million for women's programs, resulting in \$5 million actually appropriated for the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2003. In its 2005 and 2006 appropriations, Congress included \$50 million for programs that benefit Afghan women and girls, \$7.5 million in direct funding for Afghan women-led NGOs, and \$2 million for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), provisions strongly advocated by the Feminist Majority.

In 2007, Sen. Barbara Boxer, (CA) and Rep. Carolyn Maloney, (NY) introduced the Afghan Women Empowerment Act authorizing funding for Afghan women-led nonprofits, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA). This Act was included in the Afghan Freedom and Security Support Act of 2007 which passed the House and is expected to be voted on in the Senate. However, in its 2008 appropriations, Congress included Feminist Majority supported funding of \$75 million for programs for Afghan women and girls including the AIHRC, MOWA and women-led nonprofits.

Senator Boxer has reintroduced The Afghan Women's Empowerment Act in the current (2009) Senate and we anticipate it will be reintroduced in the House. **Urge your Senators and Representatives to Support the Afghan Freedom and Security Support Act.**