



AFGHAN WOMEN CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

Wazhma Frogh,
Director of Women & Peace Studies Organization
Co chair of Women Peace & Security Working Group
Member of the Civil Society Joint Working Group
Member of the Afghanistan High Peace Council
21 December 2017,

- Mr President, Your Excellencies, I would like to thank the Japanese Ambassador and President of the Security Council this month for inviting me to participate in this session. I would like to congratulate the members of the SC for standing for peace and justice around the world and the people of my country have great hopes from this important institution of peace.
- In light of the ongoing-armed conflict and the sustained violence against civilians, especially Afghan women, it is particularly significant for me to be able to present you with a civil society perspective today.
- I have been advocating for Afghan women's participation in peace and security processes for the past 20 years, previously working for gender and human rights at the Ministries of Interior and Defence, I am currently one of 12 women on Afghanistan's 70 members High Peace Council appointed by the President. Today however, I do not represent HPC but speak in my civil society capacity.

CURRENT SITUATION OF AFGHAN WOMEN:

- The National Unity Government (NUG) has appointed a number of women to leadership and management positions in the cabinet, as the governors, judges, prosecutors, and has increased efforts to raise the number of women in the police and army and I would like to recognize the efforts of the First Lady of the country in standing in solidarity with the Afghan women.
- Many Afghans and I see Afghanistan moving in the right direction however; there are major concerns about the convening of parliamentary and presidential elections on time. Afghans want an elected government and elected members of the parliament and other provincial and district councils – as these are important elements of checks and balance for effective governance.
- While every Afghan demands democracy and justice, the impact of local armed groups, the Taliban, the ISIS affiliates and some political figures have hampered the processes for the transitional justice and civil liberties of Afghans. We're still considered one of the most dangerous countries for media freedom and for journalists and have not seen due processes to prosecute those elements that put the lives of men and women journalists at risk.
- Despite national and international commitment to women empowerment in Afghanistan, only one minister in the government of

+93(0) 792 615 421

+93(0) 20 22 11 194



www.wpsa-afg.org



WPSO-Afghanistan



WPSOAFG



Afghanistan is female – the Minister of Women’s Affairs while the Afghan parliament failed to vote for another strong woman as the Minister for Mines & Petroleum. Also there are very few female Deputy Ministers and Director Generals. This is not a question of lack of capacity, but lack of political will.

- In 2017, the AIHRC recorded over 5,000 cases of severe violence against women in different parts of the country while scores of such incidents go unregistered and unheard in areas where the government and the media has no access to – only 1 in 3 women can read & write
- The Taleban and now the ISIS affiliates target women and children indiscriminately to create fear and control in Afghan communities. As I am speaking, we had a woman shot dead in public by the Taleban in Sarepul province (northern) accusing her brother to have links with the government. The ISIS affiliate militants in Darzab of Jawzjan (northern province) have reportedly taken away over 300 children from their families to an unknown training camps and reports of the Provincial Council members indicate that children as small as 6 and 7 years are being taught how to become suicide bombers. This year we had over 10 attacks on Shia mosques in Kabul and other provinces that killed and injured so many men, women and children. All this happens while the pro government local armed groups too are complicit in rape, abductions, forced marriages and extortion of women and families in so many parts of the country as the political distance between the centre and the provinces continue to widen.
- Afghanistan’s first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, was adopted in 2015 and was internationally celebrated at the time. It is of great importance and relevance to the lives of Afghan women yet it has still not been operationalized at the national and provincial levels

INTENSIFYING IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT:

- The ongoing war is not fought on the borders, far away from communities. The war manifests in explosions in the markets, in the farms, in schools and at homes and in mosques. Women are the first targets of this insurgency. When the Taliban assert their presence in a community, the first impact is that girl’s schools are closed and that women are warned not to come out of homes. Previous achievements relating to the women’s rights are being threatened or eroded. However, Afghan women do not have a role in decisions how to combat insurgency in their own communities at the national or level levels
- The changing nature of conflict is evident in Afghanistan: from an insurgency towards brutal killing of civilians and women in particular, to radicalisation of young men with violent extremism ideologies which continues to happen at the local levels where mothers and other women in the family can play a role
- The weak governance, abuse of the police and armed forces in a community, and lack of inclusion in the local and national processes





that impact young boys' lives, are key in the recruitment processes into the insurgency. The younger generation do not find spaces for their meaningful participation in the political and government structures, and the lack of "jobs and justice" driving young generation into the militancy and insurgency.

- My organization has been documenting and reporting on the impact of armed conflict on women and communities. We received reports in August this year that around 47 young women and girls between the ages of 11-22 years old were taken away by a group of ISIS affiliates and Taliban fighters when they attacked Mirzawlang of Sarepul in northern Afghanistan. The families and the provincial government authorities continue to deny their disappearance because it would bring dishonour to the families and question the government ability to protect the civilians.

PRESENCE OF ISIS FOREIGN FIGHTERS:

- As ISIS affiliates are emerging in different parts of the country, their brutalities against women and girls have also shocked the country.
- During last week, there are reports that French and Algerian fighters have arrived to Darzab of Jawzjan (north) to support the ISIS affiliates in this area – this adds to the already identified foreign fighters from Pakistan, Chechen, some of the Central Asian Republics currently fighting along ranks and files of the Taleban and ISIS

PEACE & SECURITY SECTOR REFORM:

- While a negotiated settlement is the only solution for the ongoing-armed conflict with the Taleban, the peace process needs to engage all Afghans from all walks of life and social groups to ensure the sustainability of results. If insurgency is incentivized, many will resort to violence to get the same incentive. While the Afghanistan High Peace Council is mainly mandated to facilitated a national level peace process, the council itself is sidelined from major political decisions that are taken at the government leadership levels, therefore, the public trust on the High Peace Council has not yet strengthened and the organizations relevance and importance is still being challenged by the public based on the interactions with communities in more than 24 provinces of the country that HPC carried out in 3 months consultations
- The Security Sector Reform has started in the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence and while tangible results are visible, the participation of women is still not a priority of the reform agenda. There are no women in the leadership and management positions at of these institutions while so many women are risking their lives at the lower ranks on daily basis and they don't have systematic institutional support yet. We women do not have a seat at the government National Security Council where most of the major political and security decisions are made.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

+93(0) 792 615 421

+93(0) 20 22 11 194



www.wpsa-afg.org



WPSO-Afghanistan



WPSOAFG



- As the country is moving towards reforms and improving institutional capacities, the role and contributions of women should not be ignored. The National Action Plan, if implemented properly and adequately resourced, will enable a relatively positive inclusion and participation of women into the national processes for peace building and democratic changes. We need the Afghan government to devote a specific institution & its capacity for the implementation & oversight of the National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325 independent of the current bureaucracy
- Women, children and the elderly in rural areas suffer from the ongoing conflict and perhaps even more than men in Afghanistan – yet women and civil society have been excluded from the peace processes, especially when negotiating about political peace being envisioned at the leadership of the government. Lasting peace can be achieved only when women sit in the negotiation table together with men so that communities become the guardians of such an agreement and women should be able to monitor the impact of such settlements for the community peace and their mobility inside communities
- The local civil society groups must be better supported and resourced. The number of women organizations closing down is alarming. Women organizations that are the voices of Afghan women need funding and resources to continue and function. We call on the international community members to allocate specific funding for women organizations as part of their women empowerment and NAP1325 implementation in Afghanistan
- Women's engagement in the police and security sector is a priority for the women's movement in the country and the Security Council should call on the Afghan Government and its international partners to work alongside women's organizations to develop clear procedures on how to increase the number of women in the leadership and management of the security sector, and how to ensure a safe and enabling environment for women in police and army that should include their recruitment, retention, promotion, capacity building, and protection mechanisms.
- The Security Council should further call on the Afghan Government and UNAMA to develop in consultation with the female members of the High Peace Council, clear procedures to engage and include women in peace negotiations with the Taliban and other conflict actors, resolutions, and reconciliations at every stage and to be part of discussions on how to address the insurgency that is mostly taking shape inside communities – we expect to have a meaningful participation in the upcoming Kabul process 2, the International Contact Groups, and other regional and international platforms that reviews Afghanistan situation from time to time.

