



Afghan Women's Network
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شبکه زنان افغان



Afghan Women Recommendations to NATO Summit 2014

August 2014

Introduction:

Year 2014 is historic for Afghanistan and it is people. The Afghan citizens through practice of democracy will once again have a new elected government. This in decades will be transfer of political power from one president to the other in a peaceful and democratic way. At the same time, withdrawal of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops will be completed by end of the year. It is crucial time not only for Afghans but to the world and the region to ensure sustainable peace, democracy and justice beyond 2014 where people can enjoy practice of democracy, employment, security and inclusive participation.

After the 2012 Chicago NATO Summit, the 2014 NATO Summit will be hosted by the United Kingdom on September 2014. One of the focuses of NATO Summit will be Afghanistan beyond 2014 after withdrawal of international troops is completed.

Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is an umbrella organization of 120 women led civil society NGOs and over 3000 individual women members. AWN have played a critical role in discussing women's rights agenda at the policy level with the Afghan government and international community since registered as network in 2001. Prior to the NATO Summit UK, AWN conducted a desk review to identify key challenges and recommendations that have been presented to the Afghan government and international community regarding Afghan women security and protection as 50% citizens of the country as well as women's participation and decision making role within the Afghan National Security Forces (Army, Police and National Department of Security). AWN also consulted over Five hundred women through one day consultation conferences in Eight Zones on 17 August 2014 and a National conference in Kabul on 27 August 2014 to discuss women's concerns and recommendations and concrete measures to ensure women's political participation, increasing their decision making role, safe mobility, needed protection and security measures beyond the year 2014.

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Ongoing Challenges:

Women as a whole are unsure about the future of Afghanistan. Security and political Transition did not fully involve women as well as there needs seem to be in isolation. Women are frustrated by the lack of clarity on how the commitments to support Afghanistan beyond 2014 will be shaped post withdrawal of international forces. Women are not engaged at the leadership level fully and do not have full access to information and decisions that are made in Afghanistan at the national and local level.

AWN has produced extensive position papers, declarations and statements to bring the first hand information on the challenges women face across the country. AWN and its members have noted number of key challenges that have been repeatedly reflected but have unfortunately received fairly low attention by the Afghan government and international community. Some of the challenges that still remained unaddressed are as follows:

1. Vetting of recruits for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) including Afghan Local Police (ALP) does not include community based component where women's groups and women from relevant communities can report on the background of the newly enrolled security forces. Up to date, at the national level, the recruits to ANSF including ALP have recruited number of human rights violators accused for crimes such as rape, murder, torture and misuse of power.
2. Actions in the past 13 years have focused to increase number of women into Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA) however there is little information available on the actual efforts such as campaigns, coordination with relevant government and non-government organizations to support the process. After recruitment and appointment, women's contribution within these sectors, measures for creating a secure and harassment free environment are not transparent, clear and sustainable.
3. Despite of the calls on Afghan National Security forces especially ANP and ANA for inclusion of human rights and women's rights education within the Police and Army training curriculums, the newly recruits' lack clear understanding of human rights and women's rights due to very short and basic trainings provided to them. Thus in most part of the country they have remained less responsive to women victims of violence and incidents of discriminations against women.
4. Even though Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) has made gender as a cross cutting issue and the 10 years National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) has created policy implementation and monitoring at all sectors including ANSF, these national tools are not fully adopted and implemented by concerned government ministries of Interior and Defense.

5. While Afghan government has committed to international human rights laws and resolutions, the development process of national action plan on women, peace and security (NAP) {United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325} has been extremely slow. The lengthy process and lack of NAP is a huge gap to address important challenges of women such as their participation, protection, security and engagement in a systematic and accountable manner.

6. Since the start of security transition, women in most part of the country are facing security restrictions. Women within Judiciary, Parliament, ANSF and Civil Society are being threatened and eventually attacked. In most cases, women have lost their lives due to lack of protection mechanism.

7. While efforts such as allocation of huge amount of aid is being announced to support women in security sector by international community, there are lack of clear implementation plans, consultation with women's groups and organizations such as AWN and monitoring on aid to ensure the effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

8. Despite of commitments made in international platforms such as Chicago NATO Summit (2012) to support ANSF through trainings and technical support beyond 2014, there is very little information available on how women in ANSF will be supported and integrated to real policing and army jobs.

Recommendations to Sustain Women's Gains:

In spite of the mentioned uncertainty AWN would like to once again recall on Afghan government and international community (NATO Members) to consider the followings:

1. Vetting of recruits for Afghan National Security Forces, including Afghan Local Police (ALP) should include a community-based component in which women's groups and women from relevant communities can report on the background of the newly enrolled security forces to avoid recruitment of human rights violators within these structures.

2. Afghan Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense should be supported and encouraged to establish close collaboration and coordination to ensure smooth recruitment process for women through collaboration with relevant actors within the government (Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs) and Civil Society (Afghan Women's Network for information sharing, transparency and accountability purposes. Introducing a special ministerial decree/ policy to confirm women's appointment in the senior posts would be an encouragement to advance women's recruitment in the security sector.

3. Support for the capacity development of the Afghan National Security Forces must pay special attention to how the ANSF can be more responsive to citizen's needs, particularly those of women and children. These include greater focus on designing and delivering trainings such as civil policing, community policing, human rights, UNSCR 1325 and women rights.

4. Family Response Units (FRUs) are also critical means for addressing women's needs facing domestic and social violence; they should be fully resourced. A deputy minister level position and appointment of senior women should be prioritized within the organizational structure (tashkeel) of MoI to strengthen FRUs function to support women victims of violence.

5. Support establishment of an Independent Civil Society Oversight Commission to thoroughly monitor the implementation of existing gender strategies such as those included in ANDS, NAPWA and the upcoming National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security to increase accountability and transparency.

6. The NAP on Women, Peace and Security requires serious attention to be finalized and launched. The NAP implementation is directly related to the active participation, engagement of women, and success of peace and security process in Afghanistan. The implementation of Afghanistan NAP must be a priority for the Afghan government beyond 2014.

7. Women working in any sphere, judiciary, parliament, security sector, government and civil society must be protected through a protection mechanism to avoid their disappearance and contribution. We call on International Community to support establishment of a protection mechanism for Women Human Rights Defenders using the EU Guidelines and the commitments they have made under their National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security.

8. Funds committed by the International Community for security sector reform including women's recruitment must be still conditioned on the consultations with women's groups for planning and implementation phases as well as the inclusion of women in senior ranking posts within ANSF.

9. Afghan government in the NATO Summit should commit appointment of a woman security advisor and a civil society woman representative within the National Security Council to increase collaboration and get engaged in decision making processes, designing of governments programs and policies related to security sector and share women's needs.

10. We call on NATO's support for appointment of gender advisors. We encourage appointment of an Afghan woman to this appointment as well.

11. Decisions and commitments that will be reaffirmed in NATO Summit 2014 in the UK must ensure clear plans and initiatives on how women will be supported.