

*An Open Letter to Friends of Afghanistan and
Champions of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*

Improving the Chances for Sustainable and Just Peace in Afghanistan

Across your nations, in Afghanistan you have sacrificed the lives of your soldiers and dedicated considerable resources to the cause of peace rooted in fundamental principles of human rights, especially the rights of women and girls to a dignified and full life. For years you have also championed Afghan women and dedicated financial and political resources for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. The peace talks, which must continue are a critical inflection point to put these 20 years of commitment into practice. ***We ask that you stand by your own words.***

The inclusion of women will inform the substance of negotiations, give legitimacy to the process and increase the chance of peace. You know well that an exclusionary process is prone to failure, increasing the risks of violence against civilians, spiraling Afghanistan again into civil conflict and becoming a haven for terrorism. The signs are already there.

The people of Afghanistan have repeatedly voiced their fears and call for a just peace including through [social media campaigns](#) and letters to the Afghan government, the Taliban, the Secretary General's Special Envoy, and the international community to act responsibly including by ensuring the effective participation of civil society especially women peacebuilders (WPBs). Most recently, the [National Peace Gathering](#) organized by Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace, demanded inclusion, ceasefire, stable governance and continued engagement of the international community. These voices reiterate that while the Taliban are a reality of Afghanistan, they are neither the whole nor even half of the reality of the country.

There are many other social, religious, and ethnic groups who believe in democracy, inclusivity and human rights. Their lives are not a collateral matter. Their concerns and contributions are not a side event and their future is not a side show. They are Afghanistan. Inclusivity and gender responsiveness must be embedded in the principles and the agenda of any future talks.

We therefore call on the friends of Afghanistan, the governments of Turkey, Qatar, U.S., Norway, Canada, U.K., Iran, Pakistan, other regional countries, the UN, the EU and other European partners and all facilitators of the Afghanistan peace process to take the following concrete steps that guarantee the participation of women peacebuilders in the Afghanistan peace process.

A. Call on the delegations, friends of Afghanistan and the conveners to:

1. Welcome the participation of an independent delegation of Afghan WPBs as a third party in the negotiations. These peacebuilders can be elected from among the women attending the planned side event. They are key actors, risking their lives for their country. Their knowledge and perspectives would strengthen the process.
 - ✓ If the existing parties resist an independent delegation, insist on ensuring WPBs have official observer status at the talks, and the relevant venues.
 - ✓ Rebuff arguments that women are “too elite”, “foreign influenced”, unqualified or “spoilers” by questioning the men’s qualifications and reminding all sides that the WPBs are unarmed yet working to improve the lives of their communities.
2. Call on the Afghan government to increase the women in its delegation including with female MPs who have a record on women’s and human rights and representing constituents.
 - ✓ Offer to fund the costs for the additional women on the Afghan government delegation.

3. Establish a consistent and continuous link between the side event and main talks by:
 - ✓ Integrating an hourly session into the daily talks' agenda for negotiating parties to meet WPBs/civil society (including virtually from the provinces), to share input, and solutions that are critical to long term peace including security concerns, governance, transitional power /responsibility sharing arrangements, the constitution, and welfare for victims and survivors.
4. Call on all parties to immediately halt and publicly condemn violence against Afghans including army, women, girls, minorities, and civilian infrastructure (e.g. schools, clinics, media etc.).
5. Call on the parties to publicly guarantee the safety and protection of Afghan social activists including WPBs, rights defenders, media, and those attending the talks.

B. Ensure inclusivity and gender expertise in your diplomatic delegations:

1. Ensure strong female representation (min 40%) and gender expertise in diplomatic teams, including members of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks with Pashto and Dari/Farsi knowledge.
2. Provide your team with gendered briefing papers related to the agenda topics, and other [tools](#) demonstrating how principles of equality, pluralism and peace are consistent with Islam and other aspects of Afghan tradition.
3. If Afghan WPBs are excluded invite them to be members of your own delegations.
4. Fund WPBs travel/stay and enable their timely visas and security access to the talks' venue.
5. Hold daily briefings with WPBs and civil society for input and exchange on the talks.
6. Call on the UN to deploy gender/inclusion advisors to support the delegations and provide gendered brief and related resources¹ so delegates become aware of the human implications and avoid doing inadvertent harm to women, men, boys and girls.
7. Do not fund or support the process/outcomes if it is exclusionary, if agreements erase existing guarantees for women's rights or enable, validate, or reinforce violence, corruption, discrimination or exclusion.

International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN); United States

Afghan Women's Skills development Center (AWSDC); Afghanistan

Afghan Women's Network (AWN); Afghanistan

Afghan Women's Organization for Equality (AWOE); Afghanistan

Association of War Affected Women (AWAW); Sri Lanka

Equality for Peace and Democracy (EPD); Afghanistan

Mina's list; United States

Armanshahr Foundation |OPEN ASIA France; Afghanistan

Women & Peace Studies Organization (WPSO); Afghanistan

Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF); Afghanistan

Women for Peace and Participation (WPP); Afghanistan

¹ such as [ceasefires](#), [governance](#), [negotiations](#), [transitional justice](#) and [policing](#)

Nandini Tanya Lallmon, Global Peace Chain
Rani Djibo, Alliance pour la Paix et la Sécurité
(APAISE-NIGER)
Nahid Azad, Federation of Medical Women of Canada
Susan Bazilli, International Women's Rights Project
Hani, Algerian Cultural White Snow Association of Tizi
Ouzou
Zander Willoughby, +Peace
Shirley Graham, Gender Equality Initiative in
International Affairs, Elliott School of International
Affairs, George Washington University
Rachel Yakobashvili, George Washington University
Nicoline Nwenushi Wazeh, Pathways for Women's
Empowerment and Development (PaWED)
Nick Zuroski, D.C. Student Consortium on Women,
Peace and Security
Bebhinn
Noelle Cohn, D.C. Student Consortium on Women,
Peace and Security
Baroness (Fiona) Hodgson, House of Lords, London,
UK.
Alliance for Peacebuilding
Megan Corrado, Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Faeza Mousavi, Nebesht Media
Aziz Hakimi, Nebesht Media
Margaret Taylor, Rural Women Empowerment
Network
Andrea Tapia, Independent Consultant
Amel Grami, WASL
Najla Ayoubi, Every Woman Treaty / Women Regional
Network
Mary Akrami, Afghan Women's Network
Muna Luqman, Food4Humanity
Nillab Pazhwak, Afghan American Women Association
Rahela, Rahela Trust (formerly Farkhunda Trust) for
Afghan women's education
Zarrina Alimshoeva, Women's Alliance for Security
Leadership (WASL)
Parween Pazhwak, AWO (Afghan Women's Org
based in Toronto, Canada), AWN (Afghan Women's
Network based in Kabul, Afghanistan)
Esther Njomo O, Reach Out Cameroon
Lauryn Oates, Canadian Women for Women in
Afghanistan

Hannah Hadikin, Kootenay Region United Nations
Association Canada
Clotilda Andiansa, Center for Advocacy in Gender
Equality and Action for Development-CAGEAD
Caryn Dasah, Hope Advocates Africa
Halima Mohamed, Coast Education Centre (COEC)
Shukria Dellawar, Afghanistan Peace Campaign
Kawther Alkholy
Farishta Qadirian, York University
Bénédicte Santoire, University of Ottawa
Ahlam Almilaji, Zenobia
Barbara Hart, Mediator
Kerry Jane Wilson, Zardozi - Markets for Afghan
Artisans
Robinah Rubimbwa, Coalition for Action on 1325
Maliha Hamidi, Carleton University
Mary Groh
Hilary Clauson, The Equality Fund
Khedija Arfaoui, Ph.D., Dali & Senda Association for
Peace (DSAP)
Sarah-Derval Ephosi Lifanda, Hope Of Africa (HOFA)
Lilian Ngige, Advocacy for Women in Peace and
Security Africa
Hafida Benchehida, Mediterranean Women Mediators'
Network, Women's Alliance for Security Leadership
Jason Calder, Saferworld
Dr. Nahid Azad, University of Ottawa
Charlotte Akin, Canadian Federation of University
Women
Marie-Joelle Zahar, University of Montreal
Homa Hoodfar, Women Living Under Muslim Laws
Heather Dinwiddie