



Feminist Majority

FACTSHEET

Freeing Afghan Women: Unfinished Work



PHOTO BY NORMA GATTSSEK

When the Taliban militia 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. Failure to sufficiently expand international peacekeeping forces and the lack of sufficient funding for reconstruction and governmental institutions threaten these

rights. Over one million people are homeless in the streets of Kabul. Worst of all, the Taliban and the warlords are re-emerging.

Protecting a Fragile Peace

Since December 2001, the United Nations, the Afghan government, Afghan women leaders, and the Feminist Majority have called upon the Bush Administration and the international community to support expansion of international peacekeeping forces throughout Afghanistan. The current force of 8,500 troops is woefully inadequate. As a result, deteriorating security has caused the postponement of the first post-Taliban parliamentary elections from June 2004 to September 2005. After two delays, the Presidential election was held in October 2004.

Women and girls continue to be the focus of violence and intimidation. More than 40 girls' schools have been set on fire, bombed, or violently attacked. Four women registering women to vote were killed. Warlord restrictions on women and threats against women who dare to exercise their rights continue with impunity. The Taliban has re-emerged and is gaining strength. **Urge an immediate and full-scale expansion of the size and mandate of international peacekeeping troops to include disarmament and protection of women's rights and human rights.**

Rebuilding Afghanistan and Women's Lives

Afghanistan is still waiting for the Marshall Plan that President Bush promised in April 2002. Restoring Afghanistan to merely a subsistence economy in which extremists can again prosper will neither improve the status of women

nor provide global security. **Urge the Bush 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. The Afghan Women Security and Freedom Act of 2004, introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer and Representative Carolyn Maloney, sought \$300 million per year for three years for programs to aid Afghan women including direct funding of \$60 million for the Ministry of Women's Affairs and \$30 million for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. The Act also specified that not less than 25 percent of funding for women in the overall bill should be provided to Afghan women-led non-governmental organizations and called for the expansion of international peacekeeping forces. While this bill did not pass Congress before it adjourned, it is anticipated that similar legislation will be introduced in 2005. Congress did include \$50 million for programs that benefit Afghan women and girls and \$7.5 million in direct funding for Afghan women-led NGOs in its 2005 appropriations, provisions strongly advocated by the Feminist Majority. **Urge your Senators and Representatives to support legislation to increase funding for programs for Afghan women and girls, direct funding for the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and Afghan women-led non-governmental organizations.**

PHOTO BY NORMA GALTSEK



Feminist Majority's Campaign for Afghan Women & Girls

Since 1997, the Feminist Majority has led the Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan. The Feminist Majority is leading efforts to increase funds for Afghanistan's reconstruction, to expand peace troops throughout the country, and to support women-led Afghan non-profit groups, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and the Independent Human Rights Commission. Working with over 220 leading human rights and women's rights organizations, the Campaign, chaired by Mavis Leno, has been successful in increasing public awareness about the plight of Afghan women and girls, preventing US recognition of the Taliban, increasing funding for reconstruction and for programs for Afghan women and girls.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

Fax this form to (703) 522-2219 or mail to:

Feminist Majority's Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls

1600 Wilson Blvd., Suite 801 • Arlington, VA 22209 • Phone: (703) 522-2214

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

I WILL:

- Call President Bush, (202) 456-1414, to urge the immediate expansion of international peacekeeping forces in Afghanistan and an increase in funding for reconstruction.
- Send emails to President Bush, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Rice from www.feminist.org.
- Form an Action Team with your friends, co-workers, classmates, Girl Scout troop, community organization, neighbors, colleagues or family members to raise awareness and help support health and education programs for Afghan women and girls.
- Donate to the Feminist Majority's Campaign for Afghan Women by visiting our website www.feminist.org or mail a contribution to the Feminist Majority, 1600 Wilson Blvd., Ste 801 Arlington, VA 22209.

I have enclosed a check for: \$500 \$250 \$100 \$30 Other: _____

Please bill my credit card for a contribution of \$_____ . MC/VISA only (*Please circle card type*).

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

For Additional Information and updates, visit our website www.feminist.org