



Women's Security and Transition in Afghanistan: Measuring the success of transition by lasting protections for women's security

Position Paper

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Afghan Women's Network formed by Afghan women in exile is an independent advocacy platform for Afghan women's human rights and peace since 1995.

INTRODUCTION

In advance of the Chicago NATO Summit, Afghan Women's Network consulted over 300 women leaders across eight Provincial Zones to document women's perceptions of the Security Transition, their involvement in Transition, and the impact Transition has thus far had on their mobility, security, and access to public space. The Transition is coordinated by the Afghan government's Transition Commission and relevant international actors, namely, NATO. Afghan women seek to ensure that their perspectives and recommendations are addressed in the convening of NATO leaders in May.

During the consultations, a majority of women expressed that they have not meaningfully participated in planning for the Security Transition. In the provinces where Transition has yet to officially start, women do not believe they will be involved in consultations to determine future plans, steps, and activities associated with the transfer of security authority. Recent consultations also revealed that women do not feel that Afghan National Security Forces are responsive to women's needs and do not uphold human rights standards. Women perceive Afghan National Security Forces as not having the full capacity and expertise necessary to address the security needs of Afghan citizens, especially women and children. They also believe that in recent years, little attention has been given to build the capacity of ANSF to improve civilian adherence to existing laws and advance rule of law by demonstrating that people who violate laws will be punished. However, women still expressed a strong interest in the international community continuing to work to build the capacity and adequately resource the ANSF.

Policy makers in Afghanistan reiterate again and again that transition is not about military and security matters alone, however practical experience on the ground shows that there isn't adequate attention paid to improving rule of law, governance, and access to justice. Similarly, it is unclear how such processes are impacting women's security. Transition should start from a citizen-articulated vision in which women and men of Afghanistan take responsibility for their better future. The road map for the exit of international forces is necessary; however, an accelerated withdrawal will jeopardize the investments of human life and material resources generously contributed by more than 40 nations, not to mention the numerous casualties of Afghan National Security Forces and enormous sacrifice by the this country's women, men and children. Women organizations and activists have better access to local communities and are aware about the challenges and causes of insecurity in their communities; therefore they should

be consulted and included to ensure that security and transition plans are implemented successfully.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

The formation of Afghan Local Police Units has proven to be one of the major challenges in a majority of provinces where ALPs function. Women believe that the existence of Afghan Local Police has increased the movement restrictions for women and girls imposed by their families, due to a concern that women and girls will not be safe with these armed men now retaining an official security role within their communities. In a majority of provinces women believe the existence of a parallel security structure, like ALPs, is utilizing high amounts of financial and human resources with little impact. Women consulted in Regional Command East noted multiple examples of resource wastage and felt this money would be better spent if allocated to the Afghan National Police. Women also observe that ALPs lack the proper security and human rights training and therefore cannot only address women's need and incidents of violations against women at the provincial- and village-level, but there are many incidents noted of abduction rape at the hand of ALP. The cumulative impact is that ALPs contribute to destabilization and act as a driver of local conflict.

During the consultations women raised their concerns on the importance of good governance, rule of law, and access to justice. Women said that, after 11 years of practicing democracy and efforts to build rule of law and access to justice, the majority of issues and conflicts are resolved by the Afghan local *Shuras* (tribal or village councils) where elders of the communities make most of the decisions. Resolution of disputes in the absence of women still remains a challenge. Moreover, women believe that there has been very little attention paid by the international community toward promoting access to formal justice, good governance, and rule of law in the provinces. Calls for greater transparency and accountability for the Afghan government and international community were heard in each of the women's consultations. The political transition should not be secondary to the security transition; in fact, women identified the political transition as having greater importance.

Women as a whole are unsure about the future of Afghanistan. Transition, which does not involve them fully as well their needs are not taken into consideration, seems to be in isolation. Women are frustrated by the lack of clarity on what the commitments of the Afghan government and international community will be beyond 2014. Women are also not engaged at the leadership level fully and do not have full access to information and decisions that are made in Afghanistan.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support for the capacity development of the Afghan National Security Forces must pay special attention to how the ANSF can be more responsive to citizens' needs, particularly those of women and children. This includes greater focus on civil policing training and organization. Family Response Units are also a critical means for addressing women's security needs; they should be fully resourced and the *tashkeel* should be amended to allow for higher ranking women to staff these units.
2. Need for increase recruitment of women in to police force, through creating enabling environment within the security structure, giving adequate training for women police to be involved in higher position of security forces, and providing adequate support to the protection of women in security forces
3. Ongoing mentoring and training is required long beyond 2014 to build the capacity of ANSF to understand how their actions impact of law implementation, rule of law, access

to justice, responsiveness to the needs of women and children. This training should include curriculum on basic values related to treating civilians with respect, how to build trust in local communities, and how to conduct effective people-to-people engagements. One-time trainings have less impact than recurrent programming.

4. 30% of international funds allocated for support of the ANSF should be earmarked for recruitment and retention of women in the ANSF.
5. Establishment of an Independent Civil Society Oversight Commission to thoroughly monitor the contribution, support, and performance of ANSF, as well as provide feedback and recommendations to the Ministries of Interior and Defense, and other relevant actors. The objective of the commission should be to improve ANSF's responsiveness towards Afghan citizens, especially women and children.
6. NATO member countries must jointly develop a comprehensive strategy and budget to identify how to maintain the achievements women have made over the last 11 years. Development of this strategy and budget should be in consultation with Afghan women's civil society organizations.
7. Women's empowerment is a MUST: Women need to be given the opportunity to work to protect the gains they have made over the last 11 years. To do this, their position in society stills need to be strengthened through targeted technical capacity building programs for women, ranging from literacy to legal skill building.
8. The National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security requires serious focus from the Afghan government for the development of the Plan, and commitment from the international community to resource the Plan. The NAP must be understood as being directly related to the success of peace and security processes in Afghanistan, and its implementation must be prioritized.
9. The Afghan government must be held accountable to their national and international obligations to acknowledge women as leaders and ensure their participation in decision-making roles.
10. Funds committed by the International Community for security sector reform, judicial reform, and good governance, must be conditioned on the consultation of women in planning and implementation phases, as well as the inclusion of women in all related governmental, security, and judicial bodies.

The recommendations listed above build upon and supplement the concrete recommendations developed by Afghan women who have advocated for their inclusion in peace and security processes over many years. Each time, women have worked to develop solutions for what needs to be done to improve their situation. AWN brings a number of these recommendations back to the memory of policy makers who may have read **Afghan Women Position Paper toward Bonn and Beyond**. This is a reflection to evaluate the level of seriousness and attention that might have been put towards the demands of women since September 2011.

1. Women's organization should be included in designing, monitoring and evaluating indicators that measure the impact of transition on women. Transition decisions should be based, in part, on results of this monitoring.

2. The recruitment of Afghan Local Police (ALP) and other security alternative needs to include a transparent vetting process so that former and current warlords with previous record of human rights violations do not automatically become part of the national forces. A portion of the vetting process should be community based, allowing women's groups and women from communities to report on the background of the newly enrolled security forces
3. Women leaders in government and civil society are under constant attack, while it is necessary to ensure women's protection in general, women leaders' protection needs to be a priority as per their critical role as agents of change in society against conservative elements taking Afghanistan back to 1990.
4. The Afghan government should have a clear reporting process for the human rights instruments and international laws that it has signed and needs to demonstrate that Afghan laws are not in contradiction with its international legal commitments for women.
5. A joint International Afghanistan War Memory Commission should be created so that the past 30 years of war violations are identified and there is a documentation process as a matter of conflict prevention. Such an investigation does not have to conclude in a legal trial but a memory of war and the beginning of a healing process. Otherwise, the practice of impunity will not unite Afghans towards a rule of law culture.

CONSULTATION COVERAGE

The above recommendations are gathered consulting women leaders in the below provincial zones.

Provincial Zones	Provinces Covered	Provincial Consultation Center
North	Balkh, Jowzjan, Faryab, Samangan	Balkh
South	Kandahar, Helmand, Urzgan, Zabul, Nimroz	Kandahar
East	Jalalabad, Nooristan, Laghman, Kunar	Jalalabad
West	Herat, Farah, Badghis, Ghor	Herat
Central Region	Bamyam, Daikundi	Bamyan
North West	Takhar, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Kunduz	Kunduz
South West	Paktia, Paktika, Khost	Paktia
Central	Kabul, Logar, Wardak, Panjsher, Kapisa	Kabul