



شبکه زنان افغان Afghan Women's Network

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— *Statement ahead of the Security Council debate on Afghanistan* —

We, the women of Afghanistan, have cautious optimism for peace. Yet we are concerned - more than ever - that women's human rights will be compromised in the name of peace.

An inclusive approach to peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan will ensure the voices of all Afghans, in particularly women, are included and that the material benefits of the peace process are shared.

Any agreement relating to peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan that fails to meaningfully engage women, fails promote and protect the rights of women, or reflect the priorities of women will not result in peace for women. Rather, it will serve to bring Afghanistan back towards the social and political exclusion women were once subjected to and exacerbate the drivers of conflict.

Today, in Afghanistan, women play a significant role in every sector in the country, including in decision-making. In the parliamentary elections of October 2018, men and women from diverse areas of Afghanistan chose to vote for women candidates, dispelling myths around women's participation and demonstrating that many Afghans have turned towards supporting women's rights.

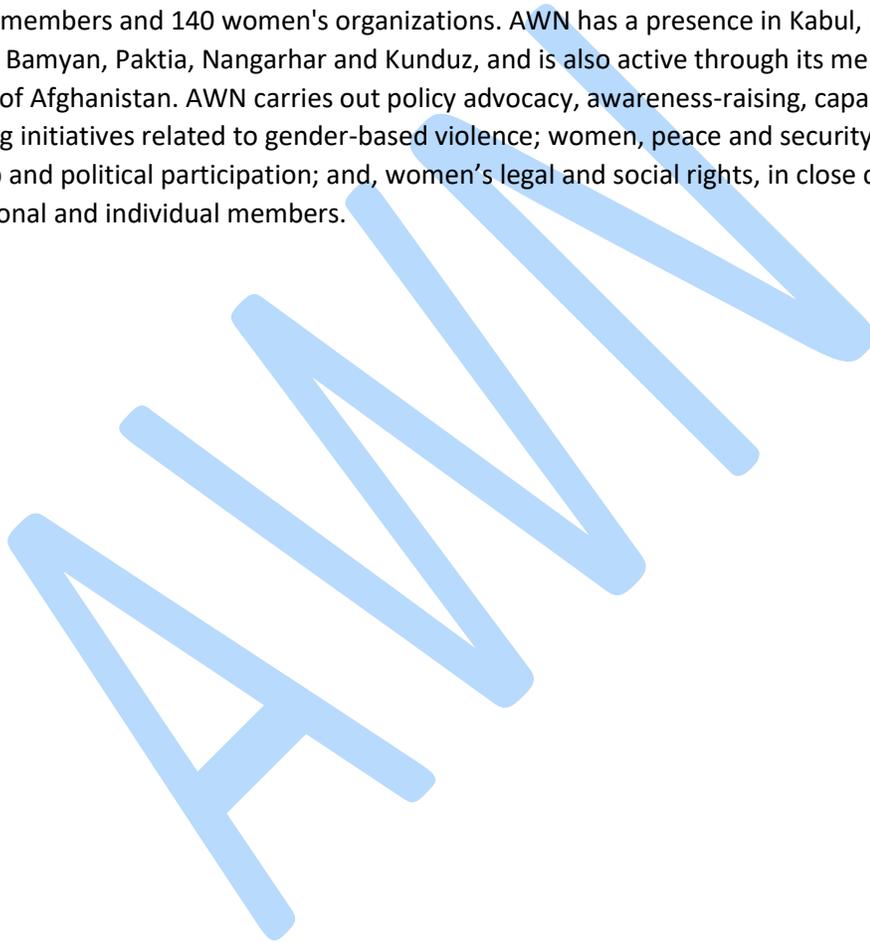
In 2018, the Afghan Women's Network led a series of consultations with women and women's organisations across Afghanistan. Through this statement, the Afghan Women's Network shares the voices of these women from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan:

1. The women of Afghanistan call for their **full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and reconciliation processes** relating to Afghanistan. Women are best placed to raise the concerns and priorities of women, as well as find broad solutions that benefit all of society. Afghan women emphasize the need for a transparent and accountable peace process that protects and promote women's human rights, supports justice for victims of violence and wars, and, prevents a culture of impunity.
2. As we see momentum towards a ceasefire, it is critical that women, including women in the security sector, as well as gender experts be **included in all stages of a ceasefire**. An inclusive process will ensure that a ceasefire includes gender-awareness provisions, identifies violations relating to gender-based violence, and provide for women to monitor compliance with a ceasefire agreement.
3. The **Constitution provides women and men with equal rights**, in line with the Sharia and Islamic principles. The Constitution was agreed upon by men and women across Afghanistan at the Constitutional Loya Jirga. It is imperative that these voices are respected, and the gender equality provisions of the Constitution maintained.

4. **Violence against women and girls** remains a serious concern for women and girls in Afghanistan, despite the introduction of new laws, such as the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Anti-Harassment Law. There remains persistent obstacles to the implementation of laws, with women and girls, as well as broader communities, not yet fully aware of their rights and protections under the laws. Planning and investment are needed to improve protections and ensure access to justice for all.

About the Afghan Women's Network

The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is an umbrella organization that represents more than 3,500 individual members and 140 women's organizations. AWN has a presence in Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Kandahar, Bamyan, Paktia, Nangarhar and Kunduz, and is also active through its members across other provinces of Afghanistan. AWN carries out policy advocacy, awareness-raising, capacity-building, and networking initiatives related to gender-based violence; women, peace and security; women's leadership and political participation; and, women's legal and social rights, in close collaboration with its organizational and individual members.



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