



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK  
AFGHANISTAN • PAKISTAN • INDIA

*WRN is a network of women civil society leaders working together to advance women's rights and regional peace in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.*

**UN Security Council Resolution 1325 passed in 2000, acknowledges that for far too long, women have had their futures and those of their families decided by the men who took up guns, and who are then allowed to divvy up the spoils of war in internationally backed peace processes.<sup>1</sup>**

## **Background**

After many decades of war and insecurity, the people of Afghanistan welcome the ongoing Intra-Afghan negotiations as an opportunity to create lasting peace. **Securing a just and sustainable peace critically hinges upon all stakeholders being represented and heard**, including women, civil society, human rights defenders, ethnic and religious minorities, youth, and all others who have been disproportionately impacted by violent conflict. Centering these voices and their recommendations would not only be a fitting acknowledgment and tribute to their sacrifices but would increase the effectiveness of the negotiations and likelihood of achieving true and lasting peace. Unfortunately, reports from the negotiations thus far tell us these voices are either absent or being ignored. Along with efforts to create an immediate reduction in violence, all parties to the negotiations must urgently create a consultative process that includes the perspectives, needs, and recommendations of all Afghan people.

## **Requirements for a Just Peace**

The peace process itself and any resulting agreement must be built upon a foundation of justice, inclusivity, and transparency if it to be sustainable. To build this foundation, the root causes of violence and instability must be examined and addressed. Fifty years of constant crisis has rendered the social fabric of the country. In addition to the death, bloodshed, and displacement that comes with war, the people of Afghanistan have lacked economic opportunities, access to healthcare and education, and have been largely unable to realize their full human rights. The most vulnerable populations have faced discrimination and disenfranchisement, creating a lack of trust and cohesion that is difficult to overcome. **Women have borne a disproportional burden of the conflict and face high levels of inequality, gender-based violence, and other attacks on their human rights.** If political peace is to be created, these social needs must be addressed. Doing so will create the justice Afghan society can build on to move forward.

Despite the long decades of instability, there have been some achievements in human rights and progress toward sustainable democracy in recent years. Most notably is the creation of the current Constitution, a document based on the shared values of the Afghan people. **This document offers a starting point for a unified vision and should serve as a strong intellectual framework for the negotiations and any resulting peace agreement.** Along with the creation of a transparent and inclusive consultative mechanism, centering the Constitution in the peace process will give the process the structural and popular support it currently lacks.

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Based on abundant research documenting the positive and lasting results of peacemaking efforts when women participate<sup>2</sup>, UN 1325 calls for women's full and equitable participation at all stages of international peace and security decision-making.

## Recommendations

Based on the above principles, the Women's Regional Network urgently calls for the following:

1. **An immediate and comprehensive ceasefire by all parties.** The current peace process cannot be considered legitimate or successful and should not move forward until all parties to the conflict commit to and abide by a full reduction in violence.
2. **Strong and immediate action to meaningfully include women in all decision-making aspects of the peace process,** in accordance with the government's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 - Women, Peace & Security, and especially as it pertains to negotiations with the Taliban. Women's political, legal, social, economic and educational rights, along with their right to live free from all forms of violence, must be the condition of all international aid.
3. **The realization and institutionalization of the rights of war victims.** The perspectives and voices of the victims of war should be included in the negotiation process. Going forward, an investigative committee should be formed to identify victims of war, address their needs, and explore the possibility of compensation for material and moral damage. These actions would go far in building public trust and collective support for the peace process.
4. **The maintenance and strengthening of civil society and civic structures.** In the past 19 years, many non-governmental organizations, organizing networks, professional membership organizations, labor unions, political parties, and advocacy groups have formed and grown. This civic space should be preserved and protected to maintain a diverse and pluralistic society.
5. **The recognition and prioritization of Afghanistan's youth, in all their ethnic, regional, cultural, and linguistic diversity.** Their varied perspectives and expertise are needed at all levels of society but should be prioritized in the peace process as yet another critical avenue to build trust and consensus among all Afghans.
6. **The prioritization of regional and global diplomacy.** Afghanistan's strategic allies must support and safeguard the peace process. This includes its regional neighbors as well as past parties to the conflict and supporters such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, as well as multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and its Security Council, NATO, and the European Union. These entities must take all steps necessary to ensure an inclusive and transparent peace process that results in an agreement based on justice and human rights for all Afghans. Global partners must also monitor the implementation of a future peace agreement and develop programs that ensure political, financial, and technical support to Afghanistan and its security forces going forward.

We believe that a peace process and subsequent agreement based on the above principles of inclusivity, plurality, transparency, and justice can and will bring lasting peace to Afghanistan. **It is our hope and desire that all Afghans are afforded a future based on human dignity, shared prosperity, and freedom from violence.** It is with this hope that we share these requests with the world.

Signed,  
Women's Regional Network

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.usip.org/gender\\_peacebuilding/about\\_UNSCR\\_1325](https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325)

<sup>2</sup> [https://oursecurefuture.org/sites/default/files/Policy%20Brief-WPS-101\\_digital.pdf](https://oursecurefuture.org/sites/default/files/Policy%20Brief-WPS-101_digital.pdf)