



## **Women's Regional Network**

### **Statement on the recent terrorist attacks on women rights activists and civilians**

Women's Regional Network (WRN) expresses its grave concerns over the increased insecurity that has claimed the lives of innocent civilians in Afghanistan.

We firmly condemn the targeted violent and terrorist attacks on peace activists, negotiators and human rights defenders including the most recent of the outrageous murder attempts on women, the attack on the hospital at Dasht Barchi and several terrorist attacks.

With no signs of action taken by the government of Afghanistan, the WRN calls on Afghan authorities to urgently implement a strategy for the protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRD's) and put an end to the culture of impunity that prevails in the country.

We request the immediate intervention of the Afghanistan authorities to ensure the safety of all women, especially women at the forefront of the peace processes, and women activists working on women's rights and safety from all forms of violence against them.

WRN has been informed of the following acts against Human Rights Defenders.

- ❖ On 14 August 2020, the gunmen attempted to assassinate Ms. Fawzia Koofi, the former Parliamentarian and member of the Afghanistan Peace Negotiation team. Ms Koofi was shot while travelling with her sister. They both survived the attack.
- ❖ On 27 June 2020, Ms Fatima Khalil and Mr Jawid Folad of the national human rights institution, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) were killed in a bomb attack in Kabul's District 12.
- ❖ On 12 May 2020, terrorist gunmen stormed a 100-bed hospital of Barchi in Kabul, killing newborns, mothers and those serving humanity, manifesting a grossly inhuman act against defenseless civilians and babies.
- ❖ On 31 March 2020, Ms Sharmila Frogh, the head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) Gender Department, died of wounds from a magnetic IED (improvised explosive device) planted in her vehicle.

Such attacks are a manifestation of the nefarious designs of those who want to derail the peace process held to ensure a more peaceful, prosperous Afghanistan.



The security situation in Kabul and other provinces is deteriorating. In spite of the condemnation by civil society in Afghanistan and the international community, violence continues the length and breadth of the country.

The women of Afghanistan have made substantial efforts and sacrifices to achieve their right to full citizenship accepting its corresponding obligations and responsibilities.. Afghan women today are actively engaged in various political, social, economic and cultural domains serving in senior roles in the Defense, Foreign Affairs and Interior Ministries, including as the Heads of both the Independent Electoral Commission and Electoral Complaints Commission.

The government of Afghanistan must fulfill its legal and moral obligation to protect its citizens, particularly the most vulnerable. We call on the government to critically review the Peace and War Strategy and end the impunity of such inhuman and brutal acts.

Women's Regional Network demands the United States as the lead supporter of the Afghanistan government and the chief peace negotiator with Taliban, use its diplomatic leverage to stop the killing of civilians and agree to a ceasefire before the start of the Intra-Afghan Talks, as well as during the talks and ensure the security of women after the talks.

Afghanistan has done more to invest in women's leadership than many countries with greater means. As a result, women are rising to lead and fully engage in all segments of society. WRN calls upon the international community to defend and support the participation and achievements of Afghan women.

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Women's Regional Network is a network of women civil society leaders working together to advance women's rights and regional peace in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka.

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