



October 21, 2021

To:

The Secretary-General, United Nations, New York

Permanent Representatives of Member States to the United Nations, New York and Geneva

**Urgent Demand to Include Women in All Afghanistan-related Processes  
and Cease Collaboration with the Elimination of Afghan Women from Public Life**

It has been said and repeated. From the United Nations Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and OCHA Under-Secretary-General, and, most recently, by the newly-appointed UN Women Executive Director: women's rights in Afghanistan are 'red lines', 'a zero condition', 'which must be protected', and that 'without women there is no way Afghan economy and society will recover.'

Yet from our direct experience, the reality is entirely different from this soaring rhetoric.

We the undersigned, members of Feminist Action for Afghanistan, a global coalition of feminist, women's rights organizations, and Afghan women, are outraged at the willingness of UN agencies, funds and programmes, UNAMA, and Member States - North and South, West and East - to erase these red lines with blatant impunity.

Since the fall of the Afghan Government, we have witnessed a parade of men-only delegations on matters concerning Afghanistan. These missions have failed to consult effectively with Afghan women on humanitarian aid, failed to ensure the meaningful inclusion of Afghan women in talks and negotiations (including Doha), and failed to include Afghan women in discussions on conditions relating to the establishment of trust funds and other financial mechanisms.

The list of international failures on Afghanistan and, in particular, in protecting and promoting Afghan women is long and grows ever-longer. These shocking failures - some 21 years since the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security - to

ensure equitable and meaningful participation by Afghan women extends the removal of Afghan women from public, economic, and political life, initiated by the Taliban. It is unacceptable. It must cease.

**In this emergency statement, we call on the UN Secretary-General, UN agencies, funds and programmes, UNAMA, and Member States to reverse these failures as a matter of urgency. It is obvious what needs to be done.**

We understand that the creation of a women's 'advisory' mechanism on humanitarian aid is under consideration as a response to the demand for Afghan women's participation in decision making on humanitarian aid. The experience of women's advisory boards from both Syria and Yemen is that, in order for women's participation to be effective and consequential in real life, women must have decision making authority and not be confined to advisory roles. We have seen that advice given is too often ignored or discounted. Instead, we call for greater responsiveness, transparency, and accountability on the part of our UN partners; a partnership through which women can play a major role in the design, implementation, and monitoring of aid delivery. Indeed, Afghan women should be involved in designing the structure as to how this can best be achieved, more so given that OCHA has, incredibly, only one senior gender advisor to advise on gender related issues in humanitarian aid.

Afghan women must be meaningfully involved in **all** negotiations focused on humanitarian aid, economic support, trade, security, human rights, the political process, and governance - **all without exception**. This reflects a clear and consistent commitment of the global community. One armed extremist group must not be allowed to undermine the commitments of the United Nations and its Member States, as expressed in the multiple Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security, as well as numerous other normative frameworks relating to equality in all aspects of governance, peace and security.

We state in the clearest terms that exclusion of women in general, and Afghan women in particular, from negotiations and all processes relating to the future of Afghanistan, constitutes de-facto complicity with the Taliban's agenda to eliminate women from public life and to reverse previous commitments to the human rights of Afghan women and girls.

Answers and action are required urgently: from the Secretary-General, from OCHA, from UN Women, and, indeed, from the Security Council given their silence in the face of this threat to international peace and security. Notwithstanding the valiant attempts of many individuals across the globe during the immediate evacuation crisis, the multilateral system - and in particular the Security Council - was exposed to the world as incompetent and unable to discharge its mandate to respond to threats or breaches of international peace and security, during the fall of Kabul and the subsequent evacuations. A degree of credibility, effectiveness, and accountability must now be restored to the Security Council, the United Nations more broadly, and its Member States to mobilize the political will and action required to ensure women's meaningful participation front and center and to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of Afghan women.

We are ready, willing, and able to provide support to make the changes we demand. We welcome partnership and cooperation and want to assist in the rebuilding of that lost credibility, effectiveness, and accountability of our United Nations.

We await your response.

**Feminist Action for Afghanistan**

- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
- MADRE
- Global Fund for Women
- Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
- Equality Fund
- Front Line Defenders
- WO=MEN – Dutch Gender Platform
- International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
- Mama Cash