

Women's Manifesto on Peace, Security and Political Participation

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Contact Number: 0700649191
Website: www.wclrf.org.af
Email: wclrf@yahoo.com
Office Add: [House # 432, Str #5th, Deh Naw, Dehbori, Kabul, Afghanistan.](#)

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Zarqa Yaftali,
WCLRF Director

About WCLRF

Women & Children Legal Research Foundation is one of the leading organizations who persistently works for the rights of women and children in Afghanistan. Since its establishment in 2002, this organization has struggled to help in empowerment of women and children and their rights through studies, advocacy and capacity building of women. The organization aims to bring about social justice and institutionalize the rights of women and children in the country. The main purposes of this organization are mentioned as follow:

1. Struggle for violence against women and girls.
2. Work for changing violent behaviors.
3. Request for supporting the rights of women and children.
4. Capacity improvement of local leaders for supporting the work of the organization.
5. Empowering and capacity improvement of women regarding their basic rights.

Since its establishment, the organization has conducted more than 40 programs in various regions so as to achieve their goals. Most of the activities of the organization are concerned about study, justice and capacity building.

Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS)

Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS) - Afghanistan is a German organization which is a part of Green Political Revolution. This organization works for empowerment of democracy, human rights and insuring justice and mainly emphasis on gender based democracy which means social freedom and equal rights for men and women. Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS) is committed to equal rights for tribal and cultural minorities, and besides that develop anti-violence and peaceful policies. Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS) started its activities in 2003 in Afghanistan and now the activities of this organization are based on democracy and for insuring peace and security. For additional information about the activities and employees of this organization in Afghanistan please visit (www.boell.org.af) or email to (af@boell.org).

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Introduction

In 2015, Women and children legal Research Foundation conducted a research report on women's participation in peace the process¹ in Afghanistan. In this research, WCLRF found out number of key challenges that women face to meaningfully participate in the peace process. Some of these challenges include, lack of political will, low trust on women's capacity within HPC as well as low coordination among women at HPC and outside.

In 2016, WCLRF, further studied the role of women in HPC and developed a guideline for engendering peace process in Afghanistan². The findings on the guideline were fairly the same as of the research report where women at HPC did not have a clear role as well as they were not consulted for many important discussions in relation to Peace in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, in 2016 WCLRF established an advocacy committee for increasing women's participation in the peace process with the membership of 20 civil society organizations. Taking further practical step, the organization afterwards planned to develop Women's Manifesto on Peace, Security and Political Participation. The Manifesto primarily aims to understand and analyze the root challenges to women participation and to present key recommendations to overcome such shortcomings.

After the fall of Taliban and with establishment of interim and elected governments since 2001, political participation of women seemed to be one of the key priorities of the government as well as the international community. However, after working for around a decade and half, still women's participation is unstable. There are some members in national unity government, but their voice regarding gender equality are not considered. Since then, women have worked hard for their representation as well as their voices to be heard. Even though women constitute more than 25% of Lower and Upper house in the parliament, their voice and demands about women rights is rarely heard or taken into consideration. Also, it was discouraging to see, the first ever female judge to get the membership of Supreme Court High Council failed due to absence of many woman parliamentarians on voting day³. Therefore, for better delegation of women's rights and their needs, the current and future parliament members shall be further empowered so as they can actively delegate the half population of Afghanistan.

In addition, worsening the security situation in Afghanistan, poor participation of women in the local governments and unavailability of support and protection to employed women, are the key challenges which have diversely affected the political participation of women in Afghanistan. As the findings of a research report on women's participation in security sectors demonstrate, women only constitute two percent in those sectors. Women are not only appointed to leading and decision-making positions in

1 <http://wclrf.org.af/womens-participation-in-peace-process/>

2 <http://wclrf.org.af/projects-2/research/2016-2/guideline-engendering-the-peace-process-through-the-meaningful-engagement-of-women/>

3 http://www.awn-af.net/index.php/cms/press_detail/809/12

security and political institutions, but face many other problems such as discrimination, sexual violence and harassment and vastly.

Through Women's Manifesto on Peace, Security and Political Participation, WCLRF has further examined the challenges and is providing set of key recommendations to National Unity Government and the international actors. This Manifesto is also developed in relation to the finding of WCLRF earlier research and recalls on the organizations recommendations.

Purpose of the Manifesto

This manifesto shares the thoughts, expectations, concerns and recommendations of Afghan women in relation to women's political participation, their role in security sector as well as their engagement in peace process in Afghanistan.

In so doing it aims:

1. To ensure the authentic voices of women are being heard by political actors, donors, civil society and the wider public.
2. To build and strengthen women's socio-political status and to coordinate all relevant actors for coming to an agreement in achieving this goal;
3. To bring together like-minded organizations and individuals to share information and participate in women-led advocacy initiatives.

Methodology

For development of this document, a thorough desk review on existing research papers, policy briefs and reports on women's political participation, women's engagement in peace process and women's role in security sector was carried out. WCLRF earlier research report as well as guideline findings were also reviewed and integrated where necessary.

Similarly number of women organizations, women members of High Peace Council and women community leaders from Kabul district was interviewed through focus group discussions for this manifesto. The views and findings in this paper is entirely from the earlier papers as well as those interviewed.

Findings

First Part: Women's participation in Peace Process

WCLRF is one of the leading organizations advocating for increasing women's participation in the peace processes on the basis of capacity, expertise and gender equality. WCLRF in close cooperation with Advocacy Committee for increasing Women's Participation in the Peace Process, was constantly monitoring and jointly supervising any changes related to women's participation in peace process, and

demanding bigger changes in High Peace Council and Provincial Peace Committees' leadership. Even though WCLRF welcomes the recent changes in HPC where numbers of women were selected with WCLRF list that was shared to HPC, women's poor participation in peace process and ignoring their role has been one of the biggest concerns of the committee as well as the activists. It is encouraging to see that four women sit in executive committee of HPC which is the highest decision-making venue. Generally speaking, there is a change in voices of women in HPC during general assembly meetings. Women are now able to disagree and raise their voice as compared to earlier members in a completely male dominant structure. However, there are number of challenges identified while interviewing women both from High Peace Council as well as others interviewed for this paper.

1. Political and Biased Treatment

Since some of the new female members of HPC were introduced by different political parties, are facing with biased behaviors. Men in HPC's new composition -as used to be- have been introduced/appointed by tribal leaders, political Jihadi parties and former Taliban members, do not believe in women rights and gender equality. Their attitudes in general have resulted in sidelining women and ignoring their voices and concerns. In addition to small number of women in HPC's composition, some of these members have been introduced by civil society and some by political parties, there is no coordination between them and; hence, are being ignored by HPC's leadership and their views and demands in many ways are not taken into consideration. This situation does not only result in weakening the spirit of cooperation, but also affects the quality of the work being done through High Peace Council.

2. Sexual Discrimination

It is obvious that Afghanistan is a traditional, conservative country and negative attitudes towards women are commonplace at almost everywhere, hence, no exception with HPC's staff and officials. The findings of this Manifesto reveal that the male members of the council have gendered-biased views against women and have their masculine definition of peace and conflict, the very believe which leads to marginalization of women as well as their demands and views. Women's role and participation in such misogynistic environment is considered to be both unimportant and unproductive.

3. Mal-Adjustment of HPC' Strategy

While HPC' strategy highly emphasizes on 30% inclusion of women in its central and provincial compositions, but even the recent changes - inclusion of 8 more women thanks to CSO's advocacy efforts- do not reflect on the implementation of such basic principle. With all the struggles and advocacy efforts, the presence of women in HPC is about 21% and no exact figure has been revealed showing women's presence in Provincial Peace Councils (PPCs). Furthermore, the National Unity Government (NUG), especially Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoF) and HPC have relatively failed in full implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) for implementation of UN-1325 resolution. The NAP for implementation

of UN-1325 is in place to ensure the four pillars of resolution (Participation, Protection, Preventing and Relief & Recovery). These pillars primarily aim to strengthen women's inclusion in civil services, to increase women's economic security, to enhance women's access to justice, and to supporting women role in security sectors, yet the findings research and FGDs show its maladjustment.

4. Poor Participation

Participants to the Focus Group Discussions believe that women are not fully involved in decision-making processes within HPC and have a symbolic role. Most of the decisions are made by male members in Executive Committee and /or the secretariat and then imposed on women. The outcomes of the interviews show that HPC's female members were unaware of some vital meetings held on peace processes. They had been neither aware of such meetings, nor have been consulted with.

5. Disharmony in decisions and positions

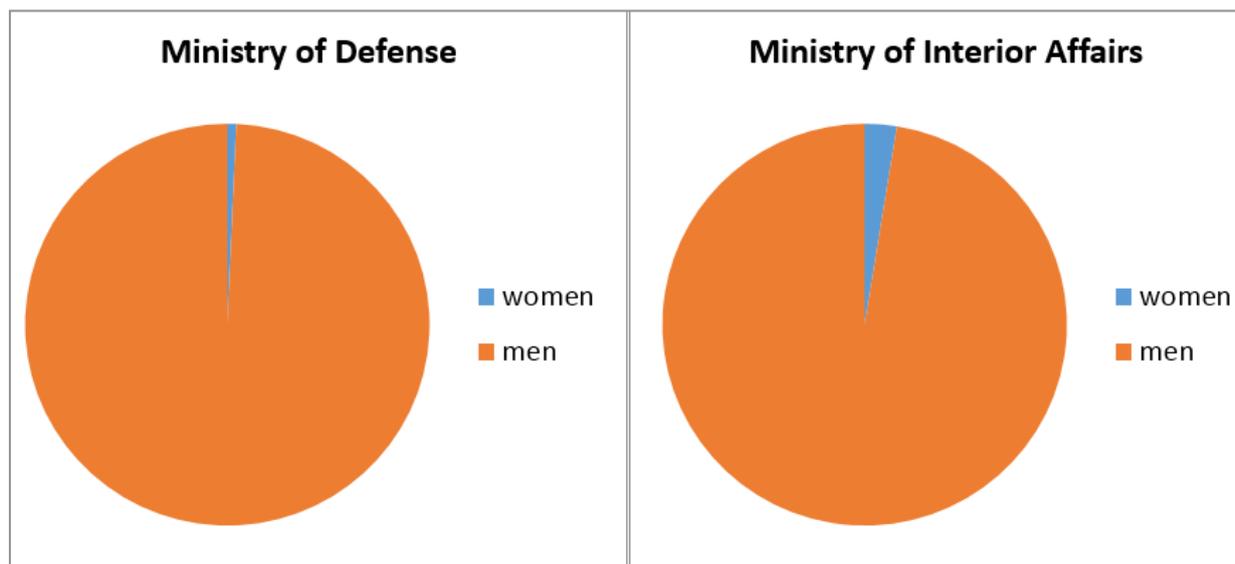
Because of the multi-factional composition of the HPC, a lack of harmony between the members is place, especially with regard to women's inclusion in peace, security and political participation. This, greatly affects the unity of visions and lowers the quality of decisions made within HPC. To illustrate, HPC's strategy clearly predicts establishing women's advisory board including women outside of HPC's structure, yet the discrepancy between its members have resulted in failing such initiative. Moreover, lack of coordination and productive cooperation between HPC's female members and women as community members has also led the majority of women to be unaware of the existence of the High Peace Council.

Second Part: Women's Presence in Security Sectors

Studies show that Women form only 2 percent of Afghanistan National Security and Defence Forces. From 195,000 Afghan National Army, 1400 are women and From 150, 000 Afghan National Police there are 3326 women (2937 police and 389 civilian) currently work within Ministry of Interior (MoI)⁴. There are not exact data available on the number of police and army female employees (officers and civilians) in the National Security Directorate, however, it would be obvious that women's presence would not exceed the numbers available at Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence.

According to the participants of focus group discussions, women recruitment in security forces has been mostly due to low financial status of women when they do not have any other options. Women's recruitment has been also fairly low as compared to men due to cultural sensitivity to policing job for women.

4 http://www.awn-af.net/index.php/cms/press_detail/986/12



In addition to the mentioned reasons, the following challenges are the most significant challenges against women in the security sectors:

A) Little opportunities and facilities

Lack of adequate and equal opportunities for women have resulted in decreasing the number of women within the security sectors. Based on Focus Group Discussions, women face logistical and programmatic challenges such as limited changing rooms, limited washrooms, and limited child care facilities as well as lack of transportation to women in security sector. Program wise, women are still not assigned to the actual policing and army jobs in most units. It reveals that a great deal of sexual discrimination are in place against women, especially in terms of equal distribution of position and other sort of opportunities in the security sectors. Likewise, women are not appointed as leading and decision-making position, yet degraded as inferior and the lowest positions.

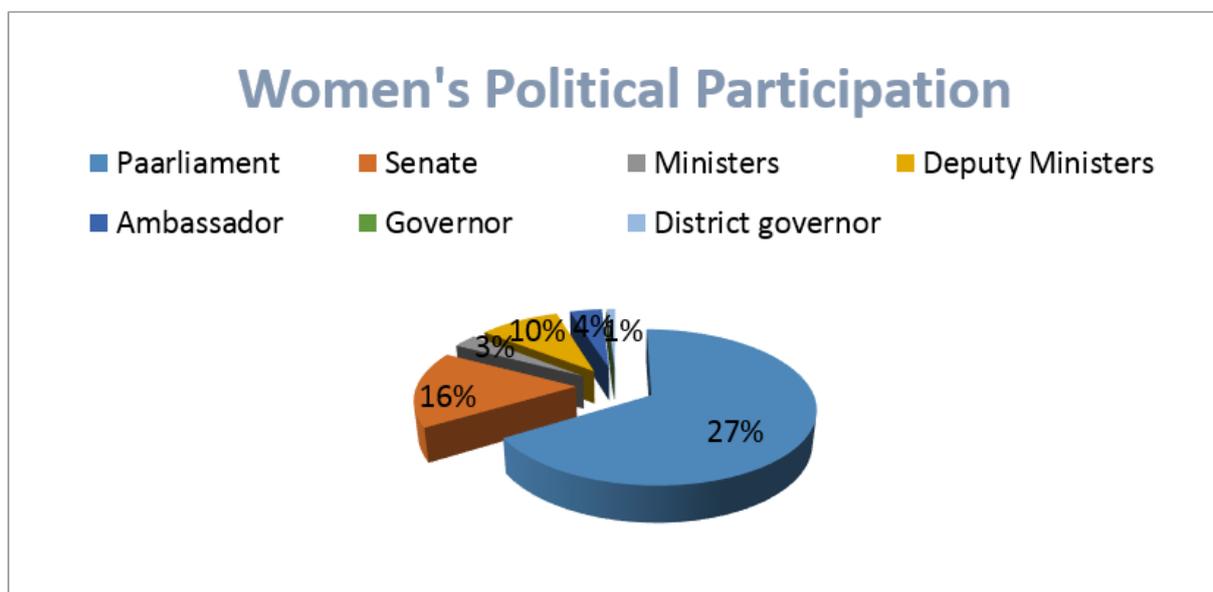
B) Sexual Harassment

Various reports on sexual violence, particularly sexual harassment, found out that women in security sectors are being sexually harassed, the very reason that adds to the concerns of women's rights activists as well the families. Women have to wait for many years for their promotion to be approved as well as there are only few women in some of senior position where as majority of women with over 10 years of experience are not considered to be appointed in leadership roles. The harassment of women in security sector has always been a matter of concern. There are several reports that document this however there are very limited voices within these institutions to raise the issue and find means to tackle it.

Third Part: Women Political Participation

Afghan women's political participation is assured within Afghanistan Constitution where specific quota for their engagement in democratic process of Presidential, Provincial Councils and Parliamentarian

elections are guaranteed. Similarly the government's national and international obligations have been practiced where women are part of the cabinet and number of other senior positions in Afghanistan.



1. Sideline Women at National and International Level

Women political participation linked to decision making and leadership role is shrinking according to number of women participants of FGDs for this manifesto. Women believe that while the representation of women is a positive step, they still lack space to attend President and CEO's important national and international discussions.

2. Lack of Women in Forming National Unity Government Leadership

In number of recent posting women were replaced by male ministers and governors. This is alarming as women's participation is turning further lower. Women in the parliament and senate have not been able to fully represent Afghan women's views. Some recent examples include declining of two female ministers and avoiding to vote for the first ever women candidate to the membership of Supreme Court High Council. Women's role in provincial councils and other sub national posts remain unclear. In most of the provinces, women are not part of any effort and initiative in relation to province development, peace and security by the male governors. Besides that, the role of women in provincial councils and other provincial formations is not clear yet. In most of the provinces, women are not giving opportunities to take part in any of the process related to peace, security and development.

3. Security Challenges for Female Nominates and Voters

The upcoming 2018 Parliamentary elections is in massive risk where due to increase insecurity and support women voters, election commission female employees and women candidates can support the most. Women participants of FGD from districts of Kabul expressed their lack of interest in voting for women candidates. They rated the coordination and collaboration of female MPs with their constituents

very poor. There is a massive gap of trust on current MPs and thus it is extremely challenging to bring the trust back to voters.

Conclusion

Cultivating peace and political stability requires active participation of each citizen. We, indeed will not find a true peace unless half the population is systematically sidelined and their rights and role are ignored. Women are highly invested in stabilizing insecure areas and strengthening the central government and civil society. Women, as peace activists, practitioners, and state representatives, can bring about crucial changes to any agreement's outcomes and can advocate for women's rights inclusion in any peace agreement. Through whole peace processes –from run-up to conflict (pre-conflict) to reintegration and reconstruction (post-conflict) – their active participation is crucial to countering extremist narratives and inflicting policies intending to sideline their role and rights. They can make efforts in supporting the creation of a more inclusive reconciliation process that engages a broad range of groups, particularly women, in defining a sustainable political solution to the conflicts. However, ensuring higher participation of women in the political process including the peace process requires presence of women in both the high level and technical level platforms that is contributing to greater political stability and peace within each community and country.

Recommendations

WCLRF recalls its recommendations made in its research paper in 2015 and guideline in 2016 and would like to propose the following recommendations to the National Unity Government and International Donors in the area of women's role in peace process, women in security sector as well as women's political engagement. These recommendations are also gathered and analyzed from the focus group discussions held for the development of this manifesto.

1. Recommendations to the National Unity Government:

A) Women's Participation in the Peace Process

- In accordance with NUG's commitment to implement NAP for UN-1325, it must ensure women's inclusion, especially within HPC and PPCs and grant them leadership positions.
- Women members of High Peace Council as well as women peace experts outside this structure must be included in debates, dialogues, mediation and negotiation processes linked to Afghanistan peace process.
- Technical capacity building for both male and female members of High Peace Council on topics in relation of mediation, dialogue, conflict analysis, negotiations etc. must be planned and carried out.
- High Peace Council is encouraged to urgently establish the Women's Advisory Board which is in accordance to High Peace Council strategy as well as the commitment HPC made to WCLRF and women

representatives during the launch of WCLRF guideline.

- Women are concerned that their one half decade of achievements are being sacrificed and wasted while peace negotiations with terrorist groups and other against women rights, therefore, we suggest that women should have an active and deciding participation in peace negotiations with Taliban and extremist groups.

B) Increments of Women in Security Sectors

- Ministries of Defense and Interior must establish coordination mechanism with nongovernmental organizations for exchange of information as well as technical expertise between women within security sector and outside.
- Ministries of Defense and Interior must make specific plans in accordance with their responsibilities in Afghanistan National Action Plan 1325 for technical capacity building of women in police and army.
- Family based incentives should be introduced to encourage recruitment of women in police and army especially in provinces. These incentives could be similar jobs to male members of families (if interested), financial support as well as accommodation and appropriate policing jobs.

C) Women's Political Participation

- Identification and appointment of women based on their qualifications and technical expertise to the government and local government positions.
- Supporting programs for female nominees for the upcoming parliament and provincial councils elections must be provided. This program should include civic education, personal security, equal campaign opportunities and motivation for their active participation in the elections.
- Increase number of women in decision making roles at the provincial level. WCLRF and many more organizations are able to provide list of competent women to the NUG.

2. Recommendations to International Community

- International community supporting peace process in Afghanistan must condition their support on meaningful inclusion of women in this process.
- International Community that directly provide financial aid to security sector reform including women's recruitment and gender mainstreaming need to closely consult and engage with women's organizations and advocates for planning and implementation phases as well as the inclusion of women in senior ranking posts within security sector.
- International Community is encouraged to support establishment of an Independent Civil Society Oversight Commission to thoroughly monitor the implementation of existing gender strategies such as NAP 1325, High Peace Council Strategy, NAPWA etc for transparency, measuring success and accountability.

This manifesto shares the thoughts, expectations, concerns and recommendations of Afghanistan women in relation to women's political participation, their role in security sector as well as their engagement in peace process in Afghanistan.

