

## Women and the Peace Process in Afghanistan

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As a retaliation for the terrorist attacks in New York on 9/11, the UN resolution 1386 authorizes the deployment of an international security assistance force to create security for Afghanistan's interim authority and UN personnel to operate on December 20 that same year.

Since then, the U.S. and NATO forces have fought the Taliban but could not remove them from power. Hence they came up with the idea of a political solution. Nearly 3 months have passed since the U.S. – Taliban agreement was signed in February in Doha, which is supposed to then lead Afghanistan's intra peace talks.

### **Women's Concern about Negotiations with the Taliban.**

Due to the Taliban's history of suppressing human rights, there are now questions about the viability of the negotiations. It should be noted that the women activists have expressed their support for the peace talks, but said that the achievements of Afghanistan in women's rights, freedom of press, and other gains should not be ignored in the process. Women organizations have specified that any long-lasting peace settlement should be based on the perspective of protecting the rights of all segments of the population, and respecting the country's constitution.

Since 2001, Afghanistan has made progress in areas such as women's rights, freedom of speech, and provision of education and other basic amenities. It is expected that any political resolution would highlight the need to preserve the constitutional rights gained by the people and the international

organizations.

One of the most significant consequences of the social construction of the peace negotiations between the U.S. and the Taliban is the lack of a gender balance. Women have been excluded from the process due to the religious principles held by the Taliban. The women in Afghanistan stressed that the negotiations risk all of the progress that has been made over the past 19 years.

Mrs. Habiba Sorabi, is one of the 5 women of a newly formed 21-member negotiation team. This team is expected to negotiate with the Taliban at the upcoming talks. She expressed her concerns at the Intra – Afghan talk event held by the United States Institute of Peace. She said that women in Afghanistan have made visible achievements throughout the last two decades with the help of the international NGO's. She believes that the efforts were invested in several aspects, particularly in human and women's rights in Afghanistan.

"When we want peace it does not mean at any cost. The price shouldn't demolish all the joint achievements", Mrs. Sorabi said.

She also indicated that human and women's rights are the major issues that the international community has a lot of treaties on. As part of the international community, Afghanistan cannot negate treaties created by the United Nations. However, it is uncertain whether the talks would resume and pave the way to a sustained peace process in Afghanistan.

Since the UN gave the U.S. a mandate to take military action in Afghanistan in the first place, the UN is also key in this negotiation. The regional actors and various NGOs could also see fit to join the dialogue, to make sure that Taliban abides by the laws regarding women and human rights in particular.