



*Report on the Virtual Meeting
'Come and Listen to Afghan
Women's concerns and Two
Decades' Achievements'
commenced in 6th July 2021*



Introductory Remarks

Baroness Fiona Hodgson of Abinger – Honorary Vice President of Conservative Women’s Organisation:

Baroness Fiona shared her support, as well as voicing her concerns, for Afghan women in the light of the rising levels of violence, with targeted killings of women and ‘horrific incidents’, such as the attack on the maternity hospital in Afghanistan last year, and the more recent attack on a girls’ school. The UK and the West, Baroness Fiona emphasised, must take action to assist the women of Afghanistan in securing their achievements thus far, and as such, this meeting would provide a good platform for UK representatives to directly hear from the women of Afghanistan their worries and anxieties about their future.



Rahela Sidiqi – Social Development Expert & Founding Director of Rahela Trust:

Mrs Sidiqi initiated the meeting by drawing attention to the series of crises faced by Afghan women, in the backdrop of a global pandemic, poverty, and drought. Furthermore, Mrs Sidiqi highlighted the potential risks to women and their decades long achievements being reversed under Taliban rule, and how ultimately, women would be the group most vulnerable to risk and oppression. As such, Mrs Sidiqi urged the UK representatives and Parliamentary Members ‘as a long-standing ally of Afghanistan’, to ‘contribute to its developmental peace building process, to protect women and human rights, by supporting Civil Society Organisation and Particularly Women-led organizations that deliver basic services such as education, Health, legal, and psychosocial assistance & Community Development’.



***We are calling on the
International community to
increase fund for humanitarian
& emergency services to
Afghanistan; to further support
women CSOs” – Mrs Sidiqi***

Guest Speakers

Shinkai Karokhail – Afghan MP & Chair of Parliamentary Women’s Caucus

“How do we change the public perception regarding women?”

Advocating for better visibility for women within public and professional spheres, Mrs Karokhail examines how the Taliban’s draconian practices against women are not compatible in today’s contemporary society. Mrs Karokhail took a specific look at Afghan women and positions of government, arguing that the small, post-2001 gains made in

women’s parliamentary representation will be threatened if international partners do not pressurise the entities that are funding persecution and terrorism.

Mrs Karokhail insists that in contrast to previous regimes, the voices of Afghan women will *not* be silenced, and calls on UK partners to help their protection as Afghanistan prepares itself for another civil war. Mrs Karokhail also calls on UK partners to assist Afghanistan in their fight for progressive rights, arguing that the Taliban’s activities will have consequences on global politics. Under the Taliban, Afghanistan will become a hotbed of trans-national extremist ideology and mass opium production, threatening Asia and greater political spheres. It is imperative that Afghan Defense Forces are funded and protected, to help combat and eradicate the groups that jeopardise the sanctity of Afghan and International politics.



Anarkali Honaryar – Afghan Senator



Exploring how minorities experience the ramifications of the Afghan conflict differently, Anarkali Honaryar discussed the discriminatory laws enforced on minority groups under the Taliban regime. From yellow flags placed on houses, to the weaponization of universities, Mrs Honaryar articulated the pressing need for international partners to help the plight of ethnic minorities under the impending Taliban regime. Singling out the experiences of Hindus and Sikhs in the 90s, Mrs Honaryar stressed the need for neighbouring countries to sanction insurgent groups and to prioritise the status of ethnic minorities within Afghanistan to ensure full protection of their rights.

Furthermore, Mrs Honaryar explored the failures of the Doha Peace Agreement, with a recent escalation of attacks in the North of Afghanistan and the specific

targeting of women, ethnic minorities and children. Despite the Afghan Government’s peace efforts, Mrs Honaryar argued that such a feat cannot be possible without

“Minority groups have a historical presence in our country.”

international partners providing the necessary assistance to achieve collective peace goals.

Lima Anwari – Afghan Youth Activist

“We are calling on the continuation of recognising the importance of education in Afghanistan’s future developments.”

Taking a specific look at the role of the Afghan Youth and the peace-building process, Lima Anwari examined the barriers that

prevents the youth from engaging with the different branches of Parliament. Corruption within the Afghan government, with Afghanistan being ranked the 11th most corrupt nation globally, has discouraged the youth from cooperating with the government, making them

vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups. Mrs Anwari advocates for the introduction of more scholarship programmes which will help younger generations integrate themselves with Afghan society and help make their importance within Afghanistan more tangible. Mrs Anwari also argued that the success of such scholarships depends on integrating different ethnic groups and women, in order to weave together a harmonious and fully inclusive Afghanistan.



“Women organisations are the closest to the community, they serve and therefore are better able to adopt to challenges when crises arise.”

Mariam Rahmani – Director of Afghan Women’s Resource Centre

Mariam Rahmani focused mainly on the integral roles of women’s organisations within Afghanistan. Mrs Rahmani pressed that the

protection of Afghan women’s organisation should be a major priority for both the Afghan government and groups across the globe. Equality, sustainable funding and peace protection should serve as the fabrics of any agenda concerning women’s organisations in Afghanistan to ensure a progressive society that reflects the demographic of the nation. It is imperative that both national and international governments single out and platform already established womens organisations within Afghanistan as viable hubs of solid networks that can help rebuild the country from the ground up.



Lesley Craig – Special Representative from the FCDO, UK

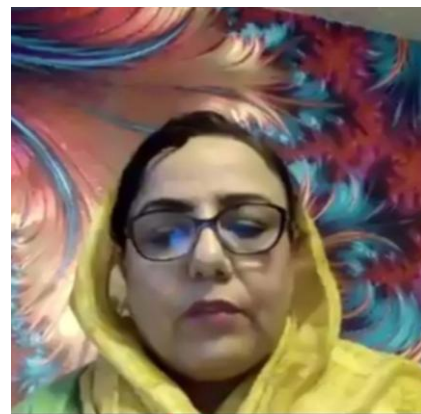
Focusing specifically on UK-Afghan relations, Lesley Craig expresses the concerns of the British government towards the treatment of Afghan women in the of the impending Taliban regime. Miss Craig iterated that progressive healthcare, education and civil rights are trans-national ideologies where governments across the globe can unify and advocate for within Afghanistan, providing essential assistance and support to help empower Afghan communities to champion within their own societies. The British government recognises the overwhelming anxieties expressed by Afghan women and stands with them in solidarity to help protect their rights in future governments.



Concluding Remarks

Mary Akrami–Director of Afghan Women’s Network

Mrs Akrami stressed the role that UK can play to facilitate peacebuilding in Afghanistan. She brings into the audience’s attention how not much has changed in the Taliban’s social policies and governance strategies and reiterates the UK’s role to pressurise the Taliban and show their support for women, human rights defenders and activists in Afghanistan. Mrs Akrami outlined the capability of Afghan women to become facilitators of peace, who are in need of support from their international counterparts.



Baroness Fiona Hodgson of Abinger:

Baroness Fiona concluded the meeting with an emphasis upon the importance of commencing meetings such as this one and the vital need for international community members to hear out the concerns of Afghan women. She brought into attention some words by Lord Ahmad, the Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth at the FCDO, to provide reassurance to Afghan counterparts that persistent efforts are made by the UK in the way of peacebuilding in Afghanistan:

“We will continue our enduring partnership with the Government of Afghanistan through our diplomacy and our development support, and we will continue to back its efforts to counter terrorism, with support for the security sector.” Lord Tariq Ahmad, Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth at FCDO, UK

Rahela Sidiqi – Social Development Expert

Mrs Sidiqi ended the meeting expressing her gratitude for all the UK and Afghanistan panellists, and once again, reiterated the need for solidarity between UK and Afghanistan in the critical juncture ahead in the ongoing peace talks.