

Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper

Taking Cover: Women in Post-Taliban Afghanistan May 2002

Since the U.S.-led alliance toppled the Taliban in November 2001, women and girls in Afghanistan have gained greater freedom to participate in public life and access to education, health care, and employment.¹ This is the case particularly in the capital, Kabul, where the deployment of foreign military forces under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)² has helped bring much-needed security. Even in Kabul, however, many Afghan women still face constant threats to their personal security from other civilians or armed men belonging to various political factions. Outside Kabul, the situation is one of acute general lawlessness and insecurity, as there is no ISAF presence and rival warlords control security conditions. In these areas, more than in Kabul, Afghan women continue to face serious threats to their physical safety, which denies them the opportunity to exercise their basic human rights and to participate fully in the rebuilding of their country.

The danger of physical assault is evident throughout northern Afghanistan, where ethnic Pashtuns have been specifically targeted for violence and harassment, including sexual violence. During February and March 2002, Human Rights Watch documented cases of sexual violence against Pashtun women perpetrated by the three main ethnically based parties and their militias in the north. Many women described how they had to fight off attackers or hide young female relatives out of fear of rape.³ These attacks took place immediately following the fall of the predominantly Pashtun Taliban on November 9, 2001, in Mazar-i Sharif⁴ (hereafter, Mazar), the largest city in northern Afghanistan, leaving it and the surrounding areas in the control of the three main rival factions

¹ For information on what life was like for women under the Taliban, see Human Rights Watch, "Humanity Denied: Systematic Abuses against Women in Afghanistan," *A Human Rights Watch Short Report*, vol. 13, no. 5 (C), October 2001, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/afghan3/>.

² See Human Rights Watch, "Paying for the Taliban's Crimes: Abuses Against Ethnic Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan," *A Human Rights Watch Short Report*, vol. 14, no. 2 (C), April 2002, pp. 46-47, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/afghan2/>. Human Rights Watch researchers visited Faryab, Balkh, Samangan, and Baghlan provinces in the north of Afghanistan during February and March 2002, and Kabul in March 2002.

³ See Human Rights Watch, "Paying for the Taliban's Crimes."

⁴ Human Rights Watch, "The Massacre in Mazar-i-Sharif," *A Human Rights Watch Short Report*, Vol. 10, No. 7 (C), November 1998, p. 12, http://www.hrw.org/reports98/afghan/Afrepor0-04.htm - P195_40896.

During the Taliban takeover of Mazar in August 1998, Human Rights Watch documented the massacres of thousands of civilians and found credible reports that the Taliban raped and abducted young women, particularly from Hazara neighborhoods of the city. Additionally, all women had to abide by various Taliban edicts governing aspects of women's public and private lives. These edicts severely restricted women's freedom of movement and association, and their access to education, healthcare, and employment. Women in the cities, particularly Mazar and Kabul, reported living in a constant state of fear because they bore the brunt of the zealous enforcement of these decrees by the Taliban.

competing for territory.⁵ These factions include the predominantly ethnic Uzbek Junbish-i Milly-yi Islami of General Abdul Rashid Dostum the predominantly ethnic Tajik Jamiat-e Islami led in Mazar-i Sharif by Ustad Atta Mohammad, and the ethnic Hazara Hizb-i Wahdat, led in the north by Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq.⁶

These three factions signed a U.N.-backed agreement on February 3, 2002, establishing a 600-person multi-ethnic security force for the city, headed by Junbish commander Majid Rouzi. However, general lawlessness and insecurity prevail.⁷ Although lawlessness is a critical issue for all Afghans, the lack of physical security has affected women in gender-specific ways, making them especially vulnerable to rape and other sexual abuse. Although Pashtun women in the north have been specifically targeted for sexual violence, during February and March 2002, Human Rights Watch researchers also gathered credible evidence of continuing politically or ethnically motivated sexual violence against women and girls of other ethnicities in Mazar. Women in Mazar reported that they live under constant fears of physical assault and feel compelled to limit their movement, expression, and dress to avoid becoming targets of such violence by armed civilians or armed men aligned with the three main ethnically based parties.

Gender-specific violence has also taken on a potentially deadly dimension elsewhere. Women continue to be assaulted or abused for not adhering to former Taliban edicts that strictly controlled women's behavior, dress, expression, and movement. In the second week of April, for example, Reuters reported an acid attack on a female teacher in Kandahar, after handwritten pamphlets were found circulating in the city warning men against sending their daughters to school or their wives to work. A previously unknown militant group named Tanzeem al-Fatah Afghanistan ("organization for the victory of Afghanistan") allegedly distributed the pamphlets. Reportedly, Kandahar authorities arrested the accused man and thirty-seven others named by the man, five of whom were wearing Afghan military uniforms when apprehended.⁸ Although the Interim Administration has publicly endorsed the right of women to obtain an education and employment, the lack of an official repeal of Taliban edicts by the Justice ministry is a significant concern for many women Human Rights Watch interviewed. Women felt that an official and public rescinding of all the Taliban edicts would go a long way in

⁵ The current competition and realignments involving armed parties in northern Afghanistan is in part driven by their desire to consolidate authority prior to the convening of the emergency Loya Jirga (Grand National Assembly), which will establish a two year transitional administration. See Human Rights Watch, "Paying for the Taliban's Crimes," pp. 6-7.

⁶ For an overview of the major parties and their history, see Human Rights Watch, "Paying for the Taliban's Crimes," pp. 5-7. General Dostum currently serves as deputy minister of defense in the interim government, and Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq serves as head of the planning department and also one of five deputy chairs of the Interim Cabinet.

⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Rise in Factional Fighting Threatens Fragile Peace: International Community Urged to Improve Security for Civilians," *A Human Rights Watch Press Release*, May 7, 2001. Susan B. Glasser, "Rivalries Cloud Afghan Peace - Lawlessness Threatens Northern City's Renewal," *Washington Post*, April 27, 2002.

⁸ "Afghan Woman Attacked with Acid," *Reuters*, April 17, 2002 and "Afghan Pamphlets on Women Warn of Reprisals," *Reuters*, April 16, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/international/international-afghan-women.html?pagewanted=print&position=top>.

fostering their confidence in the government and in providing them with the legal ability to challenge gender-specific discriminatory attitudes.

One consequence of this violence and insecurity is the continuing invisibility of women in many areas of public life. If women cannot travel freely within their communities and country, they cannot participate in the rebuilding of Afghanistan during this critical period. More broadly, women's representation and participation in the future government of Afghanistan could be undermined. On April 15, Afghanistan began the process of choosing its next government to replace the Interim Administration. One hundred and sixty women representatives are guaranteed seats in this process and others may be elected to non-reserved seats. However, women face considerable challenges in this process, which include entrenched traditional attitudes in Afghanistan constraining women from participating in political processes, as well as security concerns inhibiting women from traveling to regional centers to cast ballots.⁹ Such representation is crucial to ensure that women's rights are at the core of all governance arrangements, including post-conflict reconstruction, justice, and accountability. Both Interim Administration officials and senior United Nations (U.N.) representatives emphasized this point at a meeting on March 8 in Kabul to commemorate International Women's Day, when they stressed that a peaceful and secure environment is necessary to implement reconstruction and rehabilitation programs designed for women.¹⁰

The testimonies of women Human Rights Watch interviewed are presented below.

Mazar-i Sharif

Sexual Violence Against Women

Women interviewed by Human Rights Watch in Mazar knew of cases of sexual violence but were not willing to disclose specific incidents. Strong cultural taboos inhibit discussion of such issues because women victims of rape or other sexual abuse in Afghanistan are perceived to have suffered grave dishonor in the eyes of their families and communities.¹¹ Therefore, it was largely from medical professionals' - gynecologists and other doctors, as well as nurses at hospitals - from whom Human Rights Watch was able to obtain detailed information. Doctors and nurses, who had been directly responsible for carrying out physical examinations of women victims of rape or sexual abuse, or for registering victims' complaints, disclosed considerable information to Human Rights Watch on condition that their own identities, and those of the rape and abuse victims, would remain confidential.

⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Loya Jirga Process is Launched in Afghanistan," *A Human Rights Watch Question and Answer on Afghanistan's Loya Jirga Process*, April 17, 2002, <http://hrw.org/press/2002/04/qna-loyajirga.htm>.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch researchers attended the International Women's Day event in Kabul, March 8, 2002.

¹¹ See Human Rights Watch, "Paying for the Taliban's Crimes," p. 8.

In Mazar, women expressed fears of leaving the security of their homes. However, the security situation was so acute that women who had been raped or otherwise sexually abused had typically been attacked in their own homes. Some had been gang-raped. The identities of the perpetrators were difficult or impossible to discern, even to the victims. Women described attackers as men wearing traditional clothes (loose trousers and a long shirt), or a military-style camouflage jacket, sometimes carrying arms, and often with a turban pulled across their faces. Sometimes, women could identify their attackers' ethnicity by their facial features or speech, and so the armed political group to which they probably belonged.

Human Rights Watch was unable to determine what, if any, measures the local authorities in Mazar and its surrounding areas took to prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence. However, in numerous interviews with women and men familiar with cases of sexual violence in Mazar, Human Rights Watch was told that even when security authorities became aware that women and girls were attacked, there was no evidence that perpetrators were appropriately punished. An example of this impunity was demonstrated by reference to a case that a number of residents of Mazar were familiar with. In December 2001, fourteen armed Hazara men from the Wahdat¹² party raped three sisters, ages twelve-, fourteen-, and twenty-years-old from Char Rahi Haji Ayub, a neighborhood in Mazar. Security forces under the command of Majid Rouzi¹³ arrested four men who were released a few days later. One day after this incident, General Dostum called on all his forces to “respect the honor of all women.” The manager of the hospital records where this case was registered and where the girls sought medical treatment, explained that when she followed up with the family about their case, they told her that the authorities said they could not do anything because the responsible soldiers belonged to another faction.¹⁴

The cases reported to Human Rights Watch included the following:

- On December 29, 2001, at 6:00 p.m., two women and two girls were brought to the Mazar city hospital. They had been raped earlier that evening, according to the doctor and nurse who examined and questioned them. Two were ethnic Tajik girls and one an ethnic Tajik woman who were from different but neighboring families; the fourth was an ethnic Pashtun woman who was visiting one of the Tajik families at the time the attacks took place. The attackers bound the hands and feet of the men of both families and locked them in basement rooms in their separate

¹² Hizb-i Wahdat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan (Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan, known as Hizb-i Wahdat) is the principal Shi'a party in Afghanistan drawn mainly from the Hazara ethnic community.

¹³ On February 3, 2002, the three political parties in the north signed a U.N.-backed agreement establishing a 600-person security force for the city. The force, headed by Junbish commander Majid Rouzi, is to include 240 officers from Jamiat, and 180 each from Junbish and three Hazara parties, including Hizb-i Wahdat.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, A.P., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 19, 2002; F.A., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 19, 2002; Dr. H.Y., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 22, 2002 and Dr.K.R., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 27, 2002.

houses. Reportedly, security authorities in Mazar¹⁵ who were alerted to the attack by the two families' neighbors were sent to investigate. They took the two women and two girls to the city hospital for medical treatment, but a fifth victim, a fourteen-year-old girl, was left behind. Her fate remains unclear. The doctor told Human Rights Watch:

The women and girls were shouting and crying, explaining that they belong to two different families that live side by side on the same street in the neighborhood of Turkmenabad. Some men from the Wahdat party had entered both houses at the same time and raped two girls from one family, one of whom was G., a fourteen-year-old and the other was P., a twenty-year-old guest. Both had been raped and were bleeding. Their clothes were torn. At the same time, on the same street, there was another case. A., a thirty-five-year-old and S., a sixteen-year-old, had been raped as well. After examining them I could see that it was rape and in fact they had been raped violently. They all had severe lacerations around their vaginas.

I asked them if they knew who had done this to them and they said that about eight men had attacked them. All of them were raped three times but one girl told me that eight men had raped her in turn. She was in shock and had serious lacerations. When the seventh man was raping her, she heard another man calling out demanding his turn.

One of the girls had screamed too much and a soldier tried to strangle her; I could see the red marks on her neck. The girls told me they were shouting and crying when they were being raped, and that their two mothers came out of the houses to call [commander] Majid Rouzi and his security forces. The mothers were not raped, but had been threatened to remain silent.

The family told me that the men [assailants] were from the local security station, belonging to the Wahdat party. After this incident I heard that the garrison soldiers¹⁶ burned down the station and arrested some of the attackers. The commander had escaped but the soldiers were arrested.¹⁷

The doctor and nurse involved in this case followed up by calling the security station in Mazar. They were informed that the fighting (at the houses where the women were attacked) had stopped by 12:00 noon the next day, and although three men had been arrested, the authorities believed that military personnel were not responsible for the rapes.

¹⁵ The security force was headed by Junbish commander Majid Rouzi, who was later given official authority to head a 600-person security force in February 3, 2002, when the three political parties in the north signed a U.N.-backed agreement.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Dr. L.M., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 23, 2002 and N.J., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 22, 2002.

- On Feb 15, 2002, in Darvazeye Taj-Qurghan in Mazar, Z., a 14-year-old and S., her thirty-six-year-old mother, were raped by several Hazara men who were accompanied by armed militiamen. The woman and girl identified the perpetrators as men who wore traditional clothes, some with camouflage jackets and weapons, and with turbans pulled across their faces. Dr. L. told Human Rights Watch, “They first tied up the men of the house and then raped the girl and her mother. The criminal station [part of the police force of the city] brought them to the hospital. They were a Tajik family and the men [who attacked them] were Hazara with some armed military men.”¹⁸

Dr. K.R., a hospital registrar and manager of the hospital criminal case records, which include cases of sexual violence, explained to Human Rights Watch that generally women who have been raped either ask for medication to prevent pregnancy or request an abortion at a later date, if they become pregnant as a result of the rape. However, doctors are not authorized to prescribe emergency medication without an examination to confirm the rape. An abortion is only permitted in circumstances where the mother's life would be in danger if the pregnancy were to continue.¹⁹

Effect of Violence and Insecurity on Women

In the atmosphere of generalized insecurity in Mazar, fears for personal security severely restrict Afghan women's ability to function and participate in public life. Women feel compelled to abide by the Taliban edicts severely restricting the role of women in public life or risk abuse and even assault. A.P., a forty-five-year-old school administrator, stressed that women are, therefore, still reluctant to abandon their *chadari*²⁰ or to travel unaccompanied and independently in the city. She explained:

We have experienced many problems [in the past] and are happy that some changes have come and the life of girls has gotten better, but still nothing has been done about our security problems. Both before and during the time of the Taliban, political rivalries led to local conflicts and the winner did not consider the rights of the loser. After the Taliban, there is still abuse of the rights of all people and of women. I am free inside the house but not outside in the city. All women still wear the chadari because of this.²¹

Women told Human Rights Watch that they welcomed the Interim Administration's efforts to give them new-found freedom but said that the continuing lack

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Dr. L.M., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 23, 2002.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Dr.K.R., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 27, 2002. Since January 2002, Afghan women can obtain a legal abortion up to the third month of pregnancy if a woman's health is in danger. However, the process involves obtaining certificates from three different doctors and permission from the Health ministry. “Abortion Legal in Afghanistan in Early Pregnancy,” *Agence France Presse*, January 15, 2002.

²⁰ “Chadari” is the word most women we interviewed used to describe the head-to-toe garment they were required to wear by the Taliban that obscures their features and hides their bodies. A burqa is a similar garment. The women Human Rights Watch interviewed used the two words interchangeably.

²¹ Human Rights Watch interview, A.P., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 19, 2002.

of security in Mazar and other areas made it difficult for them to benefit from these positive developments. A woman doctor pointed out that, “Conditions are better than under the Taliban, but not perfect. During the Taliban we could not travel in a taxi alone, but now we still don't travel in a taxi or walk in the street alone, if we can avoid it, because of our security concerns.”²²

A woman working as a teacher and community worker in Dasht-i Shour, located in the southwestern outskirts of Mazar, expressed similar concerns when she spoke of the insecurity in her area and the consequences this has for women’s mobility:

The Taliban government was strict and bad things happened then, but now the security is a problem, especially at night. For women the situation in the case of education and employment was worse under the Taliban. I am a widow, and so it was difficult for me to work. Now it is better, and I am working as a teacher. Women can go out now and have the opportunity to get an education, but still while wearing a chadari. Older women are free to go without a chadari. This is because of the security situation [in Mazar].²³

Kabul

A Sense of Insecurity by Women

In Kabul, where the presence of the 4,500 strong ISAF has provided better security conditions²⁴ than in the rest of the country, women are still hesitant about participating in public life. The reasons for women’s fears in Kabul stem mainly from their personal experiences of violence and discrimination during 1992 to 1996, and since that time under the Taliban regime. Women told Human Rights Watch that they feared being attacked or harassed by men who supported the former Taliban edicts that had restricted women’s behavior, dress, expression, and movement; and of being physically assaulted by armed groups from the different factions that were responsible for the reported abductions and rapes of women and girls in Kabul between 1992 to 1996.²⁵ Human Rights Watch did not learn of such physical attacks recently taking place, but was told of a number of incidents of harassment when women attempted to discard particular aspects of the former dress code mandated by the Taliban. Those responsible for the harassment were most often unarmed civilian men, but in one incident, victims described those responsible as unarmed men wearing a particular military uniform, indicating that they may have been associated with northern Jamiat forces.

²² Human Rights Watch interview, Dr. P.A., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 22, 2002.

²³ Human Rights Watch interview, S.A., Mazar-i Sharif, Afghanistan, February 23, 2002.

²⁴ See Human Rights Watch, “Paying for the Taliban’s Crimes,” pp. 46-47.

²⁵ See Human Rights Watch, “Military Assistance to the Afghan Opposition,” *A Human Rights Watch Backgrounder*, October 5, 2001. In March 1995, forces of the faction operating under Commander Massoud, the Jamiat-i Islami, were responsible for rape and looting after they captured Kabul’s predominantly Hazara neighborhood of Karte Seh from other factions. On the night of February 11, 1993 Jamiat-i Islami forces and those of another faction, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf’s Ittihad-i Islami, conducted a raid in West Kabul, killing and “disappearing” ethnic Hazara civilians, and committing widespread rape.

A women's rights activist told Human Rights Watch that many women still “don't feel safe to come out of the house without their veil and then go to work.”²⁶ The director of an Afghan women's rights organization expanded on the statement above when she commented:

Women cannot trust this situation yet, because life was so terrible during the Taliban. They [women] feel that such a time may return and they [women] also remember the time just before the Taliban came to Kabul [referring to the period between 1992-1996]. They remember cases of forced marriages by commanders and are afraid to be too free too soon.²⁷

Most women in Kabul, as in Mazar, continue to wear the chadari. A few women told Human Rights Watch that they had experienced harassment when they had attempted to discard their chadari. For example, on January 10, 2002, in Kabul, a woman nongovernmental (NGO) worker accompanied by another woman and a male colleague were forced to stop their vehicle by three men in another vehicle; the men then questioned the man about the women appearing in public with their faces uncovered. The woman told Human Rights Watch that the men were clearly from among the armed forces from the north that had captured Kabul; they wore camouflage jackets and trousers, pakuls (the type of cap made famous by the late defense minister of the United Front,²⁸ Ahmad Shah Massoud).

- At about 10:00 a.m., I was traveling with a friend, N, who was in the car with me. We had a male driver and one male colleague with us. Another car, which was black and had three male occupants, was traveling alongside us and it veered in front of our car forcing us to stop. They told my male colleague to get out of the car and asked him why the two women had uncovered their faces and were not wearing a chadari. My colleague replied that we are like his sisters and that he works with us. One of the men said, “It doesn't matter that the Taliban are no longer here, because the Mujahidin are here.” When I heard him say that I felt enraged, and wanted to get out of the car and tell them that now we have rights. But, they became angry with me attempting to get out and speak to them and one of them slammed the door [of the car]. Like the Taliban, they said that they did not want to speak to a woman. Now I wear a chadari even in the car.²⁹

On February 14, 2002, an Afghan women's rights activist, who was visiting Kabul and working to establish women's programs in the city, described how she was threatened by a taxi driver who took offence at her suggestion that Afghan women have a right to associate and work with unrelated foreign men and women:

²⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, S.A., Kabul, Afghanistan, March 4, 2002.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, S.D., Kabul, Afghanistan, March 4, 2002.

²⁸ After the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, the opposing groups formed an alliance called the National Islamic United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, commonly known as the United Front.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, N.W., Kabul, Afghanistan, March 10, 2002.

- My colleague and I had just come out of Mustafa hotel in Kabul. We hailed a taxi and told it to take us to the address of a women's NGO. The driver started asking me questions about what I had been doing at the Mustafa hotel. The hotel is one that is frequented by foreigners. I answered that I was working with NGOs and wanted to help the people of Afghanistan. Then he mentioned that he had dropped a young Afghan woman at this hotel and that she had been accompanied with some unrelated foreign man. He said that an Afghan woman has no right to do that; she can work as a teacher, but should not be allowed to work with foreigners, or go to hotels with unrelated men. I then launched into a discussion on the rights of women, but he got really angry and started to drive very fast, swinging the car to the left and right of the road. All the while he was cursing at that young Afghan woman, once even calling her a prostitute. We told him to stop and I said, "You will kill us!" but he said, "I don't care; I want to do that." Finally, he hit a large pothole in the road and was forced to stop. As I got out he demanded the taxi fare threateningly, saying, "Are you giving me the money or...?" My colleague and I ran into a tailors shop nearby. We were both shaking with fear. He was just a local taxi driver.³⁰

Recommendations

The overthrow of the Taliban in November 2001 raised hopes that women in Afghanistan would rapidly regain their human rights. But the continuing threat to their security that women face in the north and elsewhere has in large measure rendered women's participation in public life almost impossible.

Human Rights Watch recognizes that the Interim Administration has only limited effective authority outside Kabul, and the government that replaces it will have to address these issues. Extensive and sustained support from the international community is required. The international community should take urgent action to improve security conditions throughout Afghanistan, and help end ethnic and gender-specific violence if women are to play a full and constructive role in the rebuilding of Afghan society.

Afghan women repeatedly told Human Rights Watch that without more effective guarantees for their personal security and human rights, women will not be able to participate in a meaningful and sustained way in the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Yet, the goal of long-term peace and security can only be realized if fundamental human rights are fully respected and past human rights abuses are addressed, including accountability for abuses against women.

The following recommendations to the Interim Administration (and subsequent administrations) and the international community are based on research by Human Rights Watch in the north and in Kabul and include the concerns expressed by Afghan women.

- The international community should support the expansion of the mandate and duration of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan to

³⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, F.R., Washington D.C., U.S.A, April 22, 2002.

include areas outside Kabul, most urgently northern Afghanistan and other areas of instability. Personnel should have appropriate training in international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law, including dealing with child- and gender-related provisions. The international community should immediately cease any direct or indirect military support, financial support, or technical cooperation with commanders and forces that are implicated in war crimes or serious human rights violations;

- The Interim Administration should immediately take all possible steps to protect women from sexual and other gender-specific violence, address the legal and other needs of victims, and bring perpetrators to justice. In particular, local authorities should ensure that police and other security forces take all necessary steps to prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence and threats, and investigate and hold accountable all persons, including members of armed factions, responsible for such abuses. The various armed factions must take effective measures to prevent and punish violations of international humanitarian law by their forces, particularly attacks on civilians, including sexual and gender-specific violence;
- The Interim Administration and the international community should publicly denounce human rights abuses against women and urge respect for the rights of Afghan women. To this end, specifically, the Interim Administration should, among other things, publicly announce (through radio, print, and other media) that public veiling for women is no longer mandatory and that women are free to enter the workforce at all levels and participate in the public life of the country; publicly commit to investigating and punishing all individuals who harass, physically attack, or otherwise seek to harm women for being in public without a veil, working, or participating in public life; undertake public education campaigns at all levels of society and government to communicate its commitment to women's equality in all realms of Afghan society; undertake public education campaigns to inform women about the appropriate government agencies to investigate instances of violence and discrimination against women; and publicly urge women to come forward to report attacks and other such violence and discrimination to appropriate government authorities;
- The international donor community should increase funding for human rights monitoring in Afghanistan, including for the Afghan Human Rights Commission, and provide direct financial and programmatic assistance to the Afghan Ministry for Women's Affairs. This ministry is responsible for re-establishing women's human rights; ensuring that women are included in all development efforts; integrating respect for women's rights throughout all levels of government services and agencies; and delivering critical legal, health, education, and economic services to women throughout Afghanistan;
- The Interim Administration and subsequent administrations should commit to respect fully the human rights of all the people of Afghanistan and to repeal laws

and end practices that by their intent or consequence discriminate against women. The Justice Ministry in its ongoing review of the existing laws should repeal those laws that discriminate against women and are inconsistent with customary international law and international treaties to which Afghanistan is a party. To that end, the government of Afghanistan should ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Afghanistan signed on August 14, 1980, and implement all other treaties to which Afghanistan is a party; and

- The international community should support efforts to establish accountability for past and current abuses committed in Afghanistan, including abuses against women, and efforts to promote international justice, particularly by strengthening Afghan institutions of justice that respect internationally recognized norms.