

What Do Afghan Women Want?

October 8, 2010 • Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan) today released a policy statement regarding the Canadian and international role in Afghanistan. The statement addresses the question: “*What Do Afghan Women Want?*” and provides a variety of perspectives from leaders within the Afghan women’s movement pertaining to NATO, US and Coalition forces and the responsibilities of the international community towards Afghanistan.

This policy statement clearly lays out the organization’s position vis-à-vis Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan, specifically as it relates to its interest in the welfare of Afghan women and girls and the objective of securing basic human rights for Afghans. CW4WAfghan members value Canadian support for improving the rights of women and girls, particularly in the area of education, which is profoundly linked to Afghanistan’s prospects for peace and stability.

It is important for Canadians to hear the full diversity of perspectives from Afghan women leaders, and most importantly, the voices of those women who remain on the frontlines of the fight for better rights and opportunities in Afghanistan. CW4WAfghan executive director Janice Eisenhower points out, “*It matters immensely what Afghan women leaders think about these important issues, particularly those living and actively working in the country. They have few opportunities to tour Canada or have their voices heard.*”

Canada and other NATO countries have reached a crossroads where there is much reluctance over continued engagement in Afghanistan. Afghan women leaders consistently speak out that the international community, including NATO and US forces, should not withdraw from Afghanistan prematurely, nor should negotiations take place with the Taliban insurgents that would turn women’s hard-gained rights into bargaining chips.

CW4WAfghan’s Projects Director Lauryn Oates, who returns to Afghanistan this month, says, “*As new policies are forged, and decisions made about whether to honour our commitment to Afghanistan, or not, it is critical that the voices of Afghan women be sought out. Canadians need to be seeking out this information. I hope that this policy statement helps bring some of those voices to the fore.*”

A copy of the CW4WAfghan policy statement is appended.

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CW4WAfghan’s Mission: *Canadians taking action, in partnership with Afghan women, towards improving conditions of human rights, ending women's oppression, and providing opportunities for Afghan women to live their lives with dignity, certainty and purpose.*

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