



Women living under muslim laws  
النساء في ظل قوانين المسلمين  
Femmes sous lois musulmanes

Transnational Solidarity Network

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**WLUML Statement of Solidarity**  
**Sharp Rise in Attacks on Activists and Journalists in Afghanistan**

The *Women Living Under Muslim Laws* transnational solidarity network and partners strongly condemn the recent **escalating campaign of attacks and assassinations of women's rights and human rights activists and journalists in Afghanistan**, and stand in solidarity with all those affected. While ostensibly participating in peace talks, the Taliban have not only refused a ceasefire, but have instead increased their reign of violence. These cowardly attacks are not only an assault against the women, girls and voices on the front lines - they are also a direct affront on Afghanistan's legal and democratic gains over the last 20 years. We call on the government of Afghanistan and the international community to push for an immediate ceasefire; an immediate end to this campaign of attacks; and to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of all women's rights activists.

In recent weeks there has been a significant increase in assassinations of women human rights defenders, members of Afghan civil society, journalists, and elected representatives – including the assassination of two female Supreme Court Judges, Zakieh Herawi and Qadria Yasini, journalist Malali Kakar, women's rights activist Freshta Kohistani, and Dr. Nazifa Ebrahimi, Dr. Sona, and Dr. Swita. While some of these attacks have gone unclaimed, groups in Afghanistan have little doubt that the Taliban is behind the surge in attacks.

These attacks and assassinations are a new escalation of a long record of discrimination and violence against women and girls, all while the Taliban now ostensibly takes part in a peace process. **The culture of impunity for violence against women and girls urgently needs to be reversed** in order to prevent more attacks by the Taliban and other extremist groups, not only in Afghanistan but elsewhere, as diverse fundamentalists may see the Taliban's return to power as vindication of their regressive gender ideologies.

WLUML and its partners re-affirm that **the gains that have been made for women's rights and civil society in Afghanistan must not be sacrificed** to reach a narrow security agreement with the Taliban. "Peace" without freedom of expression, tolerance, acceptance of diversity and justice will not end the violence or bloodshed, nor will it bring the lasting peace that Afghan people so desire. Today, women and human rights defenders can no longer carry out their work without real risk of violence, and girls' schools are shutting for fear of being attacked. This is not



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the Afghanistan that Afghan citizens have been creating for the last 20 years, but a move towards the unjust and violent Taliban regime that preceded this protracted war.

**We stand in solidarity** with women human rights defenders, journalists and civil society across Afghanistan, who are risking their lives for peace, justice and democracy.

WLUML and its partners in Afghanistan [call for](#):

1. **An end to the attacks** on women, human rights defenders, civil society, and journalists, and to the culture of impunity.
2. **Respect for and protection of the human rights** of women's and other rights activists, civil society, and journalists and to ensure that they are able to conduct their work without fear of violence.
3. **Urgent and transparent inquiries into recent attacks** and assassinations so that the perpetrators are brought to justice, and
4. **An immediate ceasefire** from all actors engaged in the war.
5. **Meaningful and substantial participation of Afghan women** representing diverse women's interests in the peace talks.
6. **Protection of the full range of women's human rights** in the outcomes of the peace process.
7. The **identity of those** charged with planning, attempting, or successfully **carrying out attacks** on civil society activists and women's human rights defenders to be shared. Evidence of any lists of targeted assassinations on civil society should also be shared with those affected.

We extend our deepest condolences to all those affected and hope for a speedy recovery for those that have been injured.

In solidarity,

Women Living Under Muslim Laws  
February 2021

Co-signatories:  
Zarqa Yaftali, Women Advocacy Committee