



women
building
peace

WOMEN'S VOICES FROM AFGHANISATAN

The US response to the unprecedented attack has been questioned by many, especially those familiar with the situation in Afghanistan. Everyone in Afghanistan is, and will continue to be, affected by the manner in which the US and its allies retaliate. The women and children of this war-torn country are especially susceptible to the affects of this new war and it's aftermath. Women were the first victims of the Taliban Regime, this should therefore be a time to listen to their voices and their experiences.

This compilation of voices from Afghanistan provides no analysis; it simply presents a channel for these voices and opinions on the 'War Against Terrorism.'

Response to Violence

The 'Women of Afghanistan are very, very angry,' Faryal, a member of Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), said in an interview... 'They are hopeless, helpless, but they are also very angry.'

In the early 1990's Afghan women in Kabul and other cities went to schools and universities, showed their faces and wore Western Clothes. Nearly half the doctors and more than half the teachers in Afghanistan were women. But since the Taliban came to power in 1996, women's rights and freedoms have been all but eliminated. Women in Taliban-controlled areas must paint their windows so no one can see them. They cannot leave their homes unless they wear a burka and are in the company of a male relative.

'One day, I went to the market with a friend,' Fatima, an Afghan refugee in Peshawar, said. 'Our burqas revealed more of our faces than what the Taliban police found acceptable. So they beat us with sticks—we only pulled the burqas up because the heat was stifling.'

A report published in 1999 by the Physicians for Human Rights reveals some shocking statistics: 97 percent of Afghan women are in a state of major depression, 42 percent suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and 21 percent have had suicidal thoughts quite or extremely often.

NBC News, October 5, 2001



In the name of god and peace we must unite and resist the escalation of violence. We must not allow that the strive to punish the terrorists turns into the pretext to a new war, in which the innocent become victims - including children, women and the elderly... Women of all countries and continents must unite themselves, so their protesting voices will be heard across the whole world! Such methods will only create new victims and will not protect the innocent from dangers of terrorism.

Aishat Magomedova, Ludmila Kabanova
on behalf of The Caucasus Women's
League

Public Service

Women are often denied basic medical care because it is illegal for them to visit or speak with a man who is not a close relative. In the city of Herat, guards broke into the dental office of Dr. Nader Sina's and whipped several women who were there for treatment. The dentist was imprisoned and told the clinic would be closed permanently if he cared for women again. The city is reportedly without a female dentist.

Fox News

Thirteen-year-old Belqis fled Afghanistan with her family in August. While living in Kabul she only managed to receive five months of education. Now in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, she goes to a RAWA school and studies with children half her age, 'I want to be a doctor, because there are lots of people suffering in my country and I want to help them.' Belqis has made it to the top of her class.

Away from the voices of children in the classrooms, there is an eerie silence in the school principal's office, where a shelf displays drawings created by students. The pictures show women being beaten, or being arrested by the Taliban. The artwork is a stark reminder of what continues to haunt Afghanistan's women.

NBC News, Oct. 5, 2001

Women in Afghanistan are so besieged. They are hungry. They want jobs and an education.

Sima Wali of Refugee Women in Development

Men tend to gain first access to nutritional resources and women get whatever is left over.

Womens E News

US Response

In any city controlled by the Taliban, the bombs will fall primarily upon Afghan women who huddle in their homes, clinging to their children. The Taliban leaders have already retreated to safer environments.

NBC News, Oct. 5, 2001

In the aftermath of the unconscionable September 11 suicide attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre, an American newscaster said: 'Good and evil rarely manifest themselves as clearly as they did last Tuesday. People who we don't know massacred people who we do. And they did so with contemptuous glee.' Then he quickly wept...America is at war against people it doesn't know, because they don't appear much on TV. Before it has properly identified or even begun to comprehend the nature of its enemy, the US government has, in a rush of publicity and embarrassing rhetoric, cobbled together an 'International coalition against terror' mobilised its

its air force, its navy and its media, and committed them to battle.

Arundhati Roy, The Guardian September 29, 2001

I would like Americans to call in to our State Department and ask them to deal with this situation humanely. Punish the people who deserve to be punished. Don't harm thousands of innocent people.

Mavis Leno, chair of the Feminist Majority's Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan

Fighting Back

Being a woman in Afghanistan means knowing how to resist, and how to battle the hardships imposed on them. I think RAWA and women who think like us are the biggest examples that we will not so easily give up.

Sahar Saba, RAWA member

Including women in decision-making processes, particularly in peace discussions, is important now more than ever because there needed to be a recognition of the gender-based violence affecting women as a result of armed conflict. The situation of women in Afghanistan provides one of the most visible and tragic examples, and when peace negotiations began, Afghan women belonged at the table. The current crisis here serves as a powerful warning of the consequences when women are excluded from decision-making.

Angela King, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women

As actions are taken against terrorists and their sponsors, we must make sure that the lives of thousands of women and girls in Afghanistan, who have suffered so terribly under the rule of Taliban, are saved and their plight not forgotten. Afghan's women and girls should be at the centre of the rebirth of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

They must finally gain their freedom and full rights and get the access to education and health care.

H.E. Ambassador Mrs Madina B. Jarbussynova, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, Oct. 3, 2001