



PeaceWomen Across the Globe  
FRIEDENSFRAUEN WELTWEIT  
نساء من أجل السلام عبر العالم  
Femmes de Paix Autour du Monde  
Женщины мира за мир на земле  
MUJERES DE PAZ EN EL MUNDO  
Mulheres pela Paz ao redor do Mundo  
DONNE DI PACE NEL MONDO

ピースウーマン—国境を越え平和をつくる女たち  
全球和平妇女



Newsletter 1/2021

FOCUS **AFGHANISTAN**

# Investing in the future

**Women in Afghanistan know how much is at stake for them in the peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government. If negotiations fail, they above all risk losing hard-won rights. The women must be able to demand their rights and have their say. A course at Gawharshad University in Kabul empowers them to do so.**

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, women have been those hardest hit by political instability, socio-economic crises and violent conflict. They fear that they will again lose their rights and be excluded from society if the peace negotiations fail. There are only four women (with 42 men) at the negotiating table.

“Women need more opportunities to participate in peace negotiations,” says Khatira Khorrami, coordinator for PeaceWomen Across the Globe in Afghanistan. For this to happen, she says, they need to know about the rights they are entitled to, as well as possess the negotiation skills to pave their way to a peaceful and gender-equitable Afghanistan. In a country where female literacy is barely 30%, this is no small undertaking. Even those women who are literate are usually not in a position to state their demands clearly in order to avoid exclusion.

The “Gender and Peace” course at Gawharshad University in Kabul, which we designed with the university, helps to build the confidence and skills of women in Afghanistan, giving them a voice in landmark events, says Khatira. It is an investment in the younger generation, young women who, with a heightened awareness, organise campaigns for women’s participation.

Since it was founded in 2010 by the well-known human rights defender Sima Samar, our partner organisation Gawharshad has been contributing to positive change in Afghan society and empowering women with its peace policy and feminist courses. Compared to other Afghan universities, the proportion of women among the students there is high, at more than one third. (Read the interview with Sima Samar on pages 2–3.)

## Women's rights at the core

After an intensive course on “Women and Peacebuilding” in 2020, in March this year 40 participants addressed the “Role of Women and their Inclusion in the On-going Peace Talks”. Eight men participated in the course to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding between women and men. Like the women participants, the men at the course also increased their knowledge about the different forms of violence and conflict and learned approaches to conflict resolution that they can use in their private lives too. Throughout the course, the role of women in society and their rights remained at the core.

All participants learned how to talk to their families about what they had learned and how to disseminate their knowledge via social media. In this way, the 120 graduates of both courses become important multipliers. As one student said, “I thought that leaders are born, but through this seminar I discovered that anyone who looks for change is a leader. Now I feel I am a leader and I can advocate for women’s engagement in the peace talks.”

# “Men make war, so they think they are the ones to make peace”



The peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government have been ongoing since September 2020, with only four women on the 21-member government negotiation team and none among the Taliban negotiators. We ask Sima Samar, founder of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and of Gawharshad University in Kabul, what the chances are for lasting peace.

**Four journalists, a doctor, a policewoman and two Supreme Court judges are among the women who have been assassinated or who were targets of assassination attempts. Why have attacks on women increased since the peace negotiations began?**

It is very unfortunate that the violence increased after the intra-Afghan talks started in Doha. Many more women have been killed than the ones mentioned. I believe that the Taliban use violence to terrorise the people so they blame the government for not protecting them. The Taliban use violence to gain more power. They want to be in charge of the government and the people.

**Women are underrepresented in these negotiations. Why?**

Women are always underrepresented; it is not new. The Taliban do not recognise the existence of women. They have previously revealed their attitude towards women's rights. But thanks to the advocacy of women's groups, human rights defenders and civil society, the Afghan government put four women on the negotiation team. Not enough, but better than none. We live in a patriarchal world. Men make the weapons and make war, so they think that they are the ones to make peace as well.

**Why is it significant that the government has included women in its negotiation team?**

The Afghan government has a constitutional obligation in addition to its obligation to human rights conventions. But when they convene consultation meetings on any government program or on peace, they very rarely include a woman.

**How meaningful is the participation of the four women involved in the peace negotiations?**

They are committed and powerful women, but they are only four Afghan women along with 42 men at the table. They need the support not only from Afghans but from the international community as well.

“I want a peace that sees women as human beings.”

“I used to imagine peace as the absence of war. Peace is humanity to me now.”

“Peace has long been a dream for the Afghans. When I speak of peace, hope blossoms in my heart.”

**According to Human Rights Watch, there is a gap between official Taliban statements on rights and women and the positions their officials adopt in regions controlled by the Taliban, where girls are still barred from going to school. How is it possible to negotiate a lasting peace under such circumstances?**

We cannot believe what the Taliban say, they have to demonstrate with their actions that they have changed. If they are serious about making peace, they cannot violate the human rights of half of the population. They cannot make peace with only 50% of the population.

**What have the peace negotiations achieved so far?**

The process is very slow. So far, they only have agreed on the procedure of the peace talks and the two negotiation teams. Not much has been achieved – at least, we do not know what has been achieved.

**What role do women’s organisations and activists play in the peace process?**

Women’s groups and civil society organisations are lobbying for an inclusive peace process with the government and the international community – and for the voices of the women who were directly affected by the war to be heard. But politicians do not prioritise the provision of justice. A lasting peace will be guaranteed if women can meaningfully participate in the process and the human rights of all people are safeguarded. Otherwise, it will be a short-term political and power-sharing deal, not sustainable peace. That is why any peace process requires a strong political will. It must be people- and justice-centred to be successful. Afghanistan’s recent history has made this clear.

**How can a course like the one at Gawharshad University on “Gender and Peace” contribute to peacebuilding?**

This kind of course gives the youth a deeper understanding of gender and peace and helps them understand the importance of gender in peace.

**What effect does a failed peace in Afghanistan have on women elsewhere?**

I believe that if women in Afghanistan are not free it will affect everyone. We see similar activities of fundamentalist groups everywhere, not only among the Muslims, but in countries with different religions as well. Women’s groups around the world should be aware of the losses that we face and the dangers of repeating the past.

**The US and NATO will withdraw their troops by 11 September. What do you think will be the consequences for the peace process?**

I had hoped that the US would place conditions on their full withdrawal from Afghanistan. I regret that their statement didn’t mention human rights, women and girls. I understand the US public’s demand for a troop withdrawal, but it should have happened after a peace deal. This puts the Taliban in a winning position. Now they refuse to participate in the peace negotiations until the troop withdrawal is complete. I still hope that the US will push for a people- and victim-centred peace process and for a monitoring mechanism to hold violators of the peace deal accountable. Otherwise, we will have the same situation as in the 1990s. We should learn history’s lessons.

**What can we expect in the coming months?**

I do not want to be pessimistic. I hope that the people of Afghanistan can come together and form a united front for peace. The international community is learning from its mistakes and stands with the Afghan people. It supports peace with justice, where every citizen of Afghanistan enjoys basic rights and lives with dignity. Afghanistan will be a good example of peacebuilding; this is not impossible. It is difficult but it can be done with a united approach.

This interview was conducted between 9–20 April 2021.

“Government must defend the rights of women. That is only possible if it sees the world as we do.”

“Through solidarity we can utilise our human energy for development and peace.”

These quotes are from participants in the “Gender and Peace” course at Gawharshad University.



# A feminist future for Palestine

In 2021, we will be expanding our work in Palestine, with the aim of countering the increasing fragmentation of Palestinian society and supporting Palestinian visions for a feminist future, a future characterised by comprehensive justice.

Together with our partner organisations, we want to bring together those who, despite geographical, social and political fragmentation, are affected by gender-based violence and discrimination and support them in claiming their rights. In a fragmented area like Palestine, virtual spaces are central to political activism and exchange. Furthermore, the Israeli occupation reinforces patriarchal structures and thus increases gender-based violence, which particularly affects women and LGBTIQ people.

Our partner organisation, Maada Creative Center, provides a house in Silwan, a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, as a place of retreat and exchange. The joint project focuses on awareness-raising and counselling work around gender-

based violence against women. Women are also exposed to violence in digital spaces. We are contributing to making digital spaces safer for women in our project with TAM – Women & Media Development, another partner organisation.

The project with alQaws – for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society raises awareness and advises families with queer children as well as society in general about the LGBTIQ community and its rights. alQaws develops strategies and promotes discussion on gender and sexual diversity.

Together with our partner organisations, we complement the project work with advocacy activities in Switzerland and on the ground and link it to our global network “Feminists Connecting for Peace”.

Read more on our website: Activities – Projects. The illustration above is from a field study conducted by alQaws: “Palestinian families’ interaction with their children experiencing different sexual and gendered experiences.”

## News

### Second webinar on demilitarisation

On 25 June 2021, we will continue our virtual discussion series on feminist peace politics, disarmament and demilitarisation. After the first event dealt with the responsibility of European states for global peace politics, participants in the second webinar will discuss the concept of “security” from a feminist perspective.

On our website under Events you can find more information and the registration link. Read the article “Feminist peace policies” under News.

### New to the International Board

We welcome two new members to our International Board: Sidonia Gabriel supports the work of the Board with her many years of expertise in peace, reconciliation and human rights work. With Pia Deflorin, we were able to gain a proven expert in finance and human resources who is well acquainted with the structures of feminist peacebuilding.

You can find more information about the two new members on our website under About Us – Board.

### Get involved in peace work!

Become a member of PeaceWomen Across the Globe and get an insider's view of our projects and our future planning. We will invite you to events with our project partners and to joint activities with the team.

Your regular contribution will help us to plan our peace work in the long term, and to make it sustainable. We look forward to meeting you!

You can find information on membership fees on our website under Support – Donate or by writing to [franziska.vogel@1000peacewomen.org](mailto:franziska.vogel@1000peacewomen.org)

## For peace and gender justice


Please support our women's peace work with a donation.

Thank you!

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### IMPRINT

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