



A statement of solidarity

This statement is to express our solidarity with our Afghan sisters struggling for peace and democracy in Afghanistan. We support negotiations and peace talks to end all forms of occupation, imperialist and internal civil war in Afghanistan. We stand with all Afghans in their struggle for self-determination. As neighbours, progressive voices, feminists and advocates of peace, we stand in steadfast solidarity.

After 43 years of war, which has caused division, destruction and death, our neighbouring country of Afghanistan is witnessing the historic process of peace talks. Presently, there are 4 women, out of 21, Afghan government negotiators in talks with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar. We recognize the complexity and difficulty with which women negotiators consistently, tirelessly and emphatically put forward the case for a peaceful and equal future for the women and girls of Afghanistan.

We extend our voice and support when these women and men negotiators advocate for peace in their country, to include the right of all citizens, including women, children and ethnic and religious minorities. We also unconditionally support the demand of women negotiators for the need of peace to be sustainable and for infrastructure to be rebuilt and strengthened, which emphasizes the urgent demand of functioning and safe health care facilities, schools and clean drinking water.

We express deep concern, along with women negotiators, regarding the threat to Article 22 of the Afghan constitution, which professes the universal principle of non-discrimination and the right to equality. While the peace talk agenda is being set to potentially include debating Article 22, we express our grave concern for the revisiting and revision of this particular Article. We, in Pakistan, take great pride in our constitutional guarantee of equality. This and other constitutional rights, such as that of dignity and freedom of association and expression are where and how we rightfully anchor our legal and moral relationship with the State as citizens. Indeed, equality and non-discrimination are primary constitutional guarantees, necessary for any functioning society or one, like Afghanistan, that attempts to rebuild itself. It must be recognized that no future socio-economic, political and legislative barriers can be meaningfully addressed if Article 22 of the Afghan constitution is in any way diluted or revoked.

We also wish to demand of the Government of Pakistan: negotiating with the Taliban must not be an apologetic attempt, where only male members of a delegation are present during talks and there is no discussion on the necessity of women's rights. This does not reflect the true parliamentary and political representation of women in Pakistan, nor does it reflect the constitutional guarantees towards women citizens, or some of the pro-women legislative and policy gains by successive governments. It further signals to the Taliban delegation that any talks with them are on their terms, in both cosmetic and substantive terms, and misses the chance of them witnessing an example of a Muslim country where, despite many structural and societal barriers, the women's movement is vibrant and women actively strive for public and political participation. We demand that women are part of all dialogue with the Taliban, particularly women that have been affected by the Taliban's violence.

We demand that federal and all provincial women's parliamentary caucuses formally and publicly issue a statement of support with women negotiators at the peace talks, which reflect the importance of constitutional guarantees of equality and dignity, of women's rights and the necessity of continued



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engagement with Afghan women policy makers and negotiators. This show of support will align with many women parliamentarians globally, who have showed such support.

It is critical to recall that the current atrocities are based on the US and its allies in creating a vitriolic fundamentalist force of terrorists who have created havoc in our region. We demand that imperialist and geo-political complexities do not muddle up the necessity of living in a peaceful neighbourhood. With poverty, illiteracy, structural inequality and other extremist forces that drive us into a violent, unstable existence, Pakistan must recognize that peace is a necessity, within and outside our borders. We, therefore, demand that active support of right-wing extremist forces, such as the Taliban, by our government and military apparatus immediately stop. Support for the Taliban is a short-sighted strategy that will only result in an unstable and violence ridden Afghanistan, the residue of which is felt, and will continue to be felt, in Pakistan.

Lastly, we would like to express our deepest sorrow and grave concern for the most recent violent attack on Hazara school girls, where 85 people have lost their lives. This incident brings back the stark reminder of the Hazara community attack in Quetta in January this year, the Peshawar APS attack on school children in 2014 and the attack on the school girl, Malala Yousafzai and her two companions in Swat in 2012. These attacks and the senseless loss of life urgently requires us to reiterate that the quest for peace is our common struggle, and far from over. Our thoughts are with the grieving families, the Hazara community and with Afghanistan at this very difficult time.

Until we truly bend the arc of the moral universe towards peace and justice, we stand with you.

1. **Women's Action Forum, Karachi**
2. **Women's Action Forum, Lahore**
3. **Women's Action Forum, Islamabad**
4. **Women's Action Forum, Quetta**
5. **Women's Action Forum, Hyderabad**
6. **Women's Action Forum, Peshawar**
7. **Tehrik-e-Niswan**
8. **Asma Jahangir (AGHS) Legal Aid Cell**
9. **Aurat March, Lahore**
10. **Aurat March, Multan**
11. **Women's Democratic Front**
12. **Bolo Bhi**



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- Khawar Mumtaz, former chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW)
- Nighat Said Khan, Women's Action Forum
- Anis Haroon, member, former chair NCSW & former member, National Commission Human Rights
- Sadia Bokhari, Council Member, Human Rights Commission on Pakistan
- Ferida Sher, activist
- Rubina Saigol, author and activist
- Sumaira Ishfaq, activist
- Dr. Haseen Musarat, activist
- Farida Shaheed, activist
- Rukhsana Rashid, activist
- Maria Rashid, author and activist
- Sheema Kermani, activist
- Sultanat Bukhari, activist
- Qudsia Rahim, activist
- Nusrat Jamil, activist
- Huma Fouladi, activist
- Ayesha Khan, author and activist
- Tahira Abdullah, human rights defender
- Nasreen Azhar, activist
- Nageen Hayat, activist
- Mumtaz Moghal, activist
- Farzana Bari, academic and activist
- Rehana Wagha, activist
- Simi Kamal, women's rights activist
- Anbreen Ajaib, activist
- Shazia Shaheen, activist
- Shahida Shah, activist (WAF)
- Ghazala Rehman, activist (WAF)
- Samana Malaika Raza, political activist
- Ismat Shahjahan, political worker
- Rukhshanda Naz, lawyer
- Natayla Kamal, lawyer
- Sara Malkani, lawyer
- Sarah Belal, lawyer
- Zarmeenah Rahim, lawyer
- Humaira Masihuddin, lawyer
- Sulema Jahangir, lawyer
- Benazir Jatoi, Barrister
- Dr. Haroona Jatoi, educationist
- Fatima Quadri, psychologist
- Nasreen Rehman, historian
- Saadia Toor, professor
- Munizae Jahangir, journalist
- Fiza Qureshi, journalist
- Tanzeela Mazhar, journalist
- Myra Imran, journalist
- Aqsa Khan, development professional
- Madeeha Waheed, development professional
- Mahmooda Rafoof, development professional
- Valerie Khan, development professional
- Sadaf Dar, development professional
- Hadia Nusrat, development professional
- Erum Wali Khan, Women's Empowerment Advocate, Gilgit Baltistan
- Shirin Gul, development professional
- Aysa Shukat, development professional
- Ayesha Khan, development professional
- Afsa Babar
- Mahasin Khurram
- Saba Javed