

346 Clapham Road
London, SW9 9AP

Tuesday, 31 March 2009

Dear Sir,

The new law President Karzai appears to be supporting is a grave step backwards for Afghan women and their rights (*'Worse than the Taliban' – new law rolls back rights for Afghan women'*, 31 March). Part of the justification employed by the British Government to invade Afghanistan was the liberation of Afghan women from subjugation, violence and injustice.

Despite important progress made on women's rights since the fall of the Taliban, women in Afghanistan continue to endure severe injustices and inequality. *WOMANKIND Worldwide* estimates 87% are subject to domestic violence and 60% of marriages are forced. This reality is compounded by a serious culture of impunity. If the law is to come in to force, it would legally enshrine such crimes and reduce women's liberty.

We entirely agree with the head of women's affairs at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission that the lack of international pressure against this legislation is "shameful". The UK government is committed to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which demands the protection of women from gender based violence. As part of this policy commitment, we call on HM Government to use all of its influence to stop the passage of this law.

Yours sincerely,

Charlotte Onslow, Director, Gender Action for Peace and Security UK
Chris Levick, Coordinator, Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security

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For link to printed letter see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/03/womens-rights-afghanistan-international-pressure>

Notes for editors:

- 1) **Gender Action for Peace and Security UK** is an expert working group of peace and development NGOs, academics and grassroots peace builders. Building on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, GAPS promotes, facilitates and monitors the meaningful inclusion of gender perspectives in all aspects of UK policy and practice on peace and security. Members include: International Alert, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP), UNIFEM-UK, Soroptimist International, Womankind Worldwide, United Nations Association in the UK (UNA-UK), Widows for Peace through Democracy, WILPF, IRC UK.
- 2) **Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security** is a parliamentary forum for debate, discussion and monitoring on women, peace and security issues. The Group aims to increase parliamentary attention on women, peace and security issues, and push them up the agenda of HM Government. The Group has four focus areas, one of which is Afghanistan. The APG currently has over 50 parliamentary members – **the views in this letter do not necessarily represent the views of individual members.**