

Plea to protect women and girls in Afghanistan

We believe that a nation can be proud and prosper only by embracing all her citizens. More than half of all Afghans are women and their participation in the rebuilding of the country is crucial. All talent is needed in different fields of society in order for Afghanistan to rise from the ashes of violence.

We have supported the women and girls of Afghanistan to claim their rights as equal human beings and we have witnessed their hard efforts to pursue their dreams. We want to express our continued support to them. We join the recent [Call by women leaders](#) to uphold and continue to advance equal rights and opportunities of girls and women in Afghanistan.

We understand that many Afghans urgently need food, shelter and medical care. The most vulnerable must have priority. We underline the need to help those in humanitarian distress and we plead to the international community to stay in Afghanistan and to provide aid in this crisis. The safety of the humanitarian personnel, including female workers, needs nevertheless to be guaranteed by the Taliban regime. We call for cooperation on the ground with both non-governmental international organizations as well as the United Nations organizations.

We call for an inclusive peace and reconciliation process with equal participation of women. During the last two decades, Afghan women have had a shared responsibility in governing the country, and this needs to continue. Without the participation of women, lasting peace cannot be achieved.

We know that the durable road to development of any country is possible only through education. Education of women especially enhances the wellbeing of the family. A country without sufficient numbers of highly educated professionals is doomed to failure. We call particularly for assisting the education efforts of Afghan women and girls.

We want to see Afghanistan fully respect the human rights of Afghan women, their physical security and equal participation in all fields of society. We support the call by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to establish a dedicated mechanism to closely monitor the evolving human rights situation in Afghanistan. It is particularly crucial to ensure the protection of rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. We ask the Afghan government to honor their promise to protect women and girls, adhering to their legal obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Signatories:

Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland

Together with:

Joyce Banda, former President of Malawi *

Micheline Calmy-Rey, former President of the Swiss Confederation *

Kim Campbell, former Prime Minister of Canada *

Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand

Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, former President of Malta **

Paula Cox, former Premier of Bermuda **

Dalia Grybauskaitė, former President of Lithuania *

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, former President of Mauritius **

Hilda Heine, former President of the Marshall Islands **

Atifete Jahjaga, former President of Kosovo **

Emily de Jongh Elhage, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles **

Mari Kiviniemi, former Prime Minister of Finland **

Doris Leuthard, former President of the Swiss Confederation *

Maria Liberia-Peters, Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles **

Vaira Vike-Freiberga, former President of Latvia *

Mary McAleese, former President of Ireland **

Mireya Moscoso, former President of Panama **

Jenny Shipley, former Prime Minister of New Zealand *

Simonetta Sommaruga former President of the Swiss Confederation **

* Club de Madrid

** Council of Women World Leaders