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## **Afghanistan: Another women's affairs official murdered**

The assassination of a female government official in eastern Afghanistan highlights the urgent need to provide better protection for women's human rights defenders, Amnesty International said.

Nadia Sidiqi, the acting Director of the Ministry of Women's Affairs department in the eastern province of Laghman, was killed by unidentified gunmen while on her way to work in Laghman this morning. Her predecessor, Hanifa Safi, had been killed in a bomb attack in July 2012. No one has claimed responsibility for either incident.

"This latest killing shows the desperate need for the authorities to provide better protection for women who are courageously fighting for their rights in Afghanistan," said Horia Mosadiq, Amnesty International's Afghanistan Researcher, who is currently in Kabul visiting women human rights defenders from across Afghanistan.

"This is far from an isolated act of violence. The fact that Nadia Sidiqi's predecessor was also killed just a few months ago makes the failure of security forces to provide her, and other such women human rights defenders, with adequate protection all the more outrageous.

"Impunity for violence against women is endemic in Afghanistan, where perpetrators of human rights abuses are rarely held to account. We urge the government to launch an immediate, independent investigation into Nadia's killing and increase the level of protection provided to representatives of the Ministry of Women's Affairs

"The government must also uniformly enforce the law on Elimination of Violence against Women. The law criminalises forced marriage, rape, beatings, and other acts of violence against women. It was enacted in August 2009, but is still only sporadically enforced."