

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 11/017/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 234
17 December 2002

Embargo Date: 17 December 2002 11:30 GMT

Afghanistan: Human Rights must be the priority

Human rights must be made a priority in all donor strategies, a group of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) said in a statement to the Afghan Support Group meeting in Oslo to discuss future donor coordination for Afghanistan.

"Major human rights abuses continue to be committed in Afghanistan and without international pressure and increased advice and support to Afghan institutions, this situation will not change. Donors should provide adequate assistance so both recent and past abuses can be investigated and fairly addressed," the NGOs said in a joint statement.

"Security and an end to conflict in Afghanistan will only come when human rights are fully protected in Afghanistan", the organizations added.

Currently the lack of security is the most serious obstacle to reconstruction. The international community's limited focus on Kabul has undermined long-term national security. Increased financial and technical support needs to be provided to Afghan institutions to ensure that they can protect human rights across the whole country.

International support for women's rights must be made more visible, and the international community should create economic, social and cultural opportunities for women.

"It is essential that the international community condemns all infringements of the right to freedom of expression, as those who speak out in Afghanistan have faced intimidation, arbitrary arrest, and violence. Any such cases should be raised by the international community with the Afghan authorities," the organizations stressed.

"When considering Afghanistan's development, the international community must increase the Afghan government's ability to protect and promote the human rights of all Afghans," the joint statement pointed out.

Background

The following organizations have contributed to and support this initiative: Action Aid, Afghan Women Judges Association, Afghan Women Lawyer and Professional Association, Afghan Women's Network, All Afghan Women Union, Amnesty International, ARTICLE 19, Association for Advocacy of Youths Rights, Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA), Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA), medica mondiale e.V. and The Equal Rights Association.

The full statement will be available online from 18 December at:
<http://www.web.amnesty.org/ainsf/recent/asa11/016/2002>

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>