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RAWADARI

**FOR AN EQUAL AND
PEACEFUL AFGHANISTAN**

**Press Release
8 March 2023**

On the International Women's Day 2023, Rawadari honours the brave and tireless struggles of the Afghan women for equality and rights. Women of Afghanistan are fighting for a better future for all Afghans despite restrictions that have been described as "tantamount to gender apartheid", and despite lack of meaningful international support. Rawadari calls for local and international solidarity with the Afghan women in their struggle for equality and rights.

In the past 18 months, Afghan women have been deprived of their most fundamental rights and freedoms due to Taliban's systematic and targeted discrimination. Since Taliban's military takeover of Kabul on 15th August 2021, we have seen a complete destruction and collapse of the human rights gains of Afghanistan, including the legal framework for the protection of women. Taliban's oppressive policies has led to the widespread violation of women's civil and political rights. Taliban's dismantling of the legal protections has made women more vulnerable to violence, including violence at home.

Additionally, in the past 18 months Taliban have enforced a set of policies and decrees aiming to further limit women's rights and freedoms including the right to education and the right to work, that together impact millions of girls and women. Limitations on women's movement such as the requirement for women to be accompanied by a male family member has impacted women's access to services, including access to healthcare.

Women's rights activists and organizers inside Afghanistan have stood up against these restrictions in lonely but courageous defiance. Leaders around the world, in the region and in the Islamic world have either been passive observers to this struggle or have paid lip service to fundamental rights of women through statements and speeches without meaningful action. Despite this, activists inside Afghanistan have continued their consistent struggle. Women have organized street protests, drawn graffiti at night, have produced poetry and music, have held secret classes, established libraries, advocated locally and internationally and have carried out a range of other civic and creative initiatives. Some male activists have also stood up for the rights of women through acts of civil disobedience. Taliban's



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response to the civic activism of women and men in Afghanistan has been threats, repression, detentions and torture of activists and protestors. Several of Afghan activists, protesters and journalists are currently in detention with their families unable to contact them.

Women and girls in Afghanistan need meaningful local and international solidarity and support. Inside the country, the local leaders, religious leaders & leaders of the business community and private sector must collectively exert pressure for reopening of schools and universities to women. These groups need to utilize their social and economic power to change the current unjust conditions. National solidarity for the education of women and girls is the strongest tool for change in current circumstances. The ban on women's education and work has long-term severe consequences for all Afghans and for the country's prosperity.

Solidarity between the activists in exile and the movements and collectives inside the country will strengthen the struggle for rights. Collaborations among Afghanistan's civic actors around shared goals of education, work and equal rights for women can inspire international solidarity and be a source of hope for women and girls across Afghanistan.

The world needs to stand in meaningful solidarity with the struggle for the rights of women in Afghanistan. The international community must exert sustained pressure on the Taliban for change. All external actors must consult Afghan women inside and outside the country on their policies regarding Afghanistan. The Islamic world and countries in the region who have more influence on the Taliban must utilize all tools and leverage to improve the conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan.

The de facto authorities, Taliban, must respond to the demands of Afghan women for the right to education, work and legal protection. They must uphold Afghanistan's international obligations and reduce the suffering of Afghans by announcing immediate, full and unconditional reversal of the bans on women's education and work.

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