

WOMEN'S FORUM ON AFGHANISTAN

ON NORWEGIAN TALKS WITH THE TALIBAN

The meeting convened by the Government of Norway with the Taliban and representatives of Afghan civil society comes at a critical time in Afghanistan's history. The country is facing a dire humanitarian crisis as well as political, social and human rights crises that need immediate attention. These urgent challenges should be addressed comprehensively and with accountability. The question is not whether to talk to the Taliban but rather how to talk to the Taliban. While we all understand the need for engagement, the meeting must also be an opportunity to remind and pressure the Taliban on women and human rights. Afghans, particularly Afghan women, are closely watching this meeting, as are women around the world.

Women are more than half the population and their exclusion will lead to failure – failure to save lives immediately and failure to build a viable state in the long term. Women must be part of a political dialogue from the beginning, and the inclusion of women must not be seen as undermining – rather it is integral to the alleviation of this crisis. The inclusion of women at all levels of decision-making is a pre-requisite for stability as Afghan women are disproportionately carrying the burden of this humanitarian crisis. The meaningful participation of women is integral to the effective delivery of humanitarian aid – as decision makers, project managers, humanitarian workers and direct recipients.

This meeting is an opportunity to reinforce the interdependence of peace and security, development, and human rights – the three pillars of the United Nations. The Taliban restrictions on women rights, as well as its restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, are deeply concerning. Attacks, harassment and detention of protestors must stop. Violence against women must stop. These actions are detrimental to the political dialogue that is needed for an inclusive and representative system in Afghanistan. Only an inclusive process can ensure stability and delivery of humanitarian support for the people of Afghanistan. Further engagement with the Taliban beyond humanitarian aid should require some concrete steps from them, including an end to the tactics of fear and repression.

Margot Wallstrom, Chair
Women's Forum on Afghanistan

The Women's Forum on Afghanistan is a new initiative that has been created by Afghan and global women leaders to work for the well-being and human rights of the Afghan people, and inclusive solutions to the social, economic, and political challenges the country is currently facing. info@womens-forum-afghanistan.org