

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Verveer, Melanne S <VerveerMS@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2010 8:01 PM
To: H
Subject: London Conference

I just wanted to give you a quick update on Afghan women's participation in the London conference. I raised the issue at the [redacted] yesterday. Holbrooke is all for it. [redacted]

[redacted] I don't know what's possible. UK has a significant role in putting together the agenda. Holbrooke and Lute are en route to UK. The Afghan gov't, of course, has to be persuaded to include women in their delegation. We have put together a list of very credible and effective women already in some gov't role (HR Commission, Gov of a province, etc) who could be selected. The NGO's are also asking how there can be a meeting on the future of Afghanistan with no input from the women (see below as illustrative).

Holbrook also wants me to go to the Hague next week where there will be a meeting on women's role in Afghanistan and the London conf. The Dutch gov't is participating and our embassy thinks it's imp't that I attend to demonstrate our commitment to this issue at a time when the Dutch are debating whether to extend troop deployments beyond 2010. Holbrooke said the most important thing that can happen is for you to raise the issue in your London remarks "since all the world will be listening to what she has to say." I told him it would help if there were also Afghan women in the room!

Dear and respected Ambassador Verveer,

Please accept my belated best wishes and warm greetings for the New Year 2010. May this year and years to come would bring an end to violence of all kind, in particular violence against women, may it bring peace and prosperity all over the world.

I am writing to take a few moments away from your precious time, regarding a concern that I have recently. As you are well aware, we are going towards another International conference in London, where key issues regarding Afghanistan and its future will be discussed.

There has been all different level activities by Afghans as well as internationals to prepare for this meeting where it is expected that some realistic decisions are made about the future of Afghanistan and the way forward.

Although as an Afghan who lives and is based in Afghanistan, I am not very optimistic that such conferences will bring an end to the current crisis, but I understand the importance of such lobbies and the decisions made in there will tackle our lives and our future as the ordinary people of this country.

I am sure you have followed regularly the media and other sources of information about the crucial role that Afghan civil society plays, from building schools for girls and boys, to resolving conflicts in the communities and creating Peace Shuras (councils) in far and remote parts of the country. Afghan NGOs who are neither part of the state nor international community are an important and considerable partner if we want to get a realistic picture from what is going on, Afghan women leaders have taken brave steps to advocate for peace and justice, they are the ones who need to be around that table where things are discussed. We agree and respect the principles of inter-governmental dialogues, but when talking about below points, how would it be possible if the ones who're directly involved in the implementation of projects and programs are excluded.

Therefore, I request you support in full inclusion of Afghan Civil Society representatives including women representatives from Civil Society in the London conference.

A group of civil society activists are already invited to a side event two days before the actual conference on January 26th, but we are hoping to have people inside, carrying our message to the conference participants.

Thanks so much for your continuous support towards women and voices of unheard!

With kindest regards,
Orzala.

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Independent Human Rights and Civil Society Activist/Researcher

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