

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Sherman, Wendy R <ShermanWR@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, June 19, 2012 2:02 AM
To: H
Cc: Sullivan, Jacob J; Verveer, Melanne S
Subject: Fw: Fwd: AFP -- Minister of Justice says shelters host "immorality and prostitution"

Madam Secretary,
 Cathy Ashton would like to do a joint statement with you on this if you are interested. Let me know if you'd like us to work with Melanne to do so.
 Wendy

From: SCHMID Helga Maria (EEAS) [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, June 19, 2012 01:58 AM
To: Sherman, Wendy R
Subject: Fwd: AFP -- Minister of Justice says shelters host "immorality and prostitution"

B6

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lotte Leicht <[redacted]>
Date: 19 juin 2012 09:38:22 UTC+04:00
Subject: AFP -- Minister of Justice says shelters host "immorality and prostitution"

Outrage at Afghan minister's prostitution comments

KABUL, June 18, 2012 (AFP) - Rights activists on Monday demanded the sacking of the Afghan justice minister after he suggested women's shelters in the war-torn country were home to "immorality and prostitution".

Justice minister Habibullah Ghaleb told a conference organised by the women's affairs committee of the upper house of parliament on Sunday that foreign-funded rights awareness groups had been encouraging young women to defy their parents.

"Mostly they were encouraging girls, saying, 'If your father says anything bad to you don't listen to him, if your mother says anything to you don't listen to them. There are safe houses for you where you can stay'," the minister said.

"What safe houses? What sort of immorality and prostitution was not happening at those places?"

Significant progress has been made on women's rights since the fall of the Taliban, but many fear those gains are under threat as NATO troops leave and Kabul seeks peace with Islamist insurgents.

Twelve shelters in Afghanistan house around 250 women, most of

them victims of domestic violence, according to the Women's Affairs Ministry. They are mostly run by charities and funded largely by international donors.

Leading Afghan women's rights campaigner Wazhman Frogh said Ghaleb's allegations were untrue and urged President Hamid Karzai sack him.

"We are demanding the president fire the minister for his remarks," she said.

The Afghan Women's Network, the country's leading women's rights group, also called for an apology and said the officials involved should be removed.

Sayeda Muzhgan Mustafahi, deputy women affairs minister, said the shelters were inspected every week and there was "no evidence to back up the minister's statement".

The deputy justice minister, Sayed Yousouf Aleem, also distanced herself from Ghaleb's comments.

"There is no official report to indicate that the shelters are used for immoral activities. We have no evidence," she said.

Under the Taliban regime from 1996 until the 2001 US-led invasion, girls were banned from going to school, women were whipped in the street if they did not wear the burqa and those accused of adultery were stoned to death, often in public.

In the past 10 years, the number of girls in education has soared and women's employment opportunities have improved, but there have been ominous signs for the future.

In March, Karzai endorsed an edict by the Ulema Council, the country's highest Islamic authority, saying that women were worth less than men, and should avoid mixing with men.

That effectively implied that women should not go to university or out to work.