

WOMEN FOR AFGHAN WOMEN

ADVOCATING FOR THE RIGHTS OF AFGHAN WOMEN AND GIRLS



WAW clients at the Women's March in Washington, DC
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Established in 2014 and situated strategically in Washington, DC, Women for Afghan Women's (WAW's) Advocacy Office seeks to inform United States (U.S.) and international policy as it affects Afghan women and girls, and to pursue the protection and promotion of women's rights around the world.

WAW'S KEY ADVOCACY ISSUES

WAW's services are often delivered to victims of the most severe human rights abuses, including forced and/or child marriage, attempted "honor" killings, domestic violence, *ba'ad* or the custom of using young girls as barter to settle disputes, exploitation, and forced prostitution. These protection services are an important tool utilized to address gender-based violence, but more fundamental and expedient progress must be made to change social norms and institutionalize gender equality.

WAW's Advocacy Office works tirelessly to change realities on the ground for Afghan

"When women are included in peace processes, there is a 20% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years, and a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years."

— UN Women, *"Facts and Figures: Peace and Security,"* 2017

women and girls by raising awareness about these human rights violations. In addition, WAW campaigns for sustained support for foreign aid, peacebuilding, and development initiatives in Afghanistan; protection for and provision of services to Afghan women and families everywhere; and the recognition of women's rights as human rights in the U.S. and around the world.

Specifically, WAW works to:

- Promote the progress made by Afghan women and girls since the international intervention that ended the Taliban's reign in Afghanistan in 2001;

- Ensure U.S. policies are inclusive and meet the needs of Afghan-American, refugee, and immigrant populations;

- Identify gaps in international development assistance and Afghanistan's legal framework that inhibit women's and girls' free and full exercise of their human rights;

- Urge the Afghan government to fully enforce provisions related to women's rights as enshrined in Afghanistan's Constitution, the landmark Elimination of Violence Against Women law, Anti-Harassment Regulation, and other laws and policies enacted to protect and promote women's rights;

Through WAW's Advocacy Office, the organization will continue to raise awareness about the rights, gains, and challenges women and girls face in Afghanistan and the United States, broadcast their voices, and encourage international support on their behalf.



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- Encourage the Afghan and U.S. governments to fully implement their national action plans on women to comport with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security;

- Create the political, social, economic, and cultural space to enable Afghan women and girls to pursue education, economic opportunity, and the free exercise of their human rights;

- Ensure women's full and equal participation at all levels of the decision-making processes that impact their lives;

- Promote the understanding that women's full and equal participation ultimately ensures enduring peace, security, stability, and democracy; and

- Emphasize the key role of women in peacebuilding and in the future prosperity of Afghanistan.

WAW'S ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Through its advocacy efforts, WAW ensures that the hard-won social, political, and economic gains of Afghan women and girls

“The Afghan Parliament continues to assemble with a higher percentage of female representatives (27.3%) than the legislative bodies of many of the most established democracies, including the U.S. Congress (15.2%) and British Parliament (19.7%).” – M. Ashraf Haidari,

“Institutionalizing Women's Rights for Afghanistan's Future,” 2016

are preserved, and that Afghan women participate in policymaking processes both in the U.S. and Afghanistan.

WAW pursues these goals by:

- Engaging U.S., United Nations, and international officials, diplomats, legislators, government representatives, and civil society in critical conversations;

- Building coalitions and networking with allies; and

- Creating opportunities for the full and equal participation of women at all levels of society.

WAW believes continued international and U.S. support of Afghan women is vital to the long-term sustainability of democracy and stability in Afghanistan. Achieving these aims will require the U.S. to play a leadership role in providing Afghan women and men with the technical capacity to ensure they have the fundamental skills and information necessary to create a durable and peaceful state structure, as well as legal, social, and cultural frameworks that promote enduring respect for human rights.

Since many Afghan women, children, and families in the U.S. face the same issues as their sisters and brothers in Afghanistan, WAW continues to advocate for the Afghan immigrant, refugee, and Afghan-American communities across the country. WAW's grassroots initiatives allow WAW to continually connect with a broad base of Afghans and better understand the needs of the community. WAW then articulates these concerns to local, state, national, and international policymakers and coalition partners.

To combat threatened cuts of development assistance by the U.S. and United Nations and to raise awareness regarding the imperative nature of women's role in peacebuilding processes, WAW is intensifying its advocacy efforts to further WAW's goal of advancing women's rights by ensuring the plight and potential of Afghan women and girls feature prominently in the global public consciousness.

For information on how to support WAW or to learn more about WAW's other programs, please visit: womenforafghanwomen.org

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WOMEN FOR AFGHAN WOMEN (WAW) is a grassroots civil society organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights of disenfranchised Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and New York (NY). In particular, WAW works to help Afghan women and girls exercise their rights to pursue their individual potential to self-determination, and to representation in all areas of life—political, social, cultural, and economic. WAW relentlessly advocates for women's rights and challenges the norms that underpin gender-based violence to influence attitudes and bring about change.

WAW was founded in April 2001 to advocate for women then living under Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Since its inception, WAW has become the largest organization for Afghan women and girls globally, and the largest women's organization in Afghanistan. To date, WAW has served over 30,000 clients and trained more than 330,000 individuals on women's rights. WAW provides life-saving and life-changing services, education, and advocacy for women and children across Afghanistan and NY who have endured human rights violations. WAW's capacity has grown from being volunteer-run when it was founded to now employing over 750 staff members, the vast majority of whom are Afghan and female.

