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Women for Afghan Women Condemns Ban on Women Working in Afghanistan

Women for Afghan Women condemns systematic violations against women's and girls' rights by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

NEW YORK, NEW YORK (January 12, 2023): As one of the largest women's rights nonprofit organizations operating in Afghanistan for over two decades, [Women for Afghan Women \(WAW\)](#) is deeply dismayed that we are being obliged to follow the country's de facto authorities' (the Taliban's) [decree that immediately bans women](#), including all our women staff in Afghanistan, from working.

As a women-led organization that serves any Afghan who comes to us for help — including women, men, and children — WAW is devastated that our own women staff will not be permitted to work or perform their duties, simply because of their gender.

WAW served close to 250,000 individuals in Afghanistan in 2022 alone. Since the organization was established in 2001, WAW has served over 1.6 million vulnerable individuals. Although all of WAW's national network of family consultation and protection centers for survivors of gender-based violence in Afghanistan were ordered to be shut down by the de facto authorities in August 2021, we still employ 616 staff members — 148 of whom are women. These dedicated colleagues are equally essential to every aspect of our nonprofit, humanitarian, and rights-based programs and operations. It is impossible for WAW to provide the majority of these services without our women employees, particularly where the presence of women is vitally necessary to serve the needs of other women and their children.

Since the capture of Kabul in August 2021, Afghanistan's new de facto authorities declared that only women are permitted to serve women and girls. Their most recent ban on women working directly contradicts the premise of this order: If our women employees are banned from work, WAW can no longer serve women and girls, or vulnerable families and children in which women are the head of the household, or where men are absent, sick, or have disabilities.

It is ethically and morally unacceptable that our organization be obliged to serve only men. In a conflict-ridden country with an economy that has virtually collapsed, this ban will force many women and children into extreme and life-threatening poverty, starvation, and isolation.



While the de facto authorities' recent decision has forced our women staff to stay home until further notice, we will continue to keep all of our 148 women staff on our payroll. Simultaneously, we are working closely with partners and other trusted nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations in Afghanistan, as well as our international donors, to work towards a solution that will enable our brilliant and hardworking women employees to return to work as soon as possible.

The devastating effect of this new decree impacts all of our staff. The men employed by WAW are traumatized and heartbroken by this systematic gender discrimination, which deprives them and the organization of the invaluable service and support of our professional, highly qualified women staff.

We remind the de facto authorities that a society that oppresses its women and girls, and denies half the population its rights, is doomed to suffer economically, socially, and politically. The rights of women to have equal access to education and work are not Western notions. These inalienable rights are not only enshrined in Islam, but also in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a global standard.

We strongly urge the de facto authorities to immediately rescind the employment and educational bans on women and girls, and to retract all other decrees that violate Afghan women's and girls' basic human rights.

To this end, we are unified and stand in solidarity with all our partners, who have signed on to the statement issued on December 26, 2022 by [ACBAR, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development](#) — an independent Afghan entity comprised of 183 national and international NGOs working in Afghanistan including WAW, and with the excerpted statement below:

ACBAR strongly believes that transparent, safe, impartial, non-discriminatory humanitarian and development aid, respective of Islamic and Afghan traditional values, cannot be reached without women working in national and international NGOs. Full participation of women across the spectrum of aid delivery is not just a principled response but an imperative for operational effectiveness. The ban will have devastating effects on men, boys, women, and girls in Afghanistan. ACBAR calls for an immediate revocation of this order, in its entirety.

WAW hopes that the de facto authorities will reconsider this decree and permit every member of our staff to have the opportunity to utilize their talent, skills, and enthusiasm in serving their beloved people and country.