

“WHERE I AM GOING AND WHERE I AM”

The personal and professional opportunities and challenges facing Afghan women human rights defenders outside Afghanistan: Policy Brief



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About this briefing

Afghan women's rights activists (WRAs) and women's human rights defenders (WHRDs) have actively continued their advocacy despite personal and professional challenges.^{1, 2} To ensure the sustainability of a movement for Afghan women's rights led by Afghan women, these challenges must be explored and addressed through action by partners, governments, and institutions across the international community.

This briefing shares the key findings and recommendations from field and desk research conducted by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Women for Women International (WfWI) between April-May 2022. The research included a geographic mapping as well as individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with women's rights activists (WRAs) and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) who fled Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover.

The findings of this research contribute to filling the current information gap around WRAs' and WHRDs' immediate, medium, and long-term needs in the transit and host countries where they reside, their areas of expertise and experience, and their ideas, capacities and opportunities on how to sustain the Afghan women's movement jointly, despite being apart geographically.

The evidence-based recommendations set forth in this policy brief pave the way for donors, policymakers, and partners to support the Afghan women's rights movement through diplomatic efforts and future programming and projects to sustain Afghan women's rights movements inside and inside and outside of Afghanistan.

¹ Al Jazeera, "Taliban, Western Officials Meet in Oslo to Discuss Afghanistan," Taliban News, (Al Jazeera, January 24, 2022), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/24/taliban-western-officials-meet-near-oslo-to-discuss-afghanistan>.

² The Guardian. "Afghan Female MPs Fight for Their Country in Exile," (January 17, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2022/jan/17/afghan-female-mps-fighting-for-their-country-from-exile-podcast>.

Geographic mapping

A mapping questionnaire was disseminated across five global regions to gather information about Afghan WRAs and WHRDs who fled Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover of the country in August 2021. The questionnaire was filled out by 1160 Afghan women WRA and WHRD respondents currently residing outside Afghanistan.

The mapping exercise gathered important information for the study: geographic location including country and city, contact information, years of experience and current employment status. It allowed the data collection process and thematic analysis to be rooted within the community of Afghan WRAs and WHRDs who reside outside Afghanistan.



In-depth focus group discussions and individual interviews

Out of the 1160 Afghan women WRAs and WHRDs, a sample of 53 participated in focus group discussions and individual interviews, sharing their personal experiences and needs. This enabled the study to gain a deep understanding of the needs of, challenges and opportunities for WRAs and WHRDs in sustaining their feminist movements.

Breakdown of Sample Size

Region	Method	Countries	Participants	Method	Countries	Participants
Europe	Focus Group Discussions	Albania, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, UK	7	Individual Interview	Albania, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, UK	10
Central Asia		India, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	6		Tajikistan	1
Middle East		UAE	6		UAE	3
South Asia		India, Iran, Pakistan	7		India, Iran, Pakistan	3
North America		USA & Canada	7		USA & Canada	3
	Total number of FGD participants		33	Total number of KII participants		20

Table 1: Breakdown of participants based on region and data collection approach

Participants

The mapping, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted by regional focal points in **17 countries** across five regions (both transit and host countries) where Afghan immigrants of various migration categories were known to be currently residing:

Central Asia (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan)

South Asia (India and Pakistan)

Middle East (Iran and UAE)

Europe (France, Turkey, Albania, Norway, Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, UK)

North America (USA and Canada)



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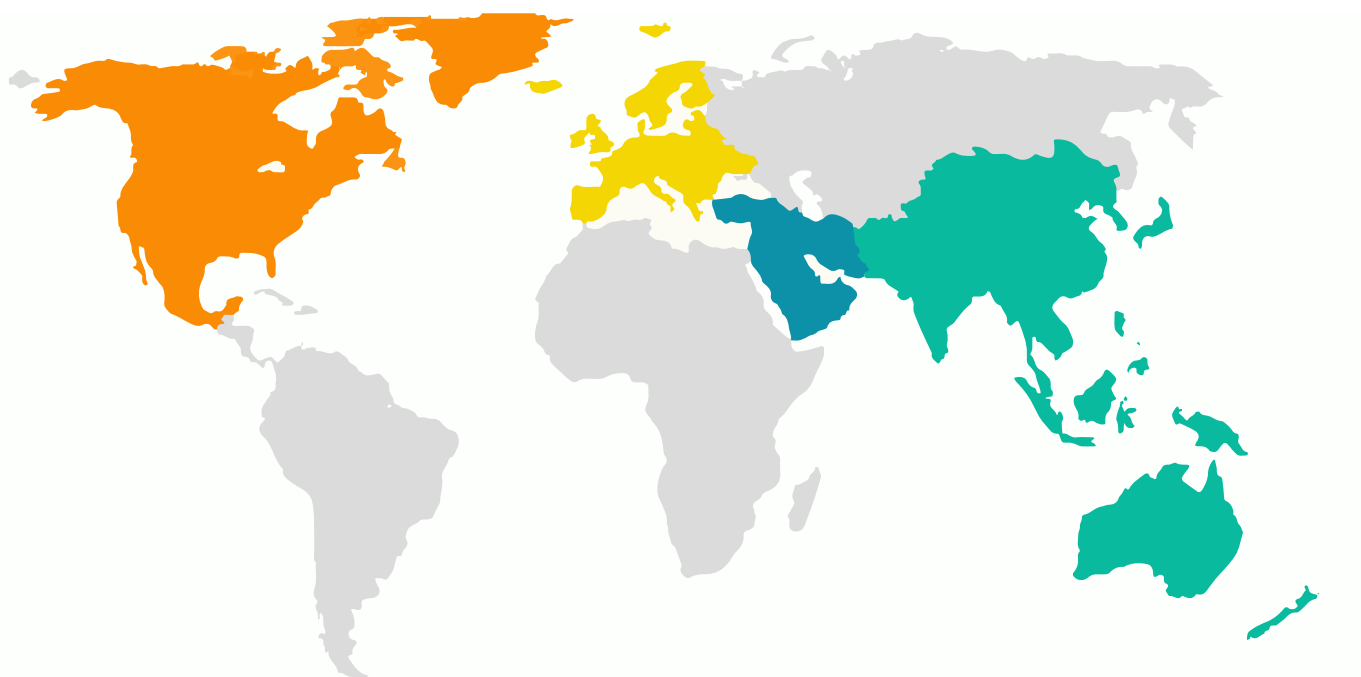




All participants of the study fell under the official definition of a human rights defender, which includes those working in civil society organisations, as journalists, advocates, and local/grassroots leaders.³ Participants also met at least one of the following criteria:

Fled Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover in August 2021	Aimed to continue activism and engagement with other women's rights activists outside Afghanistan
Fled Afghanistan due to high insecurity risks	Had at least 3-10 years of activism work in Afghanistan

Study Regions

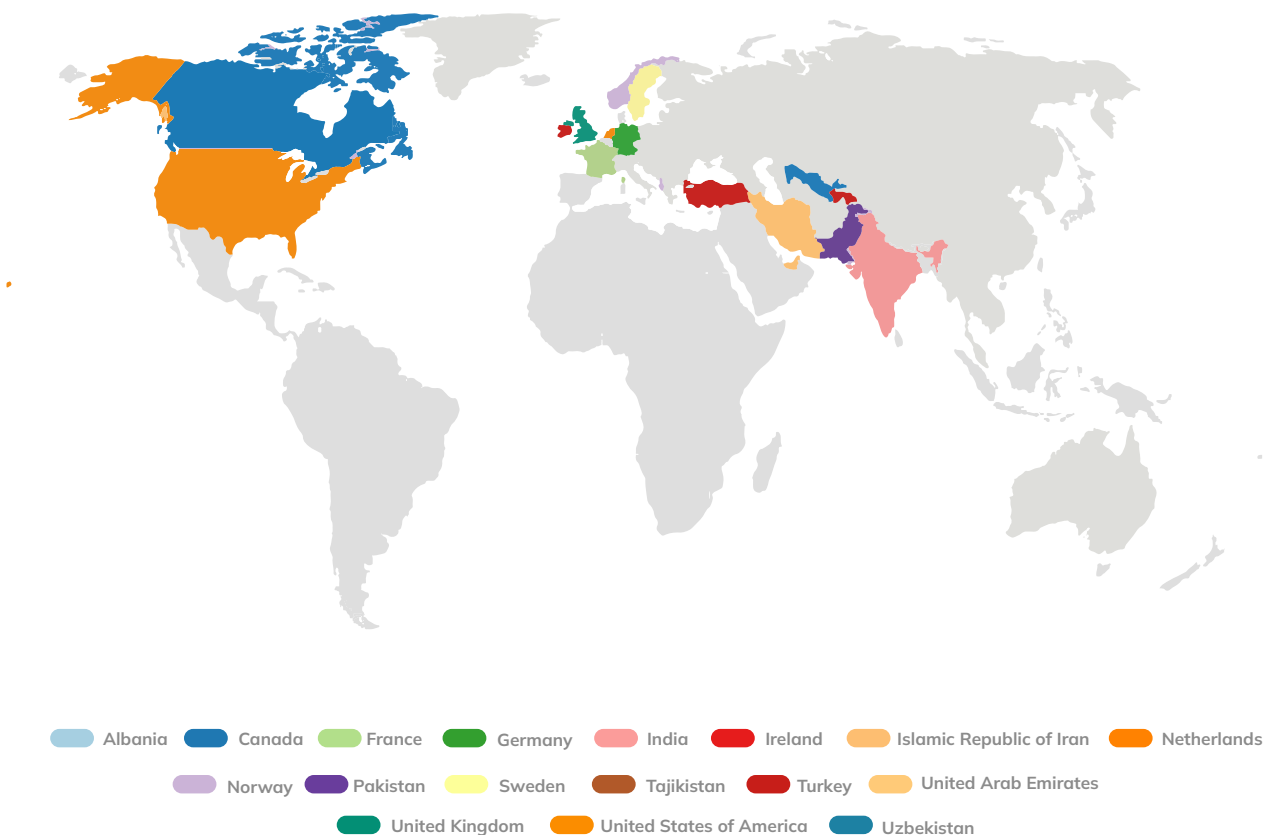


Visual 1: Regions of Mapping and Recruitment of Study Participants

● Asia ● Europe ● Middle East ● North America

³ "Human rights defender" is a term used to describe people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights in a peaceful manner (OHCHR, 2022).

Focus Groups and Individual Interview Participant Locations



Findings

Participants discussed their challenges from both a personal and professional perspective. Personal challenges related to struggles that the participants were facing within their personal lives that were also significantly impacting their work as women's rights activists and/or women human rights defenders. Participants also shared the professional challenges they were facing as they continue their work as WRAs and WHRDs outside Afghanistan in both transit and host countries.

Many of the personal and professional challenges, needs and opportunities are interrelated. For example, mental health and psychosocial needs are linked to and symptomatic of the broader challenges facing Afghan WRAs and WHRDs. These include financial concerns, lack of stability or transparency within the resettlement process, and the erosion of women's rights within Afghanistan. Thus, policies, programmes and priorities can and should be redesigned to support the personal and professional needs of WRAs and WHRDs simultaneously.

Resettlement: Immigration Status and Documentation/Identification



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As a human being I have to understand where I am going, and I have to be able to choose where I am.”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD, based in UAE

Since most of the WRA and WHRD participants of the study left Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and US withdrawal in August 2021, all 53 of those who participated in individual interviews or FGDs reported uncertainty around their immigration status and resettlement-related issues. WRAs and WHRDs cited mental stress and a lack of professional opportunities to continue their women's rights work due to the difficulty of navigating immigration processes, the status of their resettlement applications, and the restrictions on refugees' and asylum seekers' right to work (especially with regards to advocacy and activism) in their transit or host country.

Specifically,
they cited
challenges
around:

Lack of transparent immigrant and resettlement processes;

Restrictions and lack of clarity around policies for refugee and asylum seeker advocacy and activism;

Discrimination in policy and attitudes;

and professional uncertainty in host countries.



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The main issue here is uncertain and unknown status because of visa or permanent residency. Most of the defenders and activist evacuees do not have the proper visa. Even though there are lots of opportunities but because of visa issues, they can't use the opportunities, and this problem stops them from raising their voice and working harder for Afghanistan.”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD, based in the USA

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Most KII and FGD participants shared that their lack of permanent status in their host country restricted them from registering as a network, association or agency in order to structure and coordinate their work cohesively. Abroad, active women also face many problems. We alone cannot raise our voices in diaspora unless we have official permission from the government of the host country. In many cases, the host government does not allow us to gather and advocate. We are not even allowed to create a cultural office to unite women, and we cannot gather women under one roof to raise their voices. Nothing can be done empty-handed.”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in Tajikistan



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Participants also reported experiencing professional uncertainty, sharing that their educational and professional experience is not appropriately or fairly considered in their transit or host country despite their level of expertise and experience. This makes it incredibly hard to find job opportunities and integrate into wider society.



First, we [need to] have access to basic resources that can exist for a normal life of an ordinary citizen. In a country where we are immigrant or refugee right now, and in fact, we don't know how to say "immigrant" in their language." The fact that we need to learn the language, ... enter society in the fields in which we have experience or education, to have a home, and in a way to integrate into the society and be able to support ourselves through our previous experiences only then we can help the people of Afghanistan. Until our basic needs in these countries are not met, the basic needs that every citizen should have, we certainly cannot be effective neither for the host society nor for our country of origin. And we definitely cannot advocate for those who are in Afghanistan and need us to be their voice. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD FGD participant based in Europe

Urgent Implications and Impact of Resettlement Discrimination in Policy, Practice, and Attitudes

Afghan WRAs and WHRDs experience discrimination based upon their status – either as a refugee or specifically as a refugee from Afghanistan. That discrimination manifests as policy, attitude, and in practice in their new transit or host countries which negatively impacts their personal wellbeing and stability, as well as their professional goals.

Afghan WRAs and WHRDs from across all five regions surveyed shared examples of discrimination. The recommendations in this report set standards and provide guidance on thematic policies and programs but many of the examples of discrimination or exploitative behavior and policies require specific and urgent redress and remedy.



Below are illustrative examples of such challenges:



...as refugees, when we first came here, we were provided a letter by the ministry of Ireland that you are accepted refugees and you have all those rights that an Irish has but when it comes to work, they say for us that you are refugees and you are not suitable for this job. As well as when it comes to education again they say that you are refugee and you cannot study for free here like maybe for three or four years...”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in Ireland



If we do not have a visa, we will not be able to withdraw money, work and go to school, and it is even very difficult to get a house. There are not work opportunities for those who do not have a visa. We have to receive some money either from Afghanistan or other countries. If we do not have visa we cannot receive the money through Western Union or banks. And through hawala system, the money has to go to Afghanistan first and then it comes here, we get almost half the money, and this is a big challenge.”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in India

WRAs and WHRDs also widely expressed frustration with the discriminatory behaviour, attitudes and policies of many transit and host countries. Most WRAs and WHRDs interviewed said there was greater discrimination against Afghan refugees and asylum seekers compared to refugees and asylum seekers of other nationalities.

Hidden Fees

The process to maintain a valid visa as a refugee or asylum seeker can feel like a perpetual struggle due to the constant re-application and need to pay exorbitant fines which quickly add up.



The government limited its visa issuance/extension to Afghan citizens. Those who stayed under PV-2 and T types of visas are issued monthly visas up one months...and the process of extension is 18 or 20 days it mean during one months a person have only 10 or 12 days valid visa, and each time visa extension...minimum price, which is the cheapest for per person is 50\$, which means a family of four per month 200\$. Visa fee for two person for one months is 100\$. Also need to register with the police every month because each time the police register according to the valid visa and requires a support letter by the company who invited you, for every member of family over 18 years for per person the minimum price is 50\$...and registration costs at least 500\$ per months. And every time they are asking many documents such as birth certificate of the child and marriage certificate, and they are not accepting in English. They are asking to translate into Tajiki...which costs about 200\$. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in Tajikistan



They [people of the host country] think they [Afghan refugees and asylum seekers] have come from a war zone maybe they don't have anything or maybe they don't have a good knowledge of work ... I think everyone should have a chance for starting something and no one [should] think a refugee do[es] not have the right to study, or the right to work which is a big challenge for them [refugees and asylum seekers]. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD FGD participant based in Europe

Financial Challenges and Unemployment

Participants' other challenges included financial hardships around:

Economic integration
in host countries

Financial barriers such as restricted
access to bank, withdrawal, and
money transfers

Increased cost of living and of daily
necessities (after Russia's invasion
of Ukraine) without any changes in
financial status of WRAs and WHRDs



As a refugee in India, having no financial support from no one has put me under severe emotional pressure, and economically I am not stable, most of the time I am thinking that [sic] how to protect and support myself to pay rent, purchase food and other utilities cost. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in India

Participants reported that they suffer from unemployment and lack of access to professional jobs in transit and host countries. In countries where they do have access to jobs, such as Iran, the jobs are government-sponsored jobs as labourers and other low-wage jobs. In other countries, participants noted that their short-term visas and the poor economic situation of their host and transit country meant that they could not find employers willing to hire them.



The international institutions that design and plan programmes should follow and engage the Afghan society. They can use the capacities and talents that have come from Afghanistan in their plans and programs, and most of them still have organizations that are operative inside Afghanistan and are helping and assisting Afghanistan. International organizations can prioritize these women and human rights organizations to work and help. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in Canada



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According to some participants, another significant challenge to continuing advocacy and work for the Afghan women's rights movement is the change of funding status of ongoing projects, discontinuation of funding to women's rights movements inside Afghanistan, including projects focused on women and girls' education, advocacy, lobbying, capacity strengthening, and campaigning. Based on the de facto authorities' restrictions and concerns about sanctions and the security risks, some donor organisations and states also have less interest in funding and transferring money directly to Afghan NGOs due to perceived risk involved.



The biggest challenge of the moment [that] we are facing is...[the] economic burden ... most of the donor [supported projects] are on hold condition, and they are not providing financial support. Even during the previous government, we were running our activities by funding of international community. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in Norway

Security

WRAs and WHRDs highlighted two aspects of security that posed personal and professional challenges:

Cybersecurity including concerns around tracking of online activity and access to secure internet

Regressive policies and restrictions on operations within Afghanistan



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Afghan WRAs and WHRDs described perceived cybersecurity challenges in transit or host countries as general digital insecurity, lack of internet access, and a fear of being tracked by the host government or Afghanistan's de facto authorities in their communication on the internet or messenger platforms such as WhatsApp. This limits their ability to connect with their family, friends and colleagues in other countries and in Afghanistan, and puts their family at risk if their communication or advocacy activities are tracked and traced by the de facto authorities.

In some cases, there were specific barriers or restrictions facing Afghan WRAs/WHRDs in host countries such that they were unable to speak with media, give interviews, or access social media, thus hindering their ability to continue their advocacy work.



When you do not have media, it means that you do not have a voice, and when you do not have a voice, it means that her rights are being violated, and women who write on social media will be the greatest tool for strengthening women's movements both inside and outside Afghanistan."

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in Canada

The security challenges that WRAs and WHRDs face include the regressive policies of Afghanistan's de facto authorities on women's rights movements and other feminist movements, and the risk of persecution of WRAs and WHRDs inside Afghanistan. Afghan WRAs and WHRDs noted the impact of regressive policies on activists inside Afghanistan and highlighted how their inability to raise their voice within Afghanistan can even make it difficult for WRAs and WHRDs outside Afghanistan to offer support for the movements within the country.



Due to severe pressure from the Taliban, women protesters [inside Afghanistan] were tortured and videotaped and unable to share their problems with others [outside Afghanistan]. The Taliban have put a lot of pressure on women protesters, and psychological torture has increased, and the lack of serious support is one of the issues that needs to be addressed."

– Afghan WRA/WHRD FGD participant based in South Asia

Most of the participants also mentioned concern for family members inside Afghanistan. Mainly, Afghan WRAs and WHRDs said although they aim to continue their support for the movement inside Afghanistan, they find it hard because their family members are still in Afghanistan and may be threatened by the de facto authorities due to their work.



Not only are their [women's rights activists] life is [sic] at extreme risk but their family members' life is also at risk, so they are silent, and they really don't want to raise their voices because there is no support for them both nationally and internationally. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD FGD participant based in North America

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Afghan WRAs and WHRDs expressed their mental health and wellbeing challenges and a desire for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for immigrants who face depression and anxiety in camps and host countries. In addition to needing accessible MHPSS, some WRAs/WHRDs also suggested that the establishment of safe spaces for gathering, sport and education in camps would improve emotional wellbeing.



For me, the basic need right now is the emotional and mental peace and stability. I am a young woman who lives alone in this camp and is away from family. My family was torn, and we turned into refugees in other countries. I was left alone and ended up somewhere that I never imagined to be for such a long time, without my family. Therefore, emotional, and mental peace is my first need. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in United Arab Emirates

But Afghan WRAs and WHRDs emphasised that addressing many of the root causes of anxiety and depression by addressing the other challenges set forth today would also alleviate mental health challenges.



Challenges in Coordination and Connection among WRAs and WHRDs

WRAs and WHRDs largely agreed on the need to rebuild connections and networks with other Afghan WRAs and WHRDs inside and outside Afghanistan in order to advance the Afghan women's rights movement effectively. They expressed a wish to rebuild alliances and networks with international women's rights movements and organisations, and to connect to decision-makers in the host country to direct their attention towards the situation in Afghanistan.



The first thing that I really emphasise this is the advocacy work that the international communities do. The feminist organisations, The human rights organisations. They can easily a connect a network with many other organisations in different parts of the world and they can coordinate... ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in Sweden

Participants also emphasised the lack of a coherent structure and registered umbrella organisations to bring together WRAs and WHRDs dispersed across regions as refugees and asylum seekers. They feel frustrated at their inability to coordinate with each other, develop a coherent approach to advocacy and support for the movement, build power together, or solicit funds for their work. Whether through a platform, network or formal organisation, Afghan WRAs and WHRDs are seeking an Afghan-led, diverse and inclusive mechanism to channel their energies and efforts, manage their work, provide direction, amplify their activism and support them in continuing their work in a legal format.

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In terms of continuing activities, including liaising with civil society and women's rights activists inside Afghanistan, we need a network, ... an institution and ... management where women have clear needs and a clear line...and there should be... management. We want... general mobilization and cohesion. ”

– Afghan WRA/WHRD based in United Arab Emirates



Afghan WRAs/WHRDs want to lead and control the direction of the movement in a coherent manner rather than participating within often duplicative and separate initiatives by states, INGOs and other networks. They emphasise that they will need financial, technical and emotional support to establish such a coordination mechanism given their current personal challenges and tumultuous resettlement status. However, they deeply desire the space to exist, connect and coordinate amongst themselves without the presence of other actors. The way forward for the Afghan women's rights movement must be decided and led by Afghan women.

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We call on the international community to help Afghan women, both inside and outside Afghanistan, determine their own destiny, and become masters on their own two feet, able to defend their rights and use their expertise. Unfortunately, the expertise and experience of Afghan women have all been razed to the ground.

– Interviewee based in UAE



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Recommendations for Sustaining the Afghan Women's Rights Movement Outside of Afghanistan

Overarching Principles and Themes for Recommendations:

To sustain the Afghan women's rights movement and achieve its objectives, decision-makers must actively seek and act upon input and leadership from Afghan women and WHRDs inside and outside of Afghanistan.

Donors and international organisations must avoid duplication of efforts and instead support the coordination and solidarity of Afghan women and WHRDs amongst themselves.

The personal and professional challenges facing Afghan WHRDs are intimately related. Therefore, to sustain the Afghan women's rights movement, personal challenges must be addressed to support the mental health and personal capacity of Afghan WHRDs outside of Afghanistan.

Recommendations for Afghan WRAs and WHRDs outside Afghanistan:

Recommendation 1.1: Utilise engagement opportunities with international women's rights organisations and feminist movements through mapping and networking projects.

Recommendation 1.2: Utilise social media and access to media to amplify Afghan women's voices from the grassroots level.

Recommendation 1.3: Establish, sustain, and participate in alliances with the international community, donors, and feminist movements around the world to enable and advance Afghan-led women's rights movements and Afghan feminist movements inside and outside Afghanistan.

Recommendation 1.4: Establish and lead a global coordination mechanism to demonstrate and cultivate Afghan WRA/WHRD movement solidarity, solicit and manage funding for advocacy and programming for Afghan women's rights movement, and to lead strategy among INGOs, stakeholders and feminist/human rights organisations.

Recommendations to states, INGOs and other donors:

2) Avoiding duplication and compartmentalisation:

Recommendation 2.1: While centering diversity and intersectionality in their support to Afghan WHRDs, States, INGOs and other donors should avoid duplication of efforts (including regarding funding, the creation of new platforms with Afghan activists, etc.), should ensure regular communication with Afghan activists and between themselves to avoid such duplication and instead support and prioritise Afghan WHRD-led coordination mechanisms and platforms for engagement.

Recommendation 2.2: States, INGOs and other donors should ensure that Afghan WHRDs and other local actors lead the (re)design of coordination structures from the start. New initiatives should complement local efforts rather than create parallel processes, which traditionally keep power in the hands of UN entities and INGOs.

Recommendation 2.3: INGOs, donors, states, and multilateral institutions and agencies should provide flexible, long-term funding and technical support toward the establishment of an Afghan WHRD-led umbrella mechanism.

Recommendation 2.4: Host countries should ensure that their immigration and asylum laws, policies and practices – including regarding the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees to work, to social security, to child-care, to the right to health, to freedom of movement (e.g. for travelling) are gender-responsive, do not hinder and actually support Afghan WRAs and WHRDs' capacity to continue their activism in a safe and enabling environment. Host countries of Afghan WRAs and WHRDs should ensure that they are fully able to exercise their right to freedom of association for instance regarding their ability to directly receive funding from donors, to create and register new civil society structures led by Afghan WRAs and WHRDs themselves and to travel without restrictions to continue their civil society work.

3) Financial challenges:

Recommendation 3.1: Donors should resume funding of human rights, women's rights and/or empowerment projects to Afghan women-led organisations that have been put on hold and which can be coordinated remotely and ensure that funding is long-term (multi-year), unrestricted, and flexible so as to support payment of staff that may still be operating inside Afghanistan as well as staff, WRAs, and WHRDs that may be coordinating and/or participating in work outside of Afghanistan.

Recommendation 3.2: Host countries should ensure that their immigration policies and services enable and support Afghan refugees and asylum seekers to seek and hold work within the country and in international roles, including reducing the bureaucratic barriers to work such as personal documentation and identification requirements and untenable costs and paperwork to re-register their organisations within the host country.

Recommendation 3.3: Host countries and respective financial and banking institutions should review policies and services around economic integration, financial inclusion and banking to ensure that Afghan WHRD refugees and asylum seekers are able to open new accounts and fully access their existing personal accounts, for example by lifting restrictive withdrawal limits, providing financial services and technical assistance on country-specific financial literacy, and enabling transfers to and from Afghanistan including through online banking, cash transfer, and flexible accounts.

Recommendation 3.4: Where sanctions and de-risking are directly or indirectly causing barriers to enacting economic integration and banking access policies and practices for Afghan refugees and asylum seekers, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and Western countries should undertake measures that reduce the blanket effect of Taliban sanctions (UNSCR 1988), better provide guidance to and support banks in identifying where humanitarian exemptions (UNSCR 2615) may support certain transfers and activities, and prioritise a solution to the liquidity crisis in Afghanistan which includes unfreezing Afghan private assets currently being held outside of the country (approximately USD 1 billion).

Recommendation 3.5: UNHCR, states, and private entities should explore partnerships and alternative banking tools and platforms to enable mobile and digital solutions to banking and financial service access challenges and trainings in regional and national financial literacy and related trainings for Afghan WRAs and WHRDs who often don't have national identification, documentation, or residency details.

Recommendation 3.6: States, donors, and INGOs should continue to make flexible, expedited emergency funds available and accessible to individual Afghan WRAs and WHRDs within or outside Afghanistan to support a broad scope of their individual needs including their visa and resettlement processes, basic livelihood needs, connectivity devices and internet, and advocacy activities.

4) Resettlement processes and policies:

Recommendation 4.1: Host countries should advance policies and actions that advance transparency and expedition of refugee and asylum seeker settlement and family reunification processes for Afghans in transit and in host locations.

Recommendation 4.2: Host countries should take all necessary measures to eliminate discrimination in law and practice against Afghan asylum seekers and refugees including by ensuring equity in resettlement processes for instance through equity in rates of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers being accepted and welcomed into the host country and equality in fees for visa applications for Afghans.

Recommendation 4.3: To address the high costs of visas and processing in some host countries and regions, host countries should offer waivers for fees for refugees and asylum seekers.

Recommendation 4.4: Host countries and global refugee, resettlement, and asylum networks and agencies should leverage and allocate resources to Afghan-led diaspora organisations based within host countries who can act as resources to ease the resettlement experience and support in providing culturally-sensitive and gender-responsive support and services for Afghan WRAs and WHRDs.

Recommendation 4.5: International resettlement and women's rights organisations should expand their immigration and resettlement advisory and support services or initiate new projects to raise awareness and provide guidance to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers on how Afghan WRAs and WHRDs can continue their advocacy and activism activities safely and legally within the parameters of their immigration and/or refugee status in their transit and host countries including around right to work and travel guidelines.

Recommendation 4.6: International resettlement and human rights organisations should advocate for and provide accessible and low-barrier cash support to refugees and asylum seekers to pursue and navigate visa applications and documentation throughout their resettlement journey.

Recommendation 4.7: International resettlement and international women's rights and feminist organisations should engage with host countries including through the UN, other multilateral institutions and agencies, the EU, national governments and their competent authorities, to advocate for the support of policies and actions that advance transparency and expedition of refugee settlement and family reunification processes for Afghans in transit and in host locations.

Recommendation 4.8: International resettlement and women's rights organisations should expand their immigration and resettlement services or initiate new projects to raise awareness and provide guidance to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers on legal guidelines for Afghan WRAs and WHRDs to continue safe and legal engagement in advocacy and activism within their transit and host countries.

5) Security:

Recommendation 5.1: The international community and entities engaging with Afghanistan's de facto authorities should sustain political and diplomatic pressure on them regarding the respect and protection of human rights particularly of women's and girls' rights, with specific scrutiny on security for civil society and women's rights organisations in Afghanistan and for the protection of women's right to work in the humanitarian, development and human rights sectors. This can include ensuring that diplomatic, UN, and INGO delegations continue meeting with women's rights organisations, WRAs, and WHRDs within Afghanistan and allocating funding to civil society groups focused on this work to shift power, recognition, and resources to these actors.

Recommendation 5.2: Host countries and private sector stakeholders should provide safe, secure, and accessible internet access for refugees and asylum seekers so that Afghan WRAs and WHRDs can maintain their connection with families and colleagues still in Afghanistan and connect with other advocates and activists without fear of tracking and retribution by Afghanistan's de facto authorities or host country authorities.

Recommendation 5.3: States, INGOs, and private sector stakeholders should provide funding to support safe, secure, and accessible internet access for Afghan WRAs and WHRDs, including those in refugee camps or detention centers, including funding for training on digital security and funding for communication devices such as laptops and phones.

6) Mental health and psychosocial support:

Recommendation 6.1: Host countries and international funders should fund and/or expand mental health and psychosocial services and projects to address the ongoing mental health issues of Afghan WRAs and WHRDs, including through direct remote and in-person, non-discriminatory, trauma-informed, gender- and culturally responsive service delivery that is accessible both remotely and in-person- including within camps.

Recommendation 6.2: Refugee camp management and camp service providers should create safe, and particularly safe-for-women and children, spaces for recreation and community within camp spaces for Afghan WRAs and WHRDs to connect with others and to boost their mental health during their stays in camp settings.



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