

October 29, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

This month marks the 20th anniversary of the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. This landmark resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict recovery. The UN Security Council resolution also stresses the importance of women's full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security.

It is in recognition of this important anniversary that we write to you today, calling on you to ensure that women play an active role in the intra-Afghan peace negotiations and to make clear to all parties that the U.S. government expects the Afghan and Taliban leaders to preserve and promote the rights of women and girls during and following a negotiated peace agreement. This message aligns with commitments the U.S. government has already made when, on October 2017, you signed into law the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, authored by one of us and passed by Congress with broad bipartisan support.

The relationship between women, peace and security is irrefutable. Decades of data support the fact that there is a direct correlation between the rights and empowerment of women and a country's stability and ability to avoid future conflict. We know that women's participation in peace negotiations increases the likelihood of their success, their involvement in post-conflict recovery lowers the risk of relapsed conflict, and that gender inequality increases the risk of terrorism and instability.¹ In a September 2020 open letter, 26 former presidents and prime ministers, and 34 foreign ministers—including former U.S. Secretaries of State Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, Madeleine Albright, Hillary Clinton and John Kerry—affirmed that women's participation in the peace negotiations are crucial in the pursuit of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.² In fact, much of what these former officials and experts are calling for is already enshrined in U.S. law through the Women, Peace, and Security Act.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/05/opinions/women-should-be-at-the-center-of-afghan-peace-talks-bigio-cleveland/index.html>

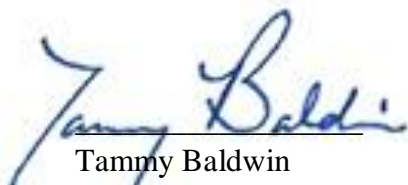
² <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/an-open-letter-from-world-leaders-calling-for-afghan-womens-meaningful-participation-in-the-peace-process/>


We call on you to ensure a lasting peace in Afghanistan by holding true to the intent and implementation of both UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security Act. Specifically, we make the following recommendations:

1. Publicly declare the U.S. government's full support for Afghan women's leadership in the peace process and in Afghanistan's recovery, for the preservation of women's rights currently enshrined in the Afghan constitution; further, that the U.S. government will not support any part of the negotiation that would sacrifice the rights of women and girls.
2. Demand that the Afghan Government and the Taliban increase women's meaningful participation in intra-Afghan peace talks, and in implementation of a potential peace agreement; stress that any agreement preserves women's rights and liberties and reflects the perspectives of Afghan women and youth—who have a vital role in Afghanistan's future.
3. Require the Taliban, during ongoing peace negotiations, to articulate its views and understanding of women's rights, education and role in society.
4. Support lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan through continued U.S. foreign assistance, conditional upon certification that there is:
 - a. active participation of women leaders and women-led civil society organizations in the implementation of any intra-Afghan peace agreement;
 - b. preservation and active promotion of the rights of women and girls as currently enshrined in the Afghan constitution and that any future changes to the Afghan constitution also protect the rights of women and girls; and
 - c. establishment and implementation of a legitimate monitoring mechanism for ensuring the maintenance of women's rights (such a mechanism should be outlined in the peace agreement).

The lives and opportunities of half of Afghanistan's population, and the sacrifice that U.S. and allied servicemembers have made in Afghanistan, are too important to not prioritize women and girls' rights and leadership in a future Afghanistan. It is not enough to simply state that this is best left to the two parties in the intra-Afghan peace process. The United States can and should ensure that women are substantively involved in the peace process and that their rights are preserved moving forward.

Sincerely,


Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

_____/s/
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

_____/s/
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

_____/s/
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

_____/s/
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

_____/s/
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

_____/s/
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

_____/s/
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

_____/s/
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

_____/s/
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

_____/s/
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
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The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
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The Honorable Zalmay Khalilzad
Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation
U.S. Department of State
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