



Dear readers,

The Law prohibiting violence against women in Afghanistan was recently approved by the president, and the authorities were asked to enforce it. Violence against women is taking place because of some customs in the Afghan society, and it is in contrary to Islamic and International values. Fortunately, during the last two years, due to endless efforts of the related governmental institutions and the enforcement of the law which prohibits violence against women, things have changed. Undoubtedly, enactment of this law is the most important step towards respecting and supporting women's rights; however, to reach the stage where women will have all the rights that they deserve to have is still a long term goal. To reach this goal, women have a long way to go; they need to fight all the causes of violence including the economical, cultural and social factors. In addition, the formulation and implementation of specific programs and policies will also be helpful. The law about the prohibition of violence against women is indeed a clarification of article 24 and article 54 of the constitution. Article 24 of the Constitution talks about freedom as a natural right of human beings and clarifies that people can use their right of freedom to do whatever they want only if their actions do not harm the public. On the other hand, it is the government's duty to protect freedom. Thus the government enacted this law to protect women's rights and human dignity. The law, with four term and 44 articles, was approved by the president after being studied based on the Islamic law by the Ministry of Justice and the judicial courts. The law addresses issues such as women's rights, murder, rape, physical confrontations, and so on. With the enactment of this law, the rate of rape, suicide-murder, sexual abuse, running away from home, and a lot of other legal problems will find a significant decrease in number.

Manizha Bakhtari,

## Governor Abdul Haq Shafaq on an Official visit to Norway



Photo: Afghanistan Embassy Oslo

Governor of Faryab Abdul Haq Shafaq, arrived in Oslo for an official visit on Tuesday 18th April 2010, to hold meetings with Mr. Jonas Gahr-Støre Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norwegian Minister of Defence Grete Faremo, Norwegian Provincial Reconstruction team-commander Rune Solberg, Mayor of Oslo Fabian Stang, Former head of Norwegian Provincial Reconstruction team, Assistance Director General Erik Hansen, Special Advisor Axel Christopher Mykleby, Governor of Oslo and Akershus counties, participate in the seminar at the Norwegian Atlantic Committee and visited the members of parliament at Stortinget. The Governor of Faryab thanked the Norwegian people and government for their support provided to people of Afghanistan over the past eight years. Elaborating on the developments in Faryab province he said, even though the security situation in our country was challenging, but Faryab province with the assists of our alliances achieved a lot in providing health care, improving education system, providing security to the civilians and confronting the narcotics issue. The Norwegian authorities reiterated the continuation of their country's support for Afghanistan in the long run.

They said Norway is going to stand side by side with the Afghan people and Government to tackle the challenges that Afghanistan is facing together with their international allies.

Currently, Norway is the third largest contributor in Europe after United Kingdom and Germany in Afghanistan's reconstruction effort.

The Norwegian Atlantic Committee held a seminar on 21th April 2010, for the Governor of Faryab province to highlight the current situation over there. At the beginning the Governor of Faryab Abdul Haq Shafaq, thanked the Norwegian Atlantic Committee for organizing such an event, and presented his gratitude to the Norwegian government and people for their generous contribution towards reconstructing of Faryab province and over all in Afghanistan. The Governor also had a briefly speech on social, economical, political, terrorism and drugs problem in Faryab province. The Governor emphasized that, over the past eight years, the government of Afghanistan and Norwegian provisional Reconstruction Teams together achieved important results in Faryab province.

Elaborating on the achievements in Faryab province he said "we have started everything in Faryab from scratch and now through your contributions around 24,000 students are going to primary and secondary schools, including 10,000 girls. In last two years we constructed 9 vocational training centers for girls which we are looking forward to build 16 more in deferent districts, we brought the opium cultivation to 0%, asphalted around 1900 km of roads, very soon Faryab will have an airport according to the international standards. We trained around 10,000 police officers, violence against women decreased by 52% in last two years.

The Governor emphasized that it is a big achievements but not enough, because we preserve more." He said "The key is to continue along the course we have taken. To do otherwise, would be to take the wrong turning at this critical point."

## A strong railway system will pick up Afghanistan's economy



Being a landlocked country, Afghanistan depends primarily on transit facilities from its neighbors for its international trade. The country lacks an effective railway system, and relies on roads as the mainstay of its transport system. This factor drives up transportation costs and also adds to the difficulty of transport system of the country.

Therefore an effective and well established railway system will enable Afghanistan to have better opportunities, greater and easy access to more International business markets. In order to improve Afghan economy and decrease the country's dependency on the neighboring countries, Afghanistan needs to have an extensive railway system.



Afghanistan's Minister of Finance with Asian Development Bank's President

Thus the governments of Afghanistan with the help of International community already started laying railway tracks across Northern provinces' rolling grassland.

This project has been funded by the Manila-based Asian Development Bank. This railway line will link Afghanistan to Central Asia and Iran. Cities in the north like Mazar-e-Sharif can become major Afghan business and transit city.

## Japanese officials pledged \$ 1 billion to build a strong railway system in Afghanistan



Afghanistan's Finance Minister Omar Zakhelal, said "Japan has pledged \$1 billion to construct a railway system in Afghanistan." "Over the past five years, Japan had donated \$5 billion for the development of various sectors, but this time Afghanistan had specifically requested money for the construction of an effective railway system, which would be built from Balkh to western Herat province" Afghanistan's Finance Minister said. The Finance Minister Omar Zakhelal also pointed out the railway which would link up Afghanistan to Central Asia would be a great economic boom for the region.

## 90 percent of people in Faryab Province have access to electrical energy

Officials from Afghanistan said "around 6,000 families in Shirin Tagab district of western Faryab province, where Norwegian Provincial Reconstruction Teams are based, were provided electricity. Governor's spokesman Ahmad Javed Bidar said to the reporters that the facility cost the Government of Afghanistan around 19 million afghanis.



Mr. Bidar pointed out, through the new electricity centers 90 percent of the people in the area got access to the electrical power. Over all at the moment eight districts in the province have access to electricity.

## Afghan woman was honored as refugee woman of the year by the Finnish Refugee Council



Photo: Anne Heinonen

Nasima Razmyar has been selected as a refugee woman of the year. Finnish Refugee Council presented the award to her on Women's Day, 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2010. The aim of the annual award is to support the empowerment of refugee women and their possibilities to make their own decisions in new life circumstances. Nasima Razmyar a proud Afghan Woman has been successfully worked for the promotion of equality and parity in Finland among refugee communities.

### Feature Story of the Month:

- Abdul Haq Shafaq Governor of Faryab visits Norway.
- Norwegian Police/ Defence Cooperation in Afghanistan



## Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg visits Afghanistan

Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway visited Afghanistan on 17 May 2010. During his visit to Afghanistan, Prime Minister Stoltenberg met President Hamid Karzai and different governmental authorities. He also, visited Norwegian arm forces based in Meymana Provincial Reconstruction team in Faryab Province. Prime Minister Stoltenberg assured the government and people of Afghanistan for long term Norwegian assistance and support for reconstruction of Afghanistan.



President Hamid Karzai met Prime Minister Stoltenberg on Monday 17 May 2010, in the Presidential Palace in Kabul and discussed on several issues including expansion of bilateral relations between two countries and commitment of Norway towards the reconstruction process of Afghanistan. President Karzai welcomed Prime Minister Stoltenberg to Kabul and thanked the Norwegian government and people for their generous contributions and support towards the development of Afghanistan. Prime Minister Stoltenberg said Norway helps Afghanistan with \$124 million annually, placing Norway

the third largest contributor to Afghanistan after Britain and Germany in European Union.

Prime Minister Stoltenberg said, his country will continue its support to the government of Afghanistan in their efforts to build stronger security institutions, promote democracy and ensure human rights. During their meeting, they discussed the upcoming Peace Jirga, Kabul Conference and Parliamentary elections.

## Norwegian Police/Defence Cooperation in Afghanistan

According to TV2.no Norwegian police trainers and troops are working together in Afghanistan for the first time with in a joint training program at the Rena Military Base in Norway.

The international police effort in Afghanistan has not been particularly successful and Norway will now redeploy its police officers from Kabul to Faryab province where Norway's military contingent is based. Norwegian police trainers have been operating in Kabul for 7 years. During this time, numerous reports have concluded that the system is not working well.



Police Inspector Steinar Aune at the international section of the Police Directorate, says that Norway's police mentors have found the work very frustrating, but many of the major international players are now "starting to find their form" and beginning to better coordinate their efforts and agree about who should do what. Steinar Aune has spent 14 months in Afghanistan and is now training police mentors for deployment in Faryab. Aune says this represents an acknowledgment that there is now more focus on delivery.



Faryab Province Northern Afghanistan

He reckons that if coordination improves and the effort is geographically oriented then results will be more measurable and it will be easier to see whether or not it is working. As Justice Minister Knut Storberget, recently back from a visit to Afghanistan, says the Norwegian police effort must continue despite there have been problems in the past. Storberget believes that success in Afghanistan totally depends in acquiring sustainable and durable security, and the Afghan police must stand on their own feet in future, so it is important to give them as much help as possible.

## Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Carl Bildt, visits Afghanistan



Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Carl Bildt, has travelled to Afghanistan for discussions on the new European focus concerning the policy for the country's development. During his visit, Mr. Bildt visited Kabul and the Northern city of Mazar-Sahrif where Sweden's Provincial Reconstruction Team is based.

Throughout his visit to Afghanistan, Carl Bildt Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden met President Hamid Karzai, Mr. Younis Qanooni Speaker of the lower House, Dr. Zalmai Rassoul Minister of Foreign Affairs and Atta Mohammad Noor governor of Balkh province.

During his meeting with Afghan officials Carl Bildt Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, discussed various issues of mutual interest including expanding and strengthening of bilateral relations between Sweden and Afghanistan. In the meeting with President Hamid Karzai, discussions were mainly focused on Peace Jirga, Kabul Conference.

Minister Foreign Affairs of Sweden acknowledged the achievements of the people and government of Afghanistan and said "Sweden will continue to assist Afghanistan in the reconstruction process."

## Eight Norwegian Soldiers were injured in Northern Afghanistan

In reaction to the tragic news on the wound of eight Norwegian soldiers on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2010, the Embassy of Afghanistan in Norway made the following statement: "It was deeply saddening to learn that Norwegian soldiers came under attack by small arms fire and grenades when they were on patrol in the town of Ghowmach in Northern Afghanistan. Your loved ones are part of an essential task which helps to ensure that civilians are not harmed.



Today, it is with a heavy heart I would like to express that the people of Afghanistan will always appreciate the sacrifices by Norwegian soldiers who serves proudly their own country and help the people of Afghanistan to move closer to the long cherished dream of peace, prosperity and democracy."

I would like to send my deepest sympathies and regrets to the family and friends of the eight wounded soldiers for the injury they have incurred. Please allow me to convey the gratitude of all Afghans, to the sacrifices your loved ones have made. Please know that their sacrifices will never be forgotten by Afghans and through their courage and bravery, a better, and more prosperous Afghanistan is being built.

Manizha Bakhtari,

## Oslo Freedom Forum Conference 2010



Photo: Afghanistan Embassy Oslo

The Oslo Freedom Forum is an intimate gathering where leaders who are transforming the world, present effective solutions and inspiring testimonies that impact human rights and freedom. From Afghanistan, Dr Sima Samar, the chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Special Reporter on the situation of human rights in Sudan, has participated in the Oslo Freedom Forum Conference, The 2010 event was held in April 26-29 in Oslo, Norway. In her speech Dr. Sima Samar, at the Conference, explained how three decades of war and invasion have forced Afghan society to become very conservative and inhospitable toward human rights and especially the rights of women. Dr. Sima Samar compared Afghanistan's current situation with the time she was in school, almost 31 years ago, she explained there were no problem those days towards co-educational system in Afghanistan. In today's Afghanistan, she said, such a thought is unimaginable. Dr. Sima Samar notified the participants in the conference how after the Soviet invasion, many Afghans rallied around religious conservatives and began to follow their lead both militarily and socially.

Over all At the Oslo Freedom Forum Conference, speakers including Dr. Sima Samar shared their diverse perspectives and expertise.

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