

Security Council Debate on Women, Peace and Security

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Statement by H.E. Zahir Tanin Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations Security Council Debate on Women, Peace and Security

Thank you Madam President. I would like to thank Jordan for convening this important debate, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin for their briefings this morning, and the Secretary-General for his recent report on conflict-related sexual violence.

Madam President,

Today we have heard in depth about the horrific prevalence of sexual violence in conflict all over the world. Ms. Allamin and others' heart wrenching accounts have demonstrated the crippling effect of sexual violence on women's ability to lead healthy and productive lives, on their psychological, emotional and physical well-being, and on their families and communities. It is alarming, as the Secretary-General noted in his report, that violence against women has become a systematic pattern in conflict zones, and to see the suffering of women everywhere multiplied by the unprecedented increase in violence and a new wave extremism around the world.

In Afghanistan, almost 40 years of war, terrorism and violent extremism created deep fissures in the very fabric of our society, shredded human relationships, restricted access to services and justice, and undermined the state's capacity to protect its citizens. Women have been the biggest victims of the conflict, and their suffering has been compounded by a culture of discrimination against women. Today, the Taliban and other extremists continue to use sexual violence as a tool not only to pursue their destructive ends and their campaign of terror and fear but also to weaken communities, the rule of law and long-established traditional values.

Madam President,

We recognize the need to hold all perpetrators of violence against women to account no matter where they come from or with what group they are affiliated. A few weeks ago my country was appalled to see young men commit egregious violence against an innocent woman, Farkhunda, who was beaten and then burned in one of the most brutal and inhuman killings in our history.

Farkhunda's name has become a powerful symbol of the plight of the Afghan women, and her story has moved the whole society to demand an end to violence against women once and for all.

The national unity government of Afghanistan is committed to ensuring the elimination of violence against women by strengthening our justice system and reinforcing and implementing legal frameworks that guarantee human, religious and constitutional rights for all Afghan citizens. As

President Ashraf Ghani, has said, “There is no point talking about how much we respect women’s honor if we let rape go unpunished or allow harassment in our streets.”

Afghanistan is party to global conventions to end violence against women and has launched a Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan. Since 2009, the government has worked to implement the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law, which criminalizes 22 types of violence against women and establishes specific punitive measures for perpetrators. The government of Afghanistan has also drafted national regulation on the prevention of sexual harassment and in November 2014 launched the first-ever gender-based violence treatment protocol for the health sector in Afghanistan.

These steps are important, but ultimately combating sexual violence in Afghanistan requires a paradigm shift in the way that our society treats women. In this regard, President Ghani has called for a mental and cultural revolution across Afghan society. This requires women to play an active role in the social, economic and political life of the country, as well as commitments to educate Afghan girls. Civil society, particularly Ulema and human rights and women’s rights activists, are central to efforts to raise awareness of women’s rights and to build a foundation of collective action against the evils of violence, terror and extremism.

Madam President,

This debate today compels us not only to bear witness to the societies that suffer from violence and conflict, and to the women who have survived the horrors of sexual violence, it compels us to work together, as an international community representing the conscience of the world to ensure that even when the flames of war are still burning, women and men and all citizens can live in dignity and peace.

Thank you.

- See more at: <http://www.afghanistan-un.org/2015/04/security-council-debate-on-women-peace-and-security-2/#sthash.LKT2aLfk.dpuf>