

## **Women's Rights, Human Rights, and Afghan Groups Urge Increased Funding for Afghanistan's Reconstruction and Security**

October 10, 2003

Dear Senator/Member of Congress:

As women's rights and human rights organizations, we are concerned that Afghanistan's reconstruction and security continue to be shortchanged. We believe that this situation jeopardizes the rights of Afghan women and girls as well as the country's future. While the Bush Administration plans to increase funding for Afghanistan in FY2004, the proposed funds neither adequately make up for the small amounts of reconstruction funding thus far nor do they meet the country's needs.

The proposed \$800 million Afghanistan reconstruction supplemental spending request represents less than 1% of the total \$87 billion Iraq and Afghanistan package. The \$20 billion request for Iraq reconstruction funding is 25 times as large as the Afghanistan request. This vast disparity makes no sense. Afghanistan has approximately the same population size as Iraq. The big difference is that Afghanistan is poorer and has suffered more destruction over 23 years of war. These realities argue for more – not fewer – reconstruction resources.

In Iraq, the Bush Administration has proposed spending \$2.1 billion for public safety, \$2.1 billion for national security, \$919 million for a judicial system, \$5.7 billion for the electrical system, \$2.1 billion for the oil system, \$4.6 billion for water and sanitation, \$470 for housing and construction, \$835 million for transportation and communications, and \$850 million for health care.

But for Afghanistan there are no funds requested for electrical systems, water and sanitation systems, housing construction, or communications, although the needs for all of these services are great. And, the funding for Afghanistan in other areas is very low – a mere \$30 million for health care, only \$10 million for the judicial system, and just \$105 million for road construction.

President Bush has talked about modeling reconstruction efforts on the Marshall Plan. The Iraq proposal at least contains the outlines of a Marshall Plan. The Afghanistan proposal does not even come close.

The transitional government in Afghanistan estimates that between \$20-30 billion is needed over the next five years. In other post-conflict settings, an average of \$250 per person was spent per year in aid. But in Afghanistan, donors spent only \$64 per person in 2002. In Afghanistan, we should be striving to help build a country with a real economy and a political system based on democratic principles. Merely restoring Afghanistan to a subsistence economy in which extremists can again prosper will neither improve the status of women nor provide global security.

We urge you to re-evaluate these spending priorities. House Chairman Young's mark to increase reconstruction funding for Afghanistan by \$400 million is a step in the right direction. But billions more in funds must be shifted towards Afghanistan, particularly in the areas of education, health care, roads, housing, water and sanitation, electrical system, judicial reform, and women's rights and human rights.

Moreover, we respectfully request that money to be earmarked for those Afghan institutions whose mission it is to promote women's rights and human rights. We ask that an additional \$10 million be appropriated for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, \$24 million for the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and \$3 million for the Judicial Reform Commission. Women and girls continue to face severe hardship and violations of their rights in Afghanistan. These institutions need resources to carry out their work throughout the country. We also urge designating \$300 million for women's programs in the area of political rights and human rights, health care, education and training, and security, protection and shelters.

Finally, we ask for your support for expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. By all accounts, security in Afghanistan is deteriorating, with three more girls' schools burned to the ground by extremists just a week ago. This attack brings the total to at least 30 girls' schools over the past year, with threatening leaflets against girls' education distributed at each site. Administration officials have conceded to us that the poor security situation is one of the factors delaying the construction of women's centers and other projects. With the upcoming Loya Jirga and elections, improved security – including expansion of international peacekeeping forces and their additional deployment outside of Kabul – becomes even more essential to the establishment of women's rights and democracy in the country. The Afghan Freedom Support Act of 2002 authorized \$1 billion for ISAF expansion, but President Bush did not include this expenditure in his request.

Thank you for your consideration. By increasing support for Afghanistan's reconstruction and security, the U.S. will be making a crucial investment both in the future of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls, and in global stability.

Sincerely,

Feminist Majority

National Council of Women's Organizations

US-Afghanistan Reconstruction Council

National Organization for Women

Human Rights Watch

Amnesty International USA

International Human Rights Law Group

Afghans for Civil Society

General Federation of Women's Clubs

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights

Women For Afghan Women

Women's Alliance for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan

National Association of Commissions for Women

Women's Environment and Development Organization

Ms. Foundation for Women

NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

National Peace Foundation

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Women's Business Development Center

National Women's Conference Committee

Peace X Peace

National Political Congress of Black Women

Center for Women's Global Leadership

The Center for Women Policy Studies

Equality Now