



The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Human Rights Council

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Mr. President

Distinguished Members of the committee,

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is pleased to present its report on the general situation of human rights for the second cycle of Universal Periodic Review at the 18th session of the UPR Working Group.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Afghanistan stands committed to promoting and protecting human rights, in particular women's and children rights. This commitment is evident at national level in the provisions of the Constitution and various laws, policies and plans that have been enacted in accordance with our constitution and international obligations.

Our Government has taken major steps to work pragmatically on the implementation of human rights Conventions, and to prepare and present national reports on the status of their implementation.

Afghanistan went through the first cycle of UPR in May 2009, and received 143 recommendations. We declared our support to most of these recommendations, rejecting only 10 of them, and have taken them seriously by undertaking a number of initiatives in various ministries and institutions in Afghanistan.

As a testimony to the special importance that the Government attaches to human rights we can mention the participation of H.E Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan at the 22nd session of the Human Right Council last year and the recent discussion H.E

President Hamid Karzai had with Ms. Navi Pillay, the High Commissioner of Human Rights during her visit to Afghanistan.

To prepare the report for the second cycle of Universal Periodic Review, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) established a national structure, where civil society and human rights institutions were involved in the process of data collection and report analysis. The report was prepared, based on an action plan the government had created for the follow up of the recommendations in 2012.

In my speech, I will touch upon the most important achievements and challenges on issues of human rights in Afghanistan:

Civil and political rights

The GIROA has actively promoted and protected civil and political rights in Afghanistan. Our country is a good example in the region for promoting freedom of speech, freedom of the media and associations with no censorship.

Today we have more than 55 TV channels, 150 radio stations and more than 1000 publications.

The President of Afghanistan constantly meets with national and international media, human rights activist as well as women's rights defenders. The High Council of Media composed of civil society, media and the Ministry of Information and Culture is working to protect the rights and activities of media and journalists.

Today we are preparing for important presidential and local elections. We have invited international observers to monitor the process of fair and free election in Afghanistan. According to

Independent Election Commission, ^{during} ~~only~~ this ^{Afghan} year there are 3,305,799 citizens who have received voting cards to participate in the election. 1,140,854 are women. Human rights organisations and civil society activists will closely monitor the upcoming elections.

The political oppositions freely organise their political programmes without interference of the government. There are 59 registered political parties today.

Cultural, Economical and Social Rights

The GIRoA is committed to provide and protect the economic, social and cultural rights of its citizens. Afghan citizens have access to health care, education, employment, business firms and trade union.

Right to education:

According to the Constitution, education is the right of all citizens, provided free of charge and in native languages up to BA level.

Based on recent data, Afghanistan has carried out the following activities from 2009 – 2013 to improve the quality and quantity of education:

1. The increase in construction of schools from (11,460) schools in 2009 to (15,169) in 2013 out of which (2,267) are allocated to girls;
2. The number of students increased from (6,504,715) in 2009 to (8,643,940) in 2013, of whom 3,353,991 are female students;

3. Printing (135 m) books from 2009- 2013 with a total cost of 90 million dollars;
4. The number of enrolled students in vocational schools increased from (18,296) in 2009 to (71,625) in 2013, 11% of whom are female;
5. The number of training centres for illiterates increased from (20,031) in 2009 to (26,486) in 2013 providing courses to (563,460) students:
6. Total enrolment in higher education increased from 52,000 in 2009 to 220,000 in 2013.

Right to health:

In accordance with the Constitution, the Government is duty bound to provide free health services for all Afghan citizens without any discrimination.

In respect to health services, various policies and strategies have been developed, the most important examples are: development of public health vision entitled "Health for All Afghans" for 2012 – 2020; preparation of five-year implementation health program or (System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition) for 2013 – 2018; drafting Health and Human Rights Strategy and Gender Strategy; and Policy on Funding Health in Afghanistan for 2012 – 2020

Recent data indicates a substantial improvement in the health sector, for example, mortality rate of 1600 deaths per 100,000 live births has dropped to 327 deaths per 100,000. Under 5 years, child mortality rate of 257 deaths per 1000 has reduced to 97 deaths per 1000. Under one year child mortality rate of 152 deaths per ~~100,000~~ is reduced to 77 deaths per a ~~100,000~~.

~~10,000~~
1,000

~~10,000~~
1,000

46% infants receive measles vaccination and polio vaccination has increased from 50 percent to 95 percent. ?

However, the main challenge and obstacle is lack of security in some of the remote areas of Afghanistan. The terrorist groups target schools, hospitals and other public delivery institutions. Teachers, health workers, women programme activists, and children care staff are considered to be the most targeted groups.

Compliance of national laws with international human rights treaties

The GIRoA continues the process of legal reforms in the light of the International Conventions that Afghanistan has ratified. We have reviewed 73 laws, 34 regulations and 27 strategies including the Civil Code; Penal Code; Juveniles Code; Law on Elimination of Violence against Women; Citizenship Law and dozens of other laws.

Protection and promotion of women rights and gender equality

Women Rights and Gender Equality remain a top priority. Afghan women make up 27 percent of legislators in the Parliament. Women occupy 25% government jobs, including 9% at decision making level. Girls make up about 40 percent of the nearly 9 million children going to school in Afghanistan today. 30% school teachers and 15% of university lecturers are women. Afghan women make up 24% of the health sector, 5% in security, 20% in higher education, 35% in vocational trainings, and 30% in

agriculture. At least 50% are a force behind Afghanistan's vibrant independent media and active civil society groups.

In addition to women's greater participation in the abovementioned sectors, the GIRoA has adopted various measures for protection of women and prevention of violence against them, in the past four years. The main of which include 1) adoption of EAW Law, 2) establishment of Special EAW Prosecution Offices, 3) establishment of High EAW commission and expansion of its provincial offices in 23 provinces, 4) establishment of 16 protection centres/shelters for women victims of family violence, 5) establishment of departments of women affairs in 32 provinces, 6) establishment of gender units in 22 ministries, and 7) establishment of gender and human rights unit within police academy.

The government also works to develop a national action plan on women, peace and security for post 2014 to adopt additional measures for greater participation and protection of women, prevention of violence against women and to provide relief and recovery services.

Mr. President;

GIRoA has adopted appropriate measures to ensure that children are protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment based on the legislative provisions of Labor Law, Juvenile Code, Human Trafficking Law, and policy provisions and activities of National Strategy on Protection of Children, National Strategy for Children at Risk, and the National Action Plan on Children in Armed Conflicts. Afghanistan also received a 15 point road map on further implementation of the National Action Plan on Children in Armed Conflicts from the United Nations that the government is going to approve and implement soon. Children protection units

have been established in many provinces of Afghanistan and child recruitment in the security sector has reached to zero.

GIRoA continues to stand firm to fight corruption. Measures such as adoption of the Anti-Corruption Law and establishment of Civil and Military Anti-Corruption Prosecution Units and Tribunals, and other anti-corruption actions have been taken.

The Constitution prohibits torture, inhuman, humiliating and cruel punishment under any circumstances. In order to track and access torture related cases, Human Rights Units and Supervisory Boards have been established in the Ministry of Interior Affairs, National Directorate of Security, and the Ministry of Defense. The preparation of the 2nd report of Afghanistan on the International Conventions against Torture (CAT) is being processed and will be presented to the monitoring mechanism of the United Nations in September 2014.

Challenges

In spite of all these measures Afghanistan still faces a number of challenges which have slowed down our progress in the area of human rights and the implementation of transitional justice due to terrorism, extremism, narcotics and insecurity in some parts of the country. As we have long argued these challenges are interconnected with regional and international dimensions. In addition, poverty and corruption have made it difficult to tackle these challenges easily.

Scarcity of resources to finance nationwide welfare programmes, in particular for the most vulnerable people, including disabled, children and women, is another challenge.

Conclusion

Afghanistan is a war-torn country that has achieved enormous gains and successes in past 12 years in various areas, including human rights that have come in the face of exceptionally tough conditions and persistent ongoing challenges. We are strongly determined to take effective measures in collaboration with international community to strengthen its capability. Both the Government and People of Afghanistan, especially our vibrant civil society and independent media have the will, the courage, and the determination to preserve, protect, expand and improve the rights and freedoms of our citizen, especially those of women, girls and children as we take forward our nations' difficult but clear and exciting journey towards stronger democracy, better security, development and prosperity.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the fact that the implementation of programmes and reforms towards promotion of human rights in Afghanistan requires cooperation and participation of all concerned governmental bodies, the civil society, and also direct cooperation and support of international community, particularly international organisations active in the area of human rights. With them on our side, we will gradually witness the greater improvement in the condition of human rights in Afghanistan.

Thank you very much.

