

The undersigned individuals and organisations, members of the Committee on the Status of Women of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations (CONGO) in consultative relations with the UN ECOSOC Geneva are profoundly concerned and wish to express their dismay at the violence to which women and girls can be subjected in Afghanistan.

We are particularly alarmed by the report of 9 December 2010 of the **United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (MANUA)**. This lists widespread harmful traditional practices – child marriage, giving away girls for dispute resolution, forced isolation in the home, exchange marriage and “honour” killings which cause suffering, humiliation and marginalization for millions of Afghan women and girls.

Such practices are grounded in discriminatory views and beliefs about the role and position of women in society. We must especially raise attention to the new Afghani Edict on Development issued by the General Administration Directorate of the Supreme Court on 26th of October 2010. This states that women and girls who run away from their own residence to a stranger’s residence, rather than to a relative’s house, security or justice departments, regardless of the fact that they are experiencing violence caused by a family member, will be condemned for committing the crime of adultery or prostitution. In the letter No. 1497/1054 of the Supreme Court, we note the remarks: “even if the running was as a result of violence and torture used by one of the family members, since this act could cause crimes like adultery and prostitutions as well, it is against the Sharia principles, therefore the act of running away from home is considered prohibited and prosecutable based on discretionary punishment.”

We strongly believe that the future of Afghan women and girls and women everywhere depends wholly on the protection and respect of human rights. The daily violations and denial of their fundamental human rights make these women particularly vulnerable. We most vehemently are against these practices and urgently ask the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council to especially be alert and vigilant in ensuring that the recommendations in the report of the MANUA be set before the Afghan government and ask that a national strategy for the implementation of the EVAW (Elimination of Violence against Women) law be put in place as a major step forward in the legal protection of women’s human rights in Afghanistan..

Signatories:

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