



## FROM THE FILMMAKERS

We've been asked how we came up with the idea for *Women, War & Peace*—as usual, it was over a meal.

In 2007, while overseeing the international current affairs series *Wide Angle* for PBS in New York City, Pam produced an interview with Iraqi-born Zainab Salbi, founder of Women for Women International. Zainab's book, *The Other Side of War*, vividly portrays what she describes as the unreported "backlines" of war, where women keep life going in the harshest of circumstances. For Pam it was a profound paradigm shift. In *Wide Angle's* six seasons on the air, war stories always seemed to focus on men and guns. "Who's doing the documentary about the other side of war?" she asked Zainab, certain that such a film must be in the works. "No one," was the reply. "We have to do something about that," said Pam.

Meanwhile, Abby and Gini were in an editing room across town working on *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, the story of how a group of Liberian women came together to bring peace to their country after years of war. As Gini and Abby looked for archival footage to tell the women's story, they found it was surprisingly scarce—yet videotape featuring combat, warlords, and the risks taken by journalists in the field was abundant. Despite the fact that every eyewitness to the events in Liberia confirmed that the women's peacebuilding work was transformative, their contributions had only intermittently—or mistakenly—been captured on tape.

A few weeks later, all three of us got together. As we recounted our strikingly similar experiences, the conversation became electric. Within minutes we were finishing each other's sentences. We all agreed that the need to address the media's blind spot for the momentous change in women's roles in conflict was great. The reporting gap was enormous, and the opportunity to do something together was compelling. We knew we were on to something—and *Women, War & Peace* was born.

From the outset, we knew that *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* would be one of five films in the series. The question immediately became: What other stories should we tell? All of us had been deeply moved by the U.N. testimony of Patrick Cammaert, a former commander of U.N. peacekeeping forces. He had observed from his own experience in multiple war zones that, "It has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in an armed conflict." So we decided to focus on the period in which that has happened—the last 20 years—when frontlines disappeared and civilians became primary targets.

The women targeted in Bosnia's war in the 1990s immediately came to mind. They, along with women who survived Rwanda's genocide, were the first women ever to testify at an international tribunal about what happened to women during war. They were also the first to successfully demand the prosecution of perpetrators of systematic

rape. Due to their willingness to step forward and take the witness stand, rape began to be seen as a war crime rather than an inevitable byproduct of conflict. When Pam began delving into the transcripts from The Hague, she came upon an extraordinary trial focusing exclusively on war crimes against women in a small town in southeastern Bosnia. The second film in the *Women, War & Peace* series, *I Came to Testify*, began to take shape.

As we were in the midst of discussing Bosnia, Gini heard a report on the radio about Secretary of State Hillary Clinton acknowledging four Afghan women who had pushed their way into a meeting in London. The international community had convened there to begin to lay the groundwork for ending the war in Afghanistan, but not a single Afghan woman had been invited. During the conference, attendees learned that peace talks with the Taliban were on the horizon. Afghan women wanted to make sure they were at the table. We decided to find out who these meeting-crashing women were and follow them. Our third film in the series, *Peace Unveiled*, was born.

We knew that another underreported issue is that today's conflicts are uprooting millions of civilians—the largest number in history—and turning them into refugees within their own countries. The majority are women. Abby had recently received an email about death threats against a Colombian human-rights lawyer working with two Afro-Colombian women to stop the seizure of their community's gold-rich land. A showdown was imminent. The women were vowing to fight to the death to avoid displacement—a fate already known to 4.5 million people in Colombia, where a modern-day gold rush is igniting land grabs across the country. Production on *The War We Are Living*, our fourth film in the series, swung into gear.

With production on four films now underway, we decided to round out the series with a final film that would rigorously explore the themes and ideas that had emerged from our global research on women and conflict. We invited Women for Women International's Zainab Salbi to participate alongside a chorus of leading experts, political leaders, and war survivors to probe the impact of today's wars on women in conflict zones. We asked them to help interpret for our viewers the oft-unexplored roles women are playing to change the rules of engagement.

To borrow a phrase from Hague prosecutor Peggy Kuo, it's our hope to "shine a spotlight on women's experience in war" with this series. With the aid of that spotlight, we hope viewers will finally be able to see what happens when we look at war as though women matter.

**from the *Women, War & Peace* Web Blog, July 20, 2011  
by Abigail E. Disney, Pamela Hogan and Gini Reticker  
Executive Producers**



## THE FILM

Changing a country's culture is an immensely challenging task, especially if the country is steeped in centuries of tradition and has a long history of successfully resisting intrusions and influences from the outside, as well as change from within. Such is the case in Afghanistan, where the women are working to secure the human and political rights of women and girls. *Peace Unveiled* tells the story of three such women who are actively engaged in efforts to ensure that women have a voice in determining Afghanistan's future.

Since the end of the Taliban government in 2001, the lives of many Afghan women have improved. The government no longer requires them to wear the *burqa*, girls can go to school, and women are working outside the home. Women have the right to vote, and the Afghan constitution allots 25 percent of the nation's 249 parliament seats to women. But, in many places, progress remains elusive. This is especially true in Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban. By early 2010, the Taliban was stronger than at any point since 2001. They denounced the gains women had made throughout parts of the country as heretical. But for women, the problem is not the Taliban alone. Crime bosses and legions of armed militias alleged to have ties to the government undermine the rule of law. Women who engage in public life put their lives at risk and prominent working women are being assassinated. No one knows who is doing the killing.

The Afghan government and the Taliban are now moving toward a peace deal that could result in women across the country losing the gains they have made. At an international conference in London in January 2010, President Hamid Karzai proposed peace talks with the Taliban. He received international support for this proposal with a promise to hold a peace *jirga*—a traditional community council—at which the Afghan people could express their views on negotiations.

The absence of Afghan women at the London Conference was striking—none had been invited. But, with the help of members of the international community, four Afghan women managed to crash the meeting. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a point of recognizing them at her press conference at the end of the proceedings.

Clinton gave Afghan women further support by helping them secure 20 percent of the seats at Karzai's *jirga*, which was held in Kabul in June 2010. However, President Karzai named two former warlords—Burhanuddin Rabbani and Rasul Sayyaf—to preside over the *jirga*, while women's participation in the proceedings was limited. In the end, the *jirga* gave Karzai the backing he needed to negotiate with the Taliban. Women did not receive any guarantee that they would be included in the negotiations.

Buttressed by the results of the *jirga*, Karzai then prepared to host representatives of 70 nations in Kabul. They were set to offer support and put their financial resources behind the Afghan-led policies. Still determined to play a role, Afghan women wanted a seat at the conference. Unable to rely on their own government, they turned to U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and his wife, Ching Eikenberry, communications director for USAID in Afghanistan, for help. Their efforts resulted in one woman, Palwasha Hassan, being invited to address the donor's meeting—the first time any Afghan woman publicly addressed the world from an Afghan stage. In her allotted three minutes of time, Hassan eloquently spoke to the strategic importance of including women in building peace in Afghanistan. But the international community failed to link their financial support for Karzai's government with a promise from him to include women in a peace council he would later appoint to broker negotiations with the Taliban.

Secretary Clinton maintained her support for the women of Afghanistan by sending Melanne Verveer, the first U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, to Afghanistan to advocate for women's representation on Karzai's peace council. Verveer's meetings with Karzai and with his advisor had limited success. When the peace council was seated in October 2010, it was dominated by warlords and religious conservatives. Of the 70 seats on the council, only nine went to women.

Women in Afghanistan face a tough battle in the days ahead. Even though leaders like Hasina Safi, who runs programs for illiterate women; Shahida Hussein, who advocates on behalf of women in Kandahar; and Shinkai Karokhail, recently re-elected to parliament, continue to fight, conditions in Afghanistan are extremely volatile. In spite of Secretary Clinton's support for women's rights, she must tread carefully and support U.S. efforts to strengthen President Karzai and the Afghan government. How the women of Afghanistan will fare in this situation is an open question. The words of Hasina Safi at the end of the film serve as a reminder and a plea: "We are part of the world ... The world has to support us."



## INDIVIDUALS FEATURED IN PEACE UNVEILED

**Hasina Safi** – executive director of the Afghan Women’s Education Center and Afghan Women’s Network (AWN) board member

**Shahida Hussein** – women’s rights advocate

**Shinkai Karokhail** – Afghan parliament member

**Palwasha Hassan** – AWN representative at the 2010 donors’ conference in Kabul

**Karl Eikenberry** – U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan

**Ching Eikenberry** – coordinator of Afghan communications for USAID; wife of Karl Eikenberry

**Melanne Verveer** – U.S. ambassador-at-large for women’s issues

**Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef** – founder and former senior member of the Taliban; served as the Afghan ambassador to Pakistan during the Taliban regime

**Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai** – advisor to President Karzai

**Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and Burhanuddin Rabbani** – former warlords now part of Karzai’s peace council

United States and the Soviet Union flowed into the country. In 1978, the accession to power of the communist-aligned People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan catapulted Afghanistan into the center of the Cold War conflict.

The communist government promoted women’s equality but was deeply repressive and unstable. In order to prop it up, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. In response, the United States government, through the Pakistani military intelligence service, covertly trained and armed thousands of hard-line anti-communist Islamic militias known as *mujahideen*, or holy fighters. The *mujahideen* had extremely conservative political ideas, especially concerning women. They recruited members from among Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, as well as internationally. One such recruit was Osama bin Laden, who came to Afghanistan from Saudi Arabia.

Over the course of ten years, one million Afghans were killed in the fighting, and millions more fled into neighboring Pakistan and Iran. Facing massive casualties, the Soviet army finally withdrew in 1989. As the Soviets retreated and U.S. funding dried up, war-ravaged Afghan society descended further into chaos. The *mujahideen* broke into factions, each supporting itself by producing opium for the international drug market, and battled for control of the country. It was not until 1996 that a Pakistan-sponsored group called the Taliban was able to take power and finally end the civil war.

The Taliban’s leaders had been trained in fundamentalist Islamic schools in Pakistan. The group savagely repressed its political and religious rivals and espoused a strict version of Islamic law, based in Pashtun tradition, which included barring women from education, health care, and the right to work or even leave the house unaccompanied by a male relative. Taliban rule lasted until 2001, when the United States invaded Afghanistan in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The Taliban regime was toppled in December of that year, and Hamid Karzai came to power with the backing of the U.S. military.

### More facts & figures about Afghanistan

**Population:** 29,835,392 (July 2011 est.) – 42% Pashtun, 27% Tajik, 9% Hazara, 9% Uzbek, 4% Aimak, 3% Turkmen, 2% Baloch, 4% Other

**Official languages:** Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashto

**Major religion:** 99% Islam (80% Sunni Muslim, 19% Shia Muslim), 1% Other

**Literacy rate:** 43.1% male, 12.6% female

**Labor force:** 78.6% agriculture, 5.7% industry, 15.7% services (FY08/09 est.)

**Life expectancy:** 45 years (men & women)

**Infant mortality rate:** 134 per 1,000 live births, second highest in the world (UNICEF).

**Maternal mortality rate:** 1,600 per 100,000 live births, second highest in the world (UNICEF). The fertility rate is 5.39 births/woman. Only 14% of women have a skilled childbirth attendant and only 12% have pre-natal care.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### History of Afghanistan

Wedged between China, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and the former Russian Empire, Afghanistan occupies a geographic region fraught with historical conflict. Sitting on strategic trade and migration routes that have been traveled for over 3,000 years, the land that is now Afghanistan has long served as a battleground for various empires, including those of Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan. Arab Muslim armies brought Islam to the region during the seventh century.

The modern history of Afghanistan dates from 1747, when Ahmad Shah Durrani unified a number of Pashtun tribes and founded a short-lived empire that stretched from Iran to Delhi, India. Since that time, the history of Afghanistan has been one of incessant foreign intervention, frequent wars, and internal political instability.

Beginning in the late 1700s, a nominally independent Afghanistan was used as a buffer state in the so-called “Great Game” between British-controlled India and the Russian Empire. British invasions during the nineteenth century resulted in two Anglo-Afghan Wars. In 1893, the Durand Line Agreement established the poorly marked and much-disputed border between Afghanistan and what later became Pakistan. Even after winning independence from Britain in a third war in 1919, Afghanistan continued to figure as a pawn in the contest between rival powers.

After independence, the country made some progress toward modernization, but attempts at reforms, especially the promotion of women’s rights, ran into stubborn opposition from powerful conservative elements in Afghan society. Afghanistan’s central state had a weak hold outside the main cities, with rival ethnic clans dominating the countryside. In the 1950s and 1960s, under the forty-year rule of Mohammad Zahir Shah, aid from both the



## Understanding Afghan Culture

Afghan culture is complex, made up of overlapping ethnic, tribal, and religious groupings with an overlay of tribal, religious, and governmental authorities. The intricacies of the Afghan way of doing things have long confounded scholars, military leaders, diplomats, and politicians, and sorting out those intricacies is not an easy task. The following is a very simplified explanation of Afghan culture, which can be a helpful starting point for understanding Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's society is characterized by numerous tribal and ethnic divisions. As the country's largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns – comprising scores of tribes and clans – have exerted a strong influence on Afghan culture and on Afghanistan's image in the world. They are known as great warriors who played Russia and England against each other during the “Great Game” of the nineteenth century. The Pashtun code of conduct, known as *Pashtunwali*, defines tribal relations and social behavior. Its tenets include, among other things, maintaining the honor of the family and protecting female family members. *Pashtunwali* is a male-dominated code that often constrains women and forces them into designated roles.

In addition to tribe and ethnicity, religion plays a strong role in Afghanistan. With a population that is 99 percent Muslim, the country has looked to Islam as another layer of authority, especially when threatened by non-Islamic outside forces. The Pashtuns are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims. Afghanistan's third-largest ethnic group, the Hazara, are mainly Shia.

The country has never had a strong central government, but has used a “bottom-up” approach to decision making and maintaining security. Afghans rely on district councils, or *shuras*, and meetings of elders, or *jirgas*, to resolve conflicts and govern society, particularly in areas outside of cities. The district-governing system is composed of mixed groups of tribal members and it is the only way most people in Afghanistan will participate in governance and security. This has been one of the greatest challenges for foreign powers that have tried to conquer and subdue Afghanistan.

### Sources:

[www.pashtoonkhwa.com/files/books/Miakhel-ImportanceOfTribalStructuresInAfghanistan.pdf](http://www.pashtoonkhwa.com/files/books/Miakhel-ImportanceOfTribalStructuresInAfghanistan.pdf)

[www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/research/mendoza.pdf](http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/research/mendoza.pdf)

[www.cal.org/co/afghan/apeop.html](http://www.cal.org/co/afghan/apeop.html)

## The Taliban: Their Origins and Goals

The Taliban is an Islamic political and military group that first emerged in 1994 in Afghanistan during a period of civil war. The name Taliban is the plural form of the Arabic word *talib*, which means student. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan drove many Afghans into refugee camps in Pakistan where they became recruits for Islamists fighting against the foreign invader. They received training at *madrassas*, or Islamic seminaries, which subscribed to the fundamentalist *Deobandi* interpretation of Islam and which were backed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the Afghan-Soviet war.

The founder and longtime leader of the Taliban is Mullah Muhammed Omar. (Reports of his death in early 2011 have been disputed by the Taliban.) Like most of the Taliban leadership, he comes from the Pashtun ethnic group in Afghanistan, and draws his religious and political ideas from a combination of *Pashtunwali* traditions and *Deobandi* fundamentalist Islam. Mullah Omar received early military support from the Pakistani military intelligence service (ISI), and funding from Saudi Arabia.

The Taliban came to power in September 1996 after several years of intense fighting between *mujahideen* factions. Weary of chaos and violence, the population welcomed the order imposed by the Taliban. Although it ended the civil war, the group never consolidated control over the entire country. In fact, only three countries granted the Taliban government diplomatic recognition: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban.

The Taliban has become known for its ultra-strict enforcement of an extremely conservative version of Islam. They subscribe to a harsh anti-modern ideology that has led them to outlaw many previously legal activities. They also believe that Shia Muslims are not actually Muslims.

The Taliban are almost universally condemned by Muslim scholars for propagating beliefs and practices that have no basis in the Qur'an. Furthermore, the group eschews the study of Islamic and Afghan history, and avoids engaging in debate over political and theoretical developments in Islam. Motivated by an extreme form of Deobandism, the Taliban's stated goals include driving foreigners out of Afghanistan and unifying the country under Islamic rule.

### Sources:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban)

^ The Father of the Taliban: An Interview with Maulana Sami ul-Haq , Imtiaz Ali, Spotlight on Terror, The Jamestown Foundation, Volume 4, Issue 2, May 23, 2007

The 'university of holy war', Haroon Rashid, BBC Online, 2 October 2003

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammed\\_Omar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammed_Omar)



## Rights of Women under Islam

Partly due to the attention given to the Taliban's repressive policies toward women, as well as reports of restrictions on women in some Middle Eastern countries, there is a popular perception that Muslim women have few rights. While Islam delineates different roles for men and women, and exhorts women to dress and behave modestly, in fact, under Islam a woman is entitled to the following rights:

- The right and duty to obtain an education. (This is an obligation for all Muslims, male and female.)
- The right to have her own independent property; she also has formal rights of inheritance.
- The right to work to earn money if she needs it or wants it. (Married women are free from the obligation to support and maintain relatives.)
- Equality of reward for equal deeds.
- The right to keep all her own money, to buy and sell, and to give gifts to charity.
- The right to express her opinion and be heard.
- The right to negotiate marriage terms of her choice and to refuse any marriage that does not please her. (She can accept or refuse a proposal, as she sees fit.)
- The right to provisions from her husband for all her needs.
- The right to get sexual satisfaction from her husband.
- The right to obtain a divorce from her husband. (Divorce is considered a last consideration, when there is no other alternative, but it does not mean that men have more right to divorce than women do.)
- Custody of her children after divorce.

### Sources:

[www.themodernreligion.com/women/w\\_rights\\_summary.htm](http://www.themodernreligion.com/women/w_rights_summary.htm)  
[www.islamic.org.uk/women.html](http://www.islamic.org.uk/women.html)  
[www.islamreligion.com/articles/1469/](http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/1469/)

As *Peace Unveiled* demonstrates, the rights of women in Afghanistan today are precarious. Traditionally, the position of women has been defined by the dominant Pashtun culture and the male-centered code of *Pashtunwali*. One of the criticisms of women's status under Islam has centered on the wearing of head and body coverings. Keeping women veiled derives from the ancient Persian custom of *pardah*, whereby women were kept separated from men by a curtain. The requirement of women to cover their bodies is another form of *pardah*, closely linked to the concept of honor within Islamic, patriarchal societies. While women's dress in Islamic culture is based on a principle of female modesty, there are differing interpretations about the extent to which a woman should cover herself. The wearing of the *hijab*, or headscarf, worn by many Muslim women, is considered an Islamic moral tradition or sign of religious devotion. This can be distinguished from *pardah* in its various forms (including the wearing of the *burqa*), which is considered a cultural prescription not necessarily based on Islamic teachings.

The Taliban has become notorious worldwide for its treatment of women. Combining Pashtun traditionalism with religious fundamentalism, it requires women to wear the *burqa* and bans them from participating in public life. Women cannot receive health care or education, and are not allowed outside the home unaccompanied by a male relative. The Taliban's ultra-strict enforcement of an extremely conservative version of Islam results in swift and brutal punishment for any breaking of these rules.

### Sources:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_rights\\_in\\_Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_rights_in_Afghanistan)  
*Understanding Islam*, by Frithjof Schuon. ISBN 0-14-003413-7.

## Hamid Karzai

Hamid Karzai was born in 1957 near Kandahar City in southern Afghanistan, the son of the chief of a large, powerful Pashtun tribe. He comes from a family of politicians, both his father and grandfather having served in various positions in the Afghan government under King Zahir Shah. Educated in Kabul and India, Karzai began his career in the 1980s, working for the CIA in Pakistan to raise funds for the Afghan *mujahideen* fighting the Soviet invasion. After the fall of the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan in 1992, he accompanied a group of *mujahideen* into a liberated Kabul. He served for a time as deputy foreign minister in the interim government of Burhanuddin Rabbani (a current member of Karzai's peace council).

Karzai initially supported the Taliban when it emerged in the mid-1990s, but later split with the group after its reported assassination of his father in Pakistan and its massacres of Afghan civilians. He campaigned internationally for an effort to overthrow the Taliban, which gained support in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001. In December 2001, he was hand-picked by the West to lead Afghanistan's transitional government. Karzai won his first election in 2004 with 55.4 percent of the vote, and he was officially sworn in as the first elected president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on December 7, 2004. Since his re-election in 2009, Karzai has been working to negotiate with the Taliban on a peace deal that could possibly bring the group back into the government.

Karzai is a devout man who never touches alcohol and prays five times a day. He practices a social conservatism that keeps his wife, a medical doctor, out of sight. In recent years, Karzai has come under fire for allegations of fraud and corruption, and his relationship with the U.S. has frayed as a resurgent Taliban has put increasing pressure on both the Afghan government and the U.S. occupation forces. Karzai and U.S. officials have frequently sparred over killings of Afghan civilians by the occupation forces, and Karzai has shown a willingness to buck his Western allies in his diplomacy with other nations.

### Sources:

[www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/afghanistan/karzai.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/afghanistan/karzai.html)  
[www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/20/afghanistan](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/20/afghanistan)  
[news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3135938.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3135938.stm)



## TOPICS AND ISSUES RELEVANT TO *PEACE UNVEILED*

A screening of *Peace Unveiled* can be used to spark interest in any of the following topics and inspire both individual and community action. In planning a screening, consider finding speakers, panelists, or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Afghan history and culture
- Tribal cultures of Central Asia
- Women and Islam
- History of Central Asia
- Political self-determination
- Women's empowerment
- U.S.-Afghan relations
- Islam and politics
- Gender issues



## THINKING MORE DEEPLY

1. What new insights about Afghanistan did this film give you? Has seeing this film made you aware of events and conditions you did not know about? Give an example.
2. Why do you think Hamid Karzai has chosen to work closely with warlords who were responsible for killing and atrocities during Afghan's civil war? Why would he allow them to have such prominent positions in the peace *jirga*?
3. Do you think the decision that the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) made to support Karzai was the right one? Did they have a real choice? Why or why not?
4. In some countries experiencing conflict and civil rights abuses, women have banded together to demonstrate against these conditions through marches, sit-ins, and other nonviolent actions, and they have achieved a certain level of success in attaining their demands. Would such an approach work in Afghanistan? Or should women continue to go through official, established channels to secure their rights?
5. Ambassador Eikenberry asked AWN representatives to "inspire us," and his wife, Ching Eikenberry, advised them to avoid using a negative approach. What were your thoughts when you heard their remarks? Do you agree with their advice?
6. Palwasha Hassan's presentation at the donors' conference fell on deaf ears. Why didn't the conference stipulate that women should take part in rebuilding Afghanistan? What would it mean to have women involved in healing the fractured nation?
7. Secretary of State Clinton has made numerous statements in support of women's rights in Afghanistan. When the U.S. pulls its troops out of the country, can the U.S. still support the rights of women there? How would that be possible?
8. Should a society have rules about gender roles? Why or why not?
9. Why is it important for women to be involved in a country's political life? How does women's involvement benefit men?
10. What recourse does the international community—governments as well as NGOs—have in dealing with the Taliban? Do you see any possible ways to achieve an effective compromise that doesn't sacrifice women's rights?
11. What is your assessment of the AWN's prospects for gaining the full participation of women in Afghanistan's public life?

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Together with other audience members, brainstorm actions that you might take as an individual and that people might do as a group.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Help keep the U.S. government focused on the rights of women around the world. Educate your congressional representatives, about the State Department's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), a blueprint for all U.S. international assistance and diplomacy, which was released in December 2010. The QDDR calls for all foreign aid programs that the U.S. implements to take the needs and voices of women and girls into account across all sectors: food security, health, climate change, economic growth, democracy and governance, and humanitarian assistance. Learn more about the QDDR at [womenthrive.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=904&Itemid=46](http://womenthrive.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=904&Itemid=46)
2. Join the global campaign to stop violence against women. Visit [stop-stoning.org](http://stop-stoning.org) to find out what you can do to prevent the abuse of women that occurs under the guise of cultural or religious customs.
3. One way to further the cause of women's rights is to increase the visibility of women in the media. Two organizations that are working in this area are the Women's Media Center ([womensmediacenter.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=3&Itemid=87](http://womensmediacenter.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3&Itemid=87)) and Women in Media & News (WIMN) ([www.wimnonline.org](http://www.wimnonline.org)). Both organizations sponsor media monitoring activities and offer training to help women make their voices heard in the media. Consider ways that you and a group of friends or colleagues can become involved.
4. Start a Women of Vision chapter in your community. A non-denominational volunteer ministry of World Vision, Women of Vision is devoted to advocacy and service projects that impact women. Visit [www.worldvision.org/content.nsf/getinvolved/women-of-vision-home?open&campaign=1134183](http://www.worldvision.org/content.nsf/getinvolved/women-of-vision-home?open&campaign=1134183) to find out about existing local chapters, to start a new chapter, and to join the Women of Vision online community.
5. Work with your local Girl Scouts council on the Power of Girls initiative, a leadership development project that mobilizes girls in the U.S. on the critical issues impacting girls around the world. Power of Girls is one of the many opportunities (along with Women of Vision, above) offered by partners in the Independent Television Service's Women & Girls Lead initiative. See [www.itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead](http://www.itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead) for more details.



## RESOURCES

[womenwarandpeace.org](http://womenwarandpeace.org) – Explore the official website for the *Women, War & Peace* series, which includes *Peace Unveiled*.

### Afghanistan History and Culture

[news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/country\\_profiles/1162668.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1162668.stm) – This BBC site provides a country profile and recent news articles about Afghanistan.

[www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm) – This State Department site contains a history of Afghanistan, along with other detailed information on geography, the economy, and more.

[www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook) – The CIA World Factbook contains detailed information on Afghanistan's history, economy, geography, and more.

[www.pashtoonkhwa.com/files/books/Miakhel-ImportanceOfTribalStructuresInAfghanistan.pdf](http://www.pashtoonkhwa.com/files/books/Miakhel-ImportanceOfTribalStructuresInAfghanistan.pdf) – This paper, written for the U.S. Institute of Peace by Shahmahmood Miakhel, a native of Afghanistan, provides a detailed explanation of Afghan culture and governing structures.

[www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/research/mendoza.pdf](http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/research/mendoza.pdf) – “Islam & Islamism in Afghanistan,” from the Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard Law School, provides a historical context for political Islam (Islamism) and its various manifestations.

### Women in Afghanistan

[www.afghanwomennetwork.af](http://www.afghanwomennetwork.af) – The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is a non-partisan, nonprofit network of women and women's NGOs working to empower Afghan women and ensure their equal participation in Afghan society.

[www.rawa.org/index.php](http://www.rawa.org/index.php) – The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) is a group that campaigns for women's rights and provides education and health facilities for women and children. It has set up a number of educational and health programs in Afghanistan, but has had to scale down these operations because of the threats it receives. Most of its operations are based in Afghan refugee areas in Pakistan.

[feminist.org/afghan/aboutcampaign.asp](http://feminist.org/afghan/aboutcampaign.asp) – The Campaign for Afghan Women & Girls is a public education campaign for the full and permanent restoration of women's rights for Afghan women and girls. It is sponsored by the Feminist Majority Foundation, an organization dedicated to women's equality, reproductive health, and non-violence.

### Women and Islam

[www.wluml.org](http://www.wluml.org) – Women Living Under Muslim Laws is an international solidarity network that provides information, support, and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam.

[www.karamah.org](http://www.karamah.org) – This organization of Muslim women lawyers for human rights promotes the rights of Muslim women, from within their faith perspective, through research and education.

[www.afghan-web.com/islam](http://www.afghan-web.com/islam) – This section of the Afghanistan Online website contains links to detailed information about Islam, including women's roles, gender equality, and interaction between men and women.

[www.religionfacts.com/islam](http://www.religionfacts.com/islam) – This section of the Religion Facts website contains information about Islam.

### Women's Empowerment

[www.womenforwomen.org](http://www.womenforwomen.org) – Women for Women International supports women in war-torn regions—including Afghanistan—with financial and emotional aid, job-skills training, rights education, and small business assistance so they can rebuild their lives.

[www.womenthrive.org](http://www.womenthrive.org) – Women Thrive develops, shapes, and advocates for policies that foster economic opportunity for women living in poverty. The organization brings together a coalition of over 50 organizations and thousands of individuals united in the belief that women are the key to ending global poverty, and that empowering them is the most effective long-term solution to world poverty.

[www.vitalvoices.org](http://www.vitalvoices.org) – Vital Voices Global Partnership is a non-governmental organization that identifies, trains, and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs around the globe, enabling them to create a better world for all.





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