

ACTION GUIDE

CALL FOR AN INCLUSIVE AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS



AFGHAN DIASPORA FOR
EQUALITY & PROGRESS



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ABOUT

Hello, allies of the Afghan Diaspora for Equality and Progress (ADEP) and other friends! As you may have heard, the United States Government has been negotiating directly with the Taliban since September 2018 in pursuit of a peace deal to end the conflict that has raged on for 18 years. There has been incremental progress towards reaching an agreement, but thus far, the Taliban have refused to engage with the Afghan government in its official capacity. Women and civil society have been similarly excluded - raising serious concerns due to the Taliban's track record on human rights and the fragility of any potential peace deal which leaves out the voices of more than half of the Afghan population. **As America's first inter-generational war nears to a potential close, it is our responsibility to ensure any peace agreement is inclusive, transparent and sustainable.**

This Action Guide outlines the current situation and offers specific actions members of the Afghan-American community can take to support the development of a more inclusive peace process, including **guidelines for social media activism and methods to appeal to your Members of Congress.**

The Afghan Diaspora for Equality and Progress (ADEP)

The Afghan Diaspora for Equality and Progress (ADEP) is a non-profit organization consisting of Afghan-American professionals, scholars, and activists from across the country. We are bound together by a vision of a brighter, more equitable future.

Our mission is to raise awareness of social injustice and to organize and empower changemakers. We are committed to the intentional self-development necessary to facilitate and collaborate with the next generation of young Afghans while creating an equitable future.

To learn more, visit www.adeprogress.org or follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook @adeprogress.

If you have any questions about this Guide or wish to learn more about how to get involved, please contact Arash Azzada, Lida Azim and Mena Ayazi at info@adeprogress.org.



After 18 years of war in Afghanistan, the United States has begun to hammer out a peace agreement with the Taliban. In February, the two parties completed 13 days of talks in Qatar, where they focused on the following two topics; a timeline for a potential withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and a plan for the Taliban to prevent international terrorist activity on Afghan soil. While both parties have noted progress in the talks, they **explicitly excluded the Afghan Government and civil society at large, including women, youth, minorities and the disabled.** Given the Taliban's track record on human and women's rights, women and human rights defenders have raised concerns that **if they are not at the peace table to defend women's and minorities' hard-earned gains from the last 18 years, these could be traded away in the name of 'peace.'** They rightly note that most, if not all of these gains are already in line with Islam and Afghan culture. Many other rights are protected in the current Afghan Constitution, which the Taliban says it wants to amend.

The U.S. has clarified that it has always planned to seek a comprehensive peace agreement, determined in inclusive, intra-Afghan talks, and that talks with the Taliban were only the first step, but the current talks do not reflect this promise. **In an effort for any peace agreement between the U.S. and Taliban to be sustainable, all stakeholders in the Afghan conflict must be consulted.**

The Case for an Inclusive Peace Process

Nearly four decades of armed conflict in Afghanistan has torn apart the country's social and political fabric, embedding deep fissures among ethnic, gender, generational and other divides. The goal of any peace agreement should not be solely a cease-fire among armed groups but be working to heal wounds and diffuse underlying tensions to ensure the sustainability and society-wide acceptance of any such reconciliation process.

In fact, studies show **more than 50 percent of peace agreements fail within five years** and the most sustainable and successful ones are accompanied by a larger inclusive process. The United Nations and the international community at large recognize that the key to ending violent conflict is through 'addressing inequalities and exclusion' and 'making institutions more inclusive.'

An inclusive Afghan peace process should give opportunity for the marginalized, particularly women who have suffered the most under the Taliban, to share their grievances and ensure the protection of crucial rights and gains.

BACKGROUND



Afghan Women

Much of the progress made in Afghanistan can be accredited to women who have been on the front lines of peacebuilding since the conflict began. **A growing body of research shows peace agreements are more likely to be sustainable when women are involved** in all aspects of the peace process. In fact, the United States became the first country to pass comprehensive legislation recognizing the critical role women play in building peace with the **Women Peace and Security (WPS) Act of 2017**.

Passed by Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump in October 2017, the WPS Act **promotes women's inclusion and participation in peace processes to prevent, mitigate or resolve violent conflict**. The law mandates gender inclusion in all of the U.S. Government's security and peacebuilding efforts. **The current peace talks show that the U.S. Government is not adhering to its own laws and policies.**

Since the talks began, Afghan women have lost no time in mobilizing. The Afghan Women's Network (AWN), the largest umbrella network of over 130 Afghan women's organizations and 5000 individuals, formed a delegation of 42 women from across the country to send to the peace talks – with or without an invitation. They and other Afghan women's movements have collectively **conducted consultations with women across Afghanistan's 34 provinces, released statements, organized a protest with over 3500 women, and held press conferences.** They are **lobbying the Afghan government** to include women in any delegation the government sends to future talks. **But it's clear that the United States is calling the shots.**

Three women leaders, Mahbouba Seraj, Mary Akrami, and Nasima Omari, spent two weeks in the U.S. making their case to various members of Congress, the U.N., civil society groups and the Afghan American community. Their efforts resulted in some wins, including a **promise from President Ashraf Ghani that 30% of the Loya Peace Jirga, which was set to happen in late April, will be women** and they achieved more interest from the international community to support their efforts.

We must let the United States Government know Afghan women will not go back.



Youth

As one of the world's youngest nations, **Afghan youth make up nearly 67% of the Afghan population.** The 15 to 34 age group alone makes up 32% percent of the population, according to data from the Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan. It is **therefore vital that Afghanistan's young people are invested in and are a critical part of the peace talks.** Their proper representation ensures a peace agreement that is long-lasting and will serve multiple generations of Afghans, most of whom **only know war and conflict.** The meaningful participation of Afghanistan's young population in the peace talks is critical to setting the precedent of their productive engagement in the country's affairs and would empower them as a proactive voice of opposition to the hate spread by extremist groups inside the country. It's especially important that **young men are players in this process** as they are the most vulnerable to radicalization when marginalized.

Minorities

Afghanistan is rich and unique in diversity, with no ethnic group making up more than half of the population. As the country has experienced four decades of conflict, some of the most impacted have been Afghanistan's ethnic and religious minorities. **Their inclusion in the peace process and acceptance in broader civil society is essential to the protection of their guaranteed, unalienable human rights.** Not only would their inclusion in the process help build their agency as equal citizens, **but would provide opportunity for them to air their grievances as one of the most prosecuted and marginalized groups in Afghan society and start the process of reconciliation.**

The Disabled

According to the United Nations, **Afghanistan is one of the most heavily land-mined countries in the world.** This, mixed with systemic conflict and poverty, has resulted in a large population of disabled Afghans, and this group sadly continues to grow. In 2018 alone, 12,000 people sought assistance at physical rehabilitation centers ran by the International Committee of the Red Cross (IRC). **Afghanistan's disabled continue to face major challenges, such as societal stigmatization and lack of social and medical support. Their sacrifices and challenges must not go unnoticed at the negotiating table.**

Why We Need You

The Afghan American community plays a pivotal role in this process. As both American citizens and Afghans worried about the motherland, the diaspora has a strong collective agency in ensuring that any peace processes in Afghanistan are transparent and inclusive. **You can make a difference by using the tools offered in this Action Guide to let the U.S. Government, Taliban, and the world know the Afghan diaspora cares.**

Our message is simple: as the main facilitator and key party to the peace talks, the U.S. Government should commit to the protection of human rights for all Afghans a non-negotiable in any peace process - in accordance with its own laws, policies, and values. **The Afghan diaspora will reject any agreement that is not inclusive and doesn't guarantee the protection of both women and human rights.**

The violence in Afghanistan has plagued this world for far too long and it is on us to put an end to it. **Together, let's call upon our Members of Congress to hold Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accountable for enforcing the WPS Act of 2017 and giving women, youth and minorities a seat at the negotiation table.**





SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

CALL FOR AN INCLUSIVE AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS

One of the easiest ways to support this campaign is getting active on social media, primarily on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This toolkit includes several ready-to-share options, including links and graphics.

Be sure to tag @adeprogress as you post!

HASHTAGS & GRAPHICS

You can download graphics and photos to include in your posts by **clicking here**. You can download the images by clicking on each individual one.

In effort to join the larger online conversation and help this campaign trend on social media, please use the hashtags offered below as you post.

#AfghanWomenWillNotGoBack

This is the official hashtag of the Afghan Women's Network's (AWN) social media activism around gaining a seat at the table.

#MyRedLine

Afghan women have been using this hashtag to make short video clips outlining their red lines for any peace agreement.

#AFGWomenAtTheTable

#AFGWomenTakeTheirPlace

#EnforceWPS

#NoWomenNoDeal

#OurSeatOurPeace

#CherylSays

TWITTER

Option 1:

Peace talks with the Taliban have thus far excluded Afghan women. Studies show that women-inclusive peace negotiations make an agreement 35% more likely to last 15+ years. I call on [insert the twitter handles of your members of Congress here] to enforce the WPS Act of 2017.

Option 2:

Did you know that when peace talks include representatives from unarmed, affected communities, the risk of returning to conflict drops by 64%? Women & youth must be included in any peace talks with the Taliban and Afghan Government per the United States' WPS Act of 2017. Call your Rep or Senator here: <https://www.callmycongress.com/>

Option 3:

Why are there so few women at the negotiating table with the Taliban? A lasting peace process ought to be inclusive and representative of today's Afghanistan. Congress should enforce the WPS Act of 2017. Call your Rep or Senator here: <https://www.callmycongress.com/>

FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM

Option 1:

The U.S. Government is negotiating with the Taliban in an effort to land a peace deal and end the 18-year long conflict in Afghanistan. This process currently excludes women, youth and minorities from the negotiation table. As both an American and Afghan, I find this worrisome and call on fellow members of the Afghan-American community and others to call or write their elected Representatives in the United States Congress to enforce the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, signed into law by President Trump. They should ensure Afghan women can have a seat at the table and put Afghanistan on a more sustainable path to peace.

Find your Congressperson or Senator here: <https://www.callmycongress.com/>

You can find talking points for calling your Representative and more options for you to get involved in this effort here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1FFFw73fCmCP8SSwNo-MndTkOYiLjqacP>

<CLICK HERE FOR IMAGES TO ATTACH TO YOUR POST>

Option 2:

I am an Afghan-American who is concerned about the high-level negotiations currently taking place between the U.S. Government and the Taliban. I believe that progress and peace are important, but we as a community should be concerned about the Taliban's track record on women's rights and a process that leaves out over 50 percent of the Afghan population - women. When women are included in peace processes, there is a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years. I call on you, fellow members of the Afghan-American community and others, to call or write your elected Representatives in the United States Congress to enforce the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017. Any Afghan peace deal must reflect the needs and priorities of women and girls affected by this decades-long conflict.

Find your Congressperson or Senator here: <https://www.callmycongress.com/>

You can find talking points for calling your Representative and more options for you to get involved in this effort here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1FFFw73fCmCP8SSwNo-MndTkOYiLjqacP>

<CLICK HERE FOR IMAGES TO ATTACH TO YOUR POST>



CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

CALL FOR AN INCLUSIVE AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS

The most impactful way to make your elected official hear your concerns is through calling their office and sharing your thoughts. This toolkit includes directions for calling your Representatives' office, a list of priority Members we must target and ready-to-read talking points to help guide your call.

CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY

Advocates are already lobbying members of Congress to ensure they take specific actions in support of Afghan civil society's inclusion and the protection of their rights. But there is nothing more important to a member of Congress than knowing that their constituents care strongly about an issue. After all, their constituents will ultimately decide whether that member keeps his or her job.

By taking 5 minutes out of your day (and encouraging your friends to do the same), you can help generate a groundswell that lets our elected representatives know their constituents are watching.

Below are a few scripts you can personalize in your phone calls, emails, letters, or faxes. And please do personalize them! Research has shown that the Congressional staffers who answer these calls respond better to personal stories and concerns than they do to the same rote script. **We want to make sure we get key points across, but we also want these to reflect YOUR concerns and experiences.**

Here is what you can do, in order of what is most impactful:

- Call your Senators and Representative. If the line is busy, leave a voicemail (instructions for that are below), or try again in a few minutes.
- If your Senator's or Representative's voicemail is full or the line remains busy, go back to step 1, click through to the member's website, find their email address, and email them instead.
- If you prefer to use snail mail, grab a piece of paper and mail that to your member of Congress instead (addresses are also available on members' websites).
- If you feel like you aren't getting through via any of those channels – or you just really want to go the extra mile – send a free fax! The New Yorker reported that in 2016, a single senator received 7,276 faxes from constituents in just 24 hours! Now, that would get my attention.

Let's get started:

1. To find your Member of Congress as well as their phone numbers and websites, enter your full U.S. address here: <https://www.callmycongress.com/>

2. Find the script below that applies to your Senators and Representatives. Please note that there are three options available for use and personalization:

Script #1 is for Members of the House of Representative's Foreign Affairs Committee
names are listed.

Script #2 is for any other Representative who is not on the list for Script #1.

3. Make the call! Better yet, get together with some friends and make the calls together!

SCRIPT #1

If your Representative's name is on the following list, this means they are a Member of the House of Representative's Foreign Affairs Committee. Please use Script #1 and customize accordingly.

Eliot Engel (D-NY)	Andy Levin (D-MI)	Susan Wild (D-PA)
Vincente Gonzalez (D-TX)	Dina Titus (D-NV)	Jim Costa (D-CA)
Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI)	Tim Burchett (R-TN)	Greg Pence (R-IN)
Michael McCaul (R-TX)	Ted Lieu (D-CA)	Joe Wilson (R-SC)
Mike Guest (R-MS)	David Trone (D-MD)	John Curtis (R-UT)
Brad Sherman (D-CA)	Joaquin Castro (D-TX)	Scott Perry (R-PA)
Colin Allred (D-TX)	Tom Malinowski (D-NJ)	Ron Wright (R-TX)
Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA)	Juan Vargas (D-CA)	Theodore Deutch (D-FL)
Albio Sires (D-NJ)	Steve Chabot (R-OH)	Dean Phillips (D-MN)
Karen Bass (D-CA)	Brian Mast (R-FL)	Ted Yoho (R-FL)
William Keating (D-MA)	Ann Wagner (R-MO)	Adriano Espaillat (D-NY)
Christopher Smith (R-NJ)	David Cicilline (D-RI)	Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA)
Ami Bera (D-CA)	Gregory Meeks (D-NY)	Lee Zeldin (R-NY)
Adam Kinzinger (R-IL)	Steve Watkins (R-KS)	Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)
Abigail Spanberger (D-VA)	Gerald Connolly (VA-11)	Francis Rooney (R-FL)
Ken Buck (R-CO)	Ilhan Omar (D-MN)	

Hi! My name is [**NAME**], and I'm one of Representative [**NAME**]'s constituents from [**CITY, STATE**].

I'm calling to request that Representative [**NAME**] urge Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad to protect Afghan women's rights and ensure their equal and meaningful inclusion in any talks about Afghanistan's future.

The bipartisan Women, Peace, and Security Act, which this President signed into law in 2017, makes it the policy of the U.S. to promote women's meaningful participation in peace talks. We are not doing that in Afghanistan. It is important that the House Foreign Affairs Committee fulfill its oversight role by calling Secretary Pompeo and Special Representative Khalilzad to testify in a hearing on this issue. An Afghan woman should be invited to testify to provide women's perspectives as well.

Will Representative [**NAME**] commit to calling for a committee hearing?

Thank you for your time and attention.

(If leaving a voicemail, please leave your street address to ensure your call is tallied.)

SCRIPT # 2

For any Senator,* please feel free to use and personalize Script #2.

**This script can be used for calls to any Senator, but particularly important ones include Senators Jim Risch (R-ID), Lindsay Graham (R-SC), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Rand Paul (R-KY). If any of these are your Senators, please call and urge others you know to call.*

Hi! My name is [NAME], and I'm one of Senator [NAME]'s constituents from [CITY, STATE]. I'm calling to request that Senator [NAME] urge Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Special Representative Zal Khalilzad to protect Afghan women's rights and ensure their equal and meaningful inclusion in any peace talks. This is in keeping with the 2017 Women, Peace, and Security Act and our National Security Strategy.

The war in Afghanistan must end, but it must end responsibly. We have invested too many American lives and taxpayer dollars for a hasty exit that doesn't preserve the hard-won gains of Afghan women. The best way to protect women's rights and human rights for all Afghans is to ensure that women have an equal number of seats at the table. Anything less than that makes a mockery of our law, our values, and our sacrifices.

Thank you for your time and attention.

(If leaving a voicemail, please leave your street address to ensure your call is tallied.)

SCRIPT # 3

For any other Representative, please feel free to use and personalize Script #3.

Hi! My name is [NAME], and I'm one of Representative [NAME]'s constituents from [CITY, STATE].

I'm calling to request that Representative [NAME] urge Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Special Representative Zal Khalilzad to protect Afghan women's rights and ensure their equal and meaningful inclusion in any peace talks. This is in keeping with the 2017 Women, Peace, and Security Act and our National Security Strategy.

The war in Afghanistan must end, but it must end responsibly. We have invested too many American lives and taxpayer dollars for a hasty exit that doesn't preserve the hard-won gains of Afghan women. The best way to protect women's rights and human rights for all Afghans is to ensure that women have an equal number of seats at the table. Anything less than that makes a mockery of our law, our values, and our sacrifices.

Thank you for your time and attention.

(If leaving a voicemail, please leave your street address to ensure your call is tallied.)