

The FMF Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls

Take action to ensure that the United States and the nations of the world do not forget the women of Afghanistan during the reconstruction of this war-torn country. Launch a petition drive, form fundraising action teams, and make sure Afghanistan and its female citizens remain in the public consciousness.

Background Information:

Women were the first victims of the Taliban when they took power in Afghanistan in 1996. The fundamentalist regime prohibited women from working, and women and girls were not allowed to go to school. Women could not leave their homes unless accompanied by a close male relative and wearing a head-to-toe *burqa*. Anyone who violated Taliban decrees could be beaten, imprisoned, or even killed.

In 1997, the Feminist Majority Foundation launched the Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan (now named the Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls), working tirelessly to bring the attention of U.S. policymakers to the war on women and ethnic minorities waged by the Taliban. With the help of hundreds of thousands of supporters, the FMF played a major role in preventing recognition of the Taliban by the United States and the United Nations. For years, the Feminist Majority has also successfully pushed for substantial increases in humanitarian aid for women and girls in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees.

During the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban's treatment of women was presented as one of the primary motivations for U.S. policy. There was hope that women and girls would be liberated from the oppressive rule of the Taliban and would be free to reestablish themselves in Afghan society. Four years after September 11, 2001, are Afghan women and girls better off?

If a stable and peaceful civil society is to be established and the rights of Afghan women and girls are to be permanently restored, the U.S. and the world community must step forward and provide adequate security forces and sufficient funds to rebuild the infrastructure and economy of the nation. Interim Afghan authorities have set the figure for reconstruction as high as \$45 billion, and while many in the international community pledged much, they have delivered little. Assistance is desperately needed in Afghanistan, where women and girls have suffered the atrocities of the Taliban and the devastation of decades of war. Additionally, the millions of refugees currently living in horrific conditions in Pakistan must not be forgotten.

With the reemergence of the Taliban in many areas, coupled with escalating violence throughout the country, there is a critical need for expanded peacekeeping and security forces. The FMF and its supporters must work to ensure that the freedom and safety of Afghan women and girls are central to U.S. foreign policy. We must also press for the inclusion of women in the rebuilding of democracy and the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Only with adequate, long-range support will women and girls regain their rightful place in Afghan civil society; and only with the full participation of Afghan women and girls can Afghanistan create a peaceful, stable, and democratic future.

Though the Bush Administration has stated that it supports the rights of Afghan women and girls, their promises remain just that, only promises. The FMF urges the U.S. to do everything in its power to help Afghan women and girls, primarily through:

- 1) Dramatically increasing funding for food and other humanitarian assistance, especially direct assistance to Afghan women-led NGOs.
- 2) Expanding peacekeeping and security forces throughout Afghanistan
- 3) Providing adequate funds so that the Marshall Plan promised by the Bush Administration can be realized.

Take Action to Educate Students about the Ongoing Situation in Afghanistan!

Create an Action Team to raise money for Direct Assistance Projects!

Through this project, the FMF is advocating for the rights of Afghan women and supporting Afghan women-led organizations that are providing education, health, and/or relief services. Your group will be able to help by **raising funds to support these efforts:**

- \$2000—rent for a school year
- \$1000—medical supplies for a women’s health clinic
- \$450—a teacher’s salary for a year
- \$150—classroom chalkboards for a school
- \$60—notebooks, pencils, and pencil sharpeners for 300 students

Launch a Petition Drive to President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice!

Throughout the Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan, the Feminist Majority used petition drives to increase public awareness about the plight of women and girls and to demonstrate to policymakers the breadth of public outrage about their treatment by the Taliban. The Campaign generated over 200,000 petitions and tens of thousands of faxes and emails to U.S. officials.

- **Copy and circulate the enclosed petition**, which calls on U.S officials to:
 - Do everything in their power to help Afghan women and girls
 - Dramatically increase food and other humanitarian assistance (especially to women-led NGOs)
 - Expand peacekeeping and security forces
 - Significantly increase reconstruction funding
- Mail completed petitions to the Feminist Majority, 1600 Wilson Blvd, Suite 801, Arlington, VA 22209. We will deliver it along with tens of thousands of others.

Buy Afghan Women’s Crafts

These crafts are handmade by Afghan women living in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a part of our Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls, FMF is providing an outlet for the sale of these beautiful products. **100% of the proceeds from the sale of all items will go back to Afghan women and girls.** Visit <https://feminist.org/store/default.aspx> to purchase.

Screen Films about Women’s Experiences in Afghanistan

- **Afghanistan Unveiled:** When the first team of women video journalists to be trained in Afghanistan traveled to rural regions of the country with cameras in hand, their journey was as much an emotional one as a geographical one. With access to stories never before seen on film, “Afghanistan Unveiled” reveals the effects on Afghan women of the Taliban’s oppressive rule and the United States-sponsored bombing campaign.
- **Shroud of Silence:** This powerful 15-minute documentary narrated by Marlo Thomas chronicles the everyday struggle of women under the Taliban’s brutal regime. With actual footage of the situation in Afghanistan while it was controlled by the Taliban, this video highlights the devastating reality of gender apartheid.