



## PRESS KIT

*Series on Canada in Afghanistan*  
**#1: CW4WAfghan's Recommendations**

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### Thinking About Canada's Role in Afghanistan

Afghanistan presents a new kind of peacebuilding challenge and a new environment for Canada's military. A vibrant debate has emerged in Canada over the presence and role of Canadian forces in the southern province of Kandahar, Afghanistan. Questions put forth by the public revolve around:

- The validity of a Canadian mission to Afghanistan;
- The monetary cost of this mission;
- The combative role of Canadian forces;
- The threat to the lives of Canadian forces;
- The relationship with the US Coalition Forces operating in Afghanistan;
- The duration of this mission

As a Canadian grassroots organization advocating for human rights in Afghanistan and supporting Afghan women since 1996, *Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan* has keenly followed this debate, has been attentive to events happening in Afghanistan, as well as to the questions emerging as a result of this mission.

Our main concern is the security needs of women in all parts of the country and the protection of the human rights of Afghans. It is from this perspective that we approach the discussion taking place in Canada, based on the needs and experience of our partner Afghan women's organizations, the voices of Afghan women we are in regular contact with, and our representatives' time spent in Afghanistan.

### Recommendations

***Afghanistan needs an international security force, adhering to internationally recognized human rights standards, for a period of at least ten years.*** This force should have the following main objectives:

- To provide security and stability for all Afghans;
- To facilitate safe provision of basic services such as education, clean water, and healthcare;
- To create an environment where Afghans can take on reconstruction and development activities on their own terms;
- To create the space and allow the time for capacity-building of the Afghan security sector (i.e. Afghan National Army, police);
- To provide security to facilitate pivotal democratization events such as elections, *loya jirgas*, and parliamentary sessions;

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- To support and bolster effective mechanisms for conflict resolution and reconciliation, such as mixed-gender shuras; and,
- To ensure the security needs of women and girls are met, which include protection from sexual violence, trafficking, rape, and other security threats commonly faced by Afghan women.

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan further emphasizes that:

- Canadian development assistance is long-term and should aim to assist the government and civil society to meet the basic needs of Afghans and improve provision of basic services (see Press Kit 4: Are We Meeting the Development Needs of Afghanistan?).
- Canadian assistance should ensure to also support an independent Afghan civil society, and not only financial support to large administrations such as the UN agencies and the World Bank;
- The Afghan government is given the opportunity to administer funds directly, or to transition towards independent implementation, to every extent possible.
- Canadian assistance should contribute to the building of strong women's organizations in Afghanistan, and should support critical services for women (e.g. women's shelters, legal assistance, healthcare, income-generation, and education);
- Canadian assistance should prioritize human rights, the rule of law, and transitional justice. To this end, support should be given to Afghan institutions providing effective services such as legal aid, women's political participation, judicial reform, and investigations into past and current human rights abuses;
- Canadian assistance should aim to create an enabling environment whereby Afghan institutions, governmental and non-governmental, can take on their own development needs;

Unless and until there are alternate solutions and agreed upon strategies to address the needs of the Afghan people, Canada cannot just pull out of Afghanistan. A withdrawal of our support will be interpreted as a defeat by the Afghans. And for those Afghans intent on peace and reconstruction, defeat means a loss, yet again, of trust and hope. For the insurgents, it is a victory. Any withdrawal of NATO troops must be part of a well-planned, comprehensive solution for Afghanistan, which adequately addresses both security and development needs from a long-term perspective.

Our leadership needs to focus on how we can best meet the needs of Afghans who are intent on building peace and reconstruction in their country, as well as determining what are benchmarks for success in this mission. Guided by clear benchmarks, Canada should remain committed to security and development in Afghanistan, in partnership with the international community.

We would argue that a true benchmark of success is the realization of basic human rights: freedom of movement, access to healthcare, education and other services, for all citizens of Afghanistan, including women and children who represent over 70% of the population.