



PRESS KIT

Series on Canada in Afghanistan

#3: Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

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What will Peacebuilding in Afghanistan Take?

Afghans, more than anything else, want peace. They want opportunities for their children. They want the right to dream of their country without guns, tanks and loss of human life. They want to be able to walk in their streets without fear of attack. They want to farm their fields without the risk of landmines. They want jobs and schools. For all of these things, they need *security*.

The international community, Canada included, has a responsibility to protect, and to build peace in Afghanistan and to give Afghans a fair chance at a better quality of life. This responsibility includes:

- **Funding for reconstruction and development:** the building and repair of schools, hospitals, housing, transportation and communication systems; DDR (demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration) of combatants, income-generation opportunities, counselling and rehabilitation services; recreation.
- **A long-term diplomatic and development commitment to Afghanistan:** peace will not come overnight. It will require a serious, sustained commitment from major donors and partners for a period of at least 10 years.
- **An international security presence:** Afghans need external protection from continued internal security threats, such as attacks against the education sector. The Afghan security sector (police and military forces) do not currently have the capacity necessary to provide adequate protection to ordinary people.
- **Support for the realization of human rights:** Afghans, in particular women, have faced one of history's most shameful human rights catastrophes. The International community has an obligation to uphold universal standards of human rights for all Afghans. Mechanisms for the protection of human rights must be put in place, and there must be justice and accountability for past abuses.

Security as the Enabling Factor

Human security is the prerequisite for peace, development, and justice in Afghanistan. Human security includes economic and physical security, both of which are equally important for Afghans. Afghanistan is dependent on external assistance to provide security for its citizens. The continued activity of insurgents, primarily the Taliban, lack of jobs and opportunities, illicit drugs, poverty, landmines and other factors keep Afghanistan a highly volatile environment.

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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;
- 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.

In accordance with the Bonn Agreement signed in December 2001 and the UN Charter, Canada has a responsibility to contribute to providing security in Afghanistan. The Canadian mission in Afghanistan should remain engaged for the long-term, but should be oriented towards meeting the above-mentioned objectives. Canada should take the protection and well-being of Afghans as the heart of the mission.

Currently, many of the basic needs of Afghans are not being met as a result of insecurity. Human Rights Watch has carefully documented systematic violence against the education sector by Taliban and other armed groups. There have been at least 204 attacks against schools between January 2005 and June 2006 alone. These attacks included the burning down of schools, the murder of teachers, threats against school administrators, threats against parents for sending their children to school, and bombs left in or outside of schools. This has resulted in hundreds of other schools closing, students dropping out for fear of their lives, and a severe drop in girls' enrolment.

Protecting the basic rights of Afghans, such as the right to education, and facilitating the provision of services, such as access to clean water or to healthcare, should be higher priorities for Canada's military. To date, the Canadian military presence has not had a significant impact on helping protect, for example, the education sector, as described above. Canadian defense resources should be reoriented towards such protection, which would in turn facilitate the development and democratization of Afghanistan.