Documentation

Afghanistan in Pakistan

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We are discussing Afghanistan in Pakistan tonight and I am really happy that I see so many people following our discussions. I am very happy to welcome our distinguished speakers of tonight Dr. Sanaa Alimia, Setara Hassan and Jelena Bjelica. Just before the International Women’s Day on 8th of March it is especially important that your voices will be heard. I’m also very glad to welcome my colleague Dr. Ali Ahmad, who has developed the concept of tonight’s event together with me, and he will chair later on the panel discussion.

I would also like to thank the Afghan cultural associations AKIS, KATIB, as well as the group Afghanische Jugendliche-NEUER START in Österreich, the Afghan Women Association in Austria and the Afghan association Interkulturelles Entwicklungscentrum and the Aktiv Verein, and the Afghan Students Association IGASUS which supported us with distributing information about today’s event. I hope that I have not forgotten any of the numerous Afghan associations who are very active and supportive for newly arriving Afghans and refugees started in Austria. I want to specially thank you the Afghan Associations for this important work. Much more of this work is needed and much more of the official recognition and support would be appreciated.

A special thanks to the Austrian Development Agency, the Austrian Development Cooperation, which financed today’s event, and of course I want to thank my colleagues at VIDC, especially Irene Hochauer-Kpoda who actively supported me with organizing.

Today’s event is part of our focus on the situation in the Middle East and the background for today’s event is quite clear: Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees over the past four decades. After the US-led invasion in 2001 and the fall of the Taliban regime shortly after, many of these refugees returned to Afghanistan. Nevertheless, around three million Afghan refugees are still currently living in Pakistan, while more than one million Afghans were not registered by the UNHCR and are, therefore, living in the country without official residency status. In 2016 Pakistan began deporting large numbers of Afghan refugees. The NGO Human Rights Watch says 600,000 Afghans have been affected and calls the
deportation of Afghan refugees in 2016 “the largest unlawful forced return of refugees in recent times.” In 2017 another 100,000 refugees had to return to Afghanistan from Pakistan. Now another two million Afghan refugees in Pakistan may be threatened with deportation. The government in Islamabad has announced that more than two million Afghan refugees have to leave the country within 60 days and their residency status will no longer be extended. The main reasons given for this are economic and security concerns, which increases fears of further mass deportations. Can something like this really be done?

The deported Afghans are returning to a country that is shaped more than ever by growing revolts and the threat of the Taliban and the so called Islamic State (IS). The withdrawal of the Western troops from Afghanistan in 2014 again shifted the balance of power in favor of the Islamist movement, while Pakistan is often accused of supporting and supplying the Taliban and the IS on its soil. As you know the security situation in Afghanistan continues to be catastrophic.

Today’s speakers will talk about the situation of Afghan refugees in their current and regional dimension about security and gender problems.

What are the living conditions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan? What is the specific situation of Afghani women living in or returning from Pakistan? What is the reason behind Pakistan’s harsh crackdown and the increased deportations since 2016? Will Pakistan really expel several thousands of Afghan refugees this year? How is Afghanistan reacting to the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees? What are the security and social consequences of these deportations? How is the security situation in general in Afghanistan today? Do we see progress in regard of women rights?

As you can see we have many questions to answer, therefore I will hand over immediately to my colleague Ali Ahmad.

I just introduce him briefly,

Dr. Ali Ahmad is project manager at VIDC and is currently conducting a qualitative study on the access to the labor market in Afghanistan, with a special focus on gender. The study will be implemented in the framework of a project called Dard Kush coordinated by Caritas Austria and financed by Austrian Development Agency. Before, Ali worked as a researcher
and journalist in Afghanistan for various international research and media organizations. He is trained as medical doctor and graduated from a master’s program in peace and conflict studies at the European Peace University in Schlaining, Austria.

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Ali Ahmad

Thank you, Michael, for the introduction; it’s my privilege to be the moderator of the panel discussion with three strong voices, with three strong women. The topic and the crisis is one, but it is split into two countries: Pakistan and Afghanistan, Afghanistan in Pakistan. What will happen with the Afghan refugees?

Tonight we have three speakers who I want to introduce shortly:

Dr. Sanaa Alimia is a research fellow based at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin. She holds at PhD from the Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS, London. Sanaa used to teach at the Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS (2011-2014) and also taught at the Department of Politics at the University of Peshawar (2013-2014, 2016-2017) as a Visiting Associate Professor. Sanaa's work concentrates on Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Her manuscript 'Afghan Refugees in Pakistan' will be out in 2018.

Setara Hassan was born in Afghanistan and immigrated to Denmark as a young teenager. She did her masters in International Business and Politics in Copenhagen Business School and returned to Afghanistan working with the United Nations. She has since been involved in multiple development projects in Afghanistan. Highly passionate about women empowerment, she is currently the head of Zan TV, a TV channel that focuses primarily on women’s issues and challenges in Afghanistan.

Jelena Bjelica joined Afghanistan Analysts Network as a researcher in October 2015. Between 2010 and 2014 she worked with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan and later with the Afghanistan Center at Kabul University (ACKU). Before joining UN, she worked as journalist. She spent ten years covering Kosovo,
Macedonia and South Serbia regions, for a number of publications from Southeast and Central Europe. Her recent academic publications include: Organized crime and international aid subversion: evidence from Colombia and Afghanistan, Third World Quarterly (2015); Human Trafficking and National Security in Serbia, in Migrations and Media, Moore, K., Gross, B. Threadgold, T. (eds.), Peter Lang Publishing Group (2012). She holds MA in journalism from Cardiff University. Bjelica was honored the Press Freedom Award by Reporters without Borders in 2003.

But first we travel all the way to Pakistan and we will start with Sanaa Alimia. Her presentation will focus on the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

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Sanaa Alimia

Thank you so much for the kind introduction and thank you very much to the VIDC for hosting us.

As mentioned, I will be talking about Afghans in Pakistan and telling little bit about the historical background, what are the conditions today and what are some of the ways in which we can move forward and what are the potentials for the future. Few details have been mentioned and we should pay attention to numbers, because we have quite a few discrepancy and disagreements with our numbers, even amongst us speakers, and this itself is an interesting fact. Documented refugees and undocumented migrants, this is always difficult and can be politicized.

Of course there is a lot of debate about the position of Afghans in Europe. Currently we are seated in Vienna and of course we will be familiar with these debates, but as mentioned most of the world’s Afghan refugees are persons either located within Afghanistan or within Pakistan and Iran. Most of the world’s displacements are taking place within the so called global south. This is where a lot of the burden falls. And since the 1970s Pakistan has been one of the largest hosts of refugees of Afghans. It is estimated that at least about 7 million
Afghans have lived in Pakistan during this 30 - 40-years of conflict, which is a quite sizable number in comparison to the Afghan population as a whole.

Since the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, supported by NATO, Pakistan has shifted its policy towards Afghans and is increasingly turning towards repatriation or reintegration of Afghans into Afghanistan. The spread of the global war on terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan and deteriorating relationships between the two states means, that the Afghans often finds themselves within Pakistan being used as political scapegoat for whenever something is wrong between the two states. They are increasingly subject to forms of harassment in the country. And it’s important to note that the majority of Afghans who live in Pakistan, about 74%, were born in the country. These are not new migrants, these are not people who are born in Afghanistan and migrated into Pakistan, 74% were born in the country, and the remaining 26% are born in Afghanistan. So many people who have lived their entire life in this country feel increasingly being excluded and pushed out.

Today there are round 2.5 - 3 million Afghans in the country, perhaps 1.3 – 1.4 million of them are registered as refugees with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Pakistan. Additionally there is a high number of undocumented migrants in the country, we have figures saying about 900,000 have been registered in a recent program to register undocumented migrants, but intelligence reports from the Pakistani state estimated that this number could be anything up to 1 – 2 million, the numbers are not particularly clear. And most of the Afghans in Pakistan are mixed along lines of ethnicity, class, age, gender, legal status, region of origin within Afghanistan and where they are living in Pakistan. However around 82% are Pashtun Afghans, others will include Hazars, Tajiks, Uzbeks and others. Most are located within the North Province and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along the border. Also a number of Afghans have migrated into major cities such as Karachi, Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore and others.

**Why and How Afghans Have Been in Pakistan Since the 1970s?**

**1970s and 1980s: The rise of Afghan Communism and the Soviet-Afghan War**

During 1973-1979 the first waves of Afghan migrations to Pakistan take place against the background of a rise of socialism and then communism in Afghanistan. A number of those who migrated were political Islamists and were invited in by the Pakistani state who sought
to patronize a sympathetic Afghan Diaspora to gain influence in Afghanistan. After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Afghanistan and Pakistan had tense interstate relations.

- This was premised on the Afghan state’s rejection of the Durand Line Agreement – an 1893 agreement signed by the British colonial state in India and the Afghan state that constitutes the Afghanistan-Pakistan border today.
- The Afghan state also interlinked this rejection to the ethno-nationalist movement for the creation of a Pashtun state (“Pashtunistan”) that emerged in post-1947 Pakistan in the provinces Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), which is a buffer zone and existing state of political exception within Pakistan. This ethno-nationalist movement received directly funding and supporting from the Afghan state.

In December 1979, the Soviet Union’s invasion and occupation of Afghanistan escalated quickly spiraled into violence. By the 1980s some 4 million Afghans migrated to Pakistan. Some 3 million Afghans migrated to Iran, whilst smaller numbers, usually from elite and urban backgrounds, migrated to North America, Western Europe, India, and other states.

The situation in Afghanistan was of special interest to the U.S. in the context of the Cold War. The U.S. engaged in a partnership with Pakistan and the Afghan and international Islamist resistance to the Soviets was organized, funded, and launched from Pakistan.

1990s-2010s: The Civil War, the Taliban, and the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT)

When the Soviet-Afghan War ended in 1989, international attention on Afghanistan and its refugee populations fell. The Cold War was over and Afghanistan was no longer of global geopolitical significance. However, the civil war in Afghanistan, the rise of the Taliban, and widespread droughts meant Afghans continued to migrate into and out of Pakistan and Iran. New waves of migration brought in new ethno-linguistic and socio-economic groups, such as former government employees of the communist regime, and Hazaras.

Although international attention on Afghans dwindled, Afghans were still welcome in Pakistan as ‘temporary guests’. This is because the Pakistani state patronized the Afghan Taliban, many of whom emerged from Pakistani refugee camps. Yet, gradually, as international opinion turned against the Afghan Taliban, especially after the Taliban Afghan state was blamed for sheltering the perpetrators of the New York and Washington DC
September 2001 attacks, the Pakistani state illegalized new Afghan migrations in to the country and has engaged in a programme of refugee repatriations and deportations. ‘Jihad’ has morphed into ‘terror’ and Afghans are no longer welcomed in Pakistan.

Afghans are also being prevented from entering former host states in Europe and repatriated or deported there too. The author Shahram Khosravi says deportation and remigration is a way of life for many Afghan men.

Global Norms of Afghan Deportation: Afghanistan is a “Safe Country”? 

For the U.S. and other Western/ NATO states since the GWOT in Afghanistan started, these states are concerned with showing the war has been a success, that Afghanistan is a “safe country” worthy of capital investment, democratic elections, and return refugee migrations. This is despite the war entering its seventeenth year and some 120,000 Afghans dead.

In addition, in these states right-wing anti-migrant xenophobia is now part of the political mainstream. Further, the Western liberal/ democratic state has moved towards making deportation an accepted part of the state and its migration policies. And as Afghans are one of Europe’s largest asylum-seeking populations, European states are intent on curbing and reversing Afghan migration to their states. In 2016 the European Union (EU) used the leverage of aid to enforce a secret agreement with Afghanistan that allows EU member states to deport unlimited numbers of Afghan asylum seekers. The agreement also proposes building a terminal dedicated to deportation flights at Kabul international airport – despite the fact that many Afghans in Europe were born and raised in Pakistan or Iran.

These factors neatly dovetail with and, to a degree, informs, Pakistan’s post-2001 policy toward Afghans.

Pakistan’s Shift in its Afghanistan Policy: The Conflict Comes Home

After joining the U.S.-led NATO GWOT, Pakistan aimed to (at least publicly) distance itself from its own role in Afghanistan and its sponsorship of the Taliban. Yet the war in Afghanistan led to the Afghan Taliban and other militants seeking refuge in FATA (and Balochistan) and the rise of Taliban factions within Pakistan. Under pressure from the U.S., for the first time since 1948, Pakistan engaged in military actions in FATA and later other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
Post-2001 Pakistan is shaped by insurgencies, military operations, U.S.-led drone strikes, and militant violence.

Over 67,000 persons have been killed and some five million persons displaced.

As a result of the conflict bleeding in to Pakistan, by the mid-2000s, the U.S. constructed one foreign policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, commonly referred to as “Af-Pak.”

Meanwhile the rebuilt Afghan state has again vocally rejected the Durand Line agreement.

For Pakistan, internal security, external pressures from the U.S. in the GWOT counterinsurgency, and a rivalry with the Afghan state mean it wants to make clearer its autonomy in terms of territory and population from that of Afghanistan.

The border is not just a line on a map. But it also comes in to effect by migration controls, which is why we see such a heavy concentration on repatriation programmes.

Pakistan’s Afghanistan policy and its border management policy has Afghan refugees at its centre.

Day-to-Day Harassment

The result of the shifting political conditions in the region mean Afghans are increasingly unwelcomed in Pakistan. Many are subject to routine harassment. Getting Afghans to leave Pakistan is not simply done through peaceful leafleting. Instead, by repeatedly harassing Afghans on a daily basis, many are effectively being disciplined in to leaving the country.

Afghans are also motivated to leave because of issues with regards to a lack of long-term local integration schemes; reduced funding for Afghans in Pakistan; and economic and political insecurity within Pakistan. Pakistan itself is a post-colonial, so-called Global South state, that itself has a high number of displaced persons and also produces a high number of asylum seekers.

Today many Afghans are leaving Pakistan either going to Afghanistan through so-called assisted voluntary repatriation (AVR) schemes, outright deportation, or using irregular migration channels to migrate to Europe, Australia, Turkey, and other states.
Key Issue: Afghan refugee repatriation should be encouraged and supported when desired and is also an important means of rebuilding the Afghan state. However, Pakistan’s primary focus on refugee repatriation ignores other possibilities for longer-term migration solutions. This includes:

- Naturalization and/or integration;
- And/or long-term residency permits, with the possibility of applying for citizenship.

It also ignores the fact that many Afghans are living in Pakistan (and have been), alongside Pakistanis, for some 30-to-40 years.

**The Differences between Registered and Unregistered Refugees**

The legal status of Afghans in Pakistan is a contested topic. Pakistan, as is the case with other South Asian countries, is not a signatory to the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The country also has no official refugee law. However, since 1979 the UNHCR and its supporting partners have been active in the country. Pakistan also has separate government departments that institutionally manage Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Today Afghans fit in two main categories:

1. Registered Refugees

   - 1.3 million individuals are registered with the UNHCR and government of Pakistan.
   - Individuals who can prove that they were resident in Pakistan prior to 2001.
   - Technically these are not “refugees” per se, but Afghan citizens with temporary rights of protection in Pakistan.

A key problem for registered Afghans is that their right to stay in Pakistan is temporary and always subject to an unpredictable renewal negotiation between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the UNHCR.

2. Undocumented Afghans

   - 1-2 million persons.
   - Many may be economic migrants, but also include potential refugees entering the country after 2001 who are no longer given automatic refugee status.
• Usually from lower socio-economic income brackets.
• Many work in the informal sector.

Key Issue: Have limited local and international institutional support. However, in 2017, an ID card and registration program for approximately 1-2 million undocumented Afghans was rolled out with the support of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and other international funders. The aim, however, is to facilitate repatriation/deportation.

Persecution of Minorities

In Pakistan Shia Muslims – Pakistani and Afghan – are particularly vulnerable to sectarian violence from Sunni militant groups, which target Shias, Sufi shrines, Christians, and other minorities. Afghan Hazaras are particularly vulnerable as they appear as a physically distinct ethnic group and are thereby easy to identify.

• Many Afghan Hazaras to migrate out of Pakistan towards Turkey, Europe, Australia, and North America.
• Many from poorer backgrounds do not have access to legal aid that can help process asylum claims and do instead migrate through risky irregular channels.

Gender Insecurity

Harassment of Males and its Impact on Women

In a society based on interconnected nuclear, intergenerational, and/or joint family units, women are impacted when their social, emotional, and economic male dependents are arrested, harassed, abused, and/or deported.

This impact can take a number of forms:

• Shifting gender roles
• Fragmentation of family
• Economic loss
• Gender based violence against women

Women’s Rights
In Pakistan violence against women, through so-called honour killings, acid attacks, domestic violence, and forced marriages is an on-going issue. These are issues that are even more pronounced for marginalized groups and/or low-income migrant women, but fail to get the notice they should as the state and/or international institutions focus their concerns on refugee returns.

Afghan women who are unmarried, divorced, widowed and who do not have relevant social support networks are particularly vulnerable to social pressures and forms of gendered based discrimination and violence.

Recommendations and Ways Forward

Longer-Term Issues

- Cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan should be encouraged;
- Pakistan’s patronage of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, such as the Haqqani networks should stop;
- Afghan state should recognize the Durand Line Agreement;
- Pakistan should incorporate FATA in to Pakistan proper and engage in FATA reforms – this will help issues of development in FATA and improve security;

Medium Term Issues

- Encourage Pakistan to stop using Afghan refugees in Pakistan as leverage for the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship;
- Support the development of regulations for free movement across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border;
- Continue to support repatriation programmes and a right of return where desired, but also encourage the development of longer-term solutions to the position of Afghans within Pakistan. The most important of which is a potential amnesty, or permanent residency status;
- Encourage Pakistan to accede to the UN 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and to develop a Refugee Law;
Incorporate the concerns of migrant women into broader women’s rights issues in Pakistan.

Immediate Issues

- Stop Afghan deportations – both in Europe and Pakistan.
- Support third country resettlement of particularly vulnerable groups;
- Increase reforms and trainings for law-enforcement agencies;
- Increase legal aid and support for organizations working for Afghans in Pakistan, including undocumented migrants;
- Support an independent review of the extension/renewal process of the Afghan right to remain in Pakistan.

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Jelena Bjelica

I will just walk you briefly through the latest trends in the security and political situation in Afghanistan. By latest I mean in the last one and a half years. I think Sanaa gave great introduction on the last 40 years of conflicts in Afghanistan and I don’t need to remind you that we are talking about a country that has been in conflict for the last 40 years.

Security and political situation in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is in a very dynamic political situation at the moment (well hasn’t that always been the case?) The violence has shown upward trend. President Ghani last week made a peace offer to the Taliban that marked a change in the peace rhetoric. However, it is too early to say how that will play out. There is no national unity within the government, and ethno politicking it still a main-stream political standard.

The state of war: The five indicators for the intensity and violence of the Afghan war – security incidents, civilian and Afghan forces’ casualties, IDPs and Taliban territorial control – have shown mostly upward trends. If not any longer increasing, they showed that intensity
and violence were close to having reached plateaus; levels were at their highest since data started to be collected, with the exception of additional conflict-related IDPs that was higher in 2016 than in 2017. This is definitely the case for the time since the withdrawal of most international forces by the end of 2014 and the ISAF/RS switch and, where data is known, usually from before that, too. Decreases have mainly been very slight and always temporary.

The key observation regarding the current situation in Afghanistan is that Afghanistan is not in a post-conflict situation, where sufficient stability exists to focus on institution building and development-oriented activities, but a country undergoing a conflict that shows few signs of abating. All parties to the conflict – the Taliban, the Afghan and the U.S. government – are almost entirely focused on the war and achieving military advantage. (It is not just the U.S. which is raising “the tempo of operations,” as an ICG analysis put it recently in 2018.) Given that, it can only be expected that, as the Afghan war approaches its fortieth anniversary, the voracity and possibly the geographical extension of the conflict may again increase this year – unless peace unexpectedly breaks out (our look at peace talks in 2017 give no grounds for hope). What happened during Obama’s surge of 2010 to 2012 could be repeated, that we see a mutually reinforcing spiral of escalation of the conflict.

In 2017, Afghanistan has been reclassified by UN as a country in an active conflict. However, both the number of civilian casualties (dropped by 9 per cent) and number of IDP’s decreased in 2017 as compared to 2016 (from 675,000 newly displaced in 2016 to just a bit less than 500,000 newly displaced in 2017). The decreases in civilian casualties in 2017 is mainly due that the Afghan National Security Forces took more precautions, UNAMA said, to protect civilians during ground engagements. There were ominous trends, too; almost a quarter of all casualties were killed or injured in suicide or complex attacks, most of them in Kabul, the highest numbers on record. Nevertheless, in 2017 UNAMA recorded over 10,000 civilian casualties.

The decrease in IDPs (to 499,934 individuals), from previous highest year on record 2016 (674,698 newly displaced individuals), could also be seen as not decrease at all, if compared to the highest year on record. However, the records on the number of IDPs in the country prior to 2012 are scarce and unreliable. The estimated number of IDPs for the period 2001 to 2009, or earlier periods are patchy, variable and, for some periods, non-existent. In 2014,
196,244 new IDPs had been registered by OCHA, and in 2015 this number doubled to 384,426 newly displaced persons.

Peace offer: The second meeting of the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation that was held in the Afghan capital on 28 February 2018, marked a change in the peace rhetoric. The Afghan government presented some very concrete proposals for peace talks with the Taliban. It came with a few conditions (not called as much) – mainly that women’s rights and the basic values of the constitution are not up for negotiation. The offer includes, for the first time, a mention of a ceasefire, an office in Kabul for the Taliban and the lifting of sanctions on those Taliban leaders who would join the negotiation. What is not clear is the sequence and over what time period all this would come together. The President also offer to Pakistan of “a consolidated state-to-state dialogue,” which would include “a plan for the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan within a period of 18 to 24 months.” But, we come back to this later.

NUG rift: There has been an obvious rift between Ghani and Abdullah, and most recently following Ghani’s acceptance of Nur’s undated resignation, the division between Jamiat, a leading mainly Tajik party and the Palace surfaced, too. It was a move that both Nur, who is also the head of Jamiat’s Executive Council (shura-ye ejra’iya), and his party, opposed. In late December 2017, Atta and Ghani began indirect negotiations about their disagreement. Then, a couple of days later, Jamiat entered negotiations with the delegation representing the Palace, which included the National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar, the head of National Directorate of Security Masoom Stanekzai, Minister of Finance Eklil Hakimi, and Salam Rahimi, head of the administrative office of the president. The negotiations included a number of issues ranging from center-regional power dynamics, ethnic identity and representation issues, and the power of strongmen and former mujahidin in Afghanistan’s political struggles.

Elections: Taking into account the above mentioned context elections scheduled for 7 July 2018 will not happen on the predetermined date. This means rescheduling elections for later in the year, most likely October. Electoral preparations have been turned into a battlefield between the government and its critics. This, in addition to the lack of reform and tardy preparations (which will be looked at in more detail in this series of dispatches) call seriously into question whether a credible election can be held, not only on schedule in July 2018 but
even at a later date in the year. The Afghan government and its international backers may already be considering a Plan B.

**Returnees in the current Afghan political and socio-economic context**

Afghanistan cannot deal with a new influx of returnees. In the current situation, when Afghanistan is still dealing with around 600,000 returnees from 2016 and 2017, (and doing that poorly) and with about 1.2 million documented refugees still in Pakistan, the UNHCR has only been able to mobilize 9.4 million U.S. dollars – seven per cent – of the amount necessary to pay for already existing and expected returnees in 2018. The Afghan government has no funding on its own to provide for new returnees.

Pakistan granted a last-minute extension of the PoR cards for Afghan refugees on 31 January 2018, and only for two months, ie 31 March 2018. There are fears that in 2018, the 2016 exodus of over a half a million Afghan refugees from Pakistan, may be repeated. Both refugees and humanitarian agencies are worried about a possible mass push back of people across the border at a time when Afghanistan is not safe, services and employment opportunities for returnees are not evident and they would not have had time to prepare themselves.

Since 2016, Afghan refugees have been on increasingly shaky ground when it comes to knowing how long they might be able to stay in Pakistan. Pakistan’s position on not extending the PoR cards, is linked both the increasing hostile attitude of Kabul and the pressure tactics of Washington towards it. The turn in U.S. policy towards Pakistan – President Trump said there should be increased efforts to persuade Pakistan to stop supporting the Taliban – and its deployment of more troops to Afghanistan, coupled with Kabul’s strengthening ties with India, all appear to have fuelled Pakistan’s reluctance to extend the PoR cards.

In 2016, the UNHCR gave 400 USD cash assistance per registered refugee who returned to Afghanistan, a move which some organisations argued encouraged the return of many Afghan refugees. There are hints that Pakistan has requested from UNHCR to increase 200 USD cash assistance to 400 USD again. Although these hints have not been substantiated, it shows both that Pakistan is determined to return Afghans, but is also ready to engage in a more constructive dialogue on returns.
At the same time, the number of Afghan refugees arriving on Europe’s shores this year was significantly lower than in 2015 and 2016, but the arrivals have not stopped. In 2017, there were still a few thousand Afghans making the hazardous trip across the Mediterranean to the continent, and tens of thousands more continued to be on the move inside Europe.

**Economic and social status of returnees in Afghanistan**

Across Afghanistan, an estimated 2.2 million people from displaced, returnee and refugee families live in more than 1,600 informal settlements – often clusters of mud-brick constructions or tents on private or public land with little or no access to services. The main pull factors of these settlements are the security and the prospect of jobs and livelihoods offered by their mostly urban settings.

The best example is the rapid increase in Nangrahar’s population in 2016 has put a strain on government services, including health and education. The city’s main hospital was built to cater for a population of about 1.3 million people in the 1970s, but in 2016 overcrowded and struggling to provide services. Back then all wards and bedrooms were full and new patients either had to wait in corridors or in the open yard of the hospital. A doctor at the provincial hospital in Jalalabad city said that the daily rate of babies being born there had doubled, from 60 to 120 per day.

The education department experienced similar situation. For example, the number of students in a Nangrahar High School, located in the centre of Jalalabad, has more than doubled. An additional 1,300 to 1,500 students were admitted for the academic year 1395/96 (2016/17) which began on 15 September 2016, on top of the 1,200 students already studying there.

In 2016, the education department managed to enroll a total of 34,000 additional students and pupils from returnee families in schools all over the province. The students were enrolled based on different conditions. For example, 2,000 were accepted based on school documents from Afghan schools in Pakistan. Another 16,000, between grades one and six, were enrolled unconditionally, ie without presenting any papers. The remaining 16,000 students had been temporarily enrolled for three months. After that, the education ministry would test them to ascertain their level and formally enroll them. The education department has received support from both international non-governmental organizations and the
United Nations. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) hired 120 new teachers for this academic year, while the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF) added 50 more teachers for children who are living in tents in different areas along the Torkham-Jalalabad highway, with a hundred more teachers to come.

**Afghanistan still deals with the returnees who came back in 2016**

On the other hand, there are also significant bureaucratic hurdles for returnees trying to obtain land deeds. But, nothing has been done yet to change land distribution regulation from 2005. Land distribution under the MoRR, as per 2005 decree, has been and is still so poorly managed. The plan to move the administrative management of land distribution to the Afghanistan Independent Land Authority (Arazi, in Dari), is still pending Cabinet approval. The government is still struggling to reclaim the land from the local powerful.

The problem of land grabbing has already had an effect on Afghan refugees in Pakistan, as news of it has spread among them. Deterred by the chance to run into conflict with local power holders, many have decided to stay. This is certainly true in Balochistan, where no major incident of pressure from the Pakistani authorities has so far been reported, and where one Afghan told a BBC reporter the refugees there would not be returning because of this issue.

The coordination of development funds between organizations and different ministries additionally burdens an outreach to refugees and other population on move. To put it bluntly, people are often left to take care of themselves, and most of refugees in Pakistan, as well as Iran are aware of this. Thus, many of them are not happy with Pakistan’s ad hoc policy on extension with PoR cards, as they know that return to Afghanistan in the current situation would probably result in a general decrease of their quality of life.

**Where do we go from here?**

It is very difficult 17 years into international intervention in Afghanistan to give a silver bullet recommendation, which cuts through country’s complexities of political, security and economic realities. Hence, many ‘silver bullets’ had been offered in the past and none delivered on expectation.
In the current situation, it is not merely important that elections, peace talks and political dialogue between disfranchised parties in Afghanistan, actually take place, but it also important that Afghanistan, in line with Ghani’s 28 February speech pursue an open and constructive dialogue with Pakistan, among other things about the fate of 1.2 documented and many undocumented refugees still residing there. Pakistan is to hold general elections in July 2018, and early polls and prognosis predict that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) is heading to secure another five years term. They currently hold 55 percent majority in the Pakistan’s national assembly (189 of 342). This means that is unlikely that the current erratic policy about Afghan refugees’ right to stay in Pakistan will change, for better or worse. Afghanistan should therefore engage with Pakistan and seek solution for its citizens residing there. It would be good, if Pakistan extends PoR cards until after the elections, and Afghanistan should certainly insist on that option.

Donor fatigue with Afghanistan is more apparent than ever, as evident from the UNHCR funding gap. It is important that a potential return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan is carefully coordinated between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the donor community, including international organizations who are working closely on this issue.

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Setara Hassan

It’s a pleasure and a great honor for me to be here among all of you and thanks to the VIDC for organizing a conference which is of such high significance, because of the deportation of a lot of Afghans refugees not only from Pakistan and Iran but also from Europe. I will now focus more on women in Afghanistan.

Since the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, and the commence of the international community in rebuilding Afghanistan, numerous national and international initiatives have been applied to end gender-based discrimination that bounded the Afghan women for decades. Frequent conferences have been held to promote the important role of women in all provisions of society, to empower them and to promote gender equality in post-conflict Afghanistan.
As a result, several gains have been made. More than 78,000 women have been appointed to government positions since then, and over 8,000 women currently hold government offices.¹ Last year a women magazine started, TV stations that deal with women’s challenges have been created; social media movements such as “Where Is My Name?” are on the way. This campaign was pretty successful and many Afghans understood why “Where Is My Name?” is so important; because in Afghanistan you do not call a woman by her name. She is either a wife of someone, a mother or a sister etc. When you make an invitation card, even if it’s her wedding invitation card, you do not write her name. It is written: “Murtaza’s daughter is getting married to Hameed” and who is Murtaza’s daughter? Therefore this campaign was very important and it changed the mentality of many people. It has raised very important questions. Now as a result a lot of women do demand that their names should be written on their wedding invitation cards, or if a woman died, her name should be written on her graveyard. This gives a kind of value to her as a person.

There are immense achievements by the Afghan women in the past 17 years:

- Increased political participation
- Increased school enrolment of girls and university graduation among young women
- Increased access to justice and legal protection of women’s rights
- Decrease in certain harmful cultural practices
- Economic advancement, and business development among women
- And finally women’s increased participation in peace and security, their presence in
  - Police force,
  - Air force,
  - Special force,
  - Defense force

Nonetheless, women still face systematic challenges, beyond the common encounters of illiteracy, poverty, lack of access to standard health care and insecurity, with the cultural embedded degradation of women seen as second or third class citizens, often “owned” or objectified. They do not only face violence in the family but also in the community and are continuously threatened by widespread sexual harassment, wherever they go, whether it is

¹ https://asiafoundation.org/
educational setting, government office, workplaces or street. Over 90 percent of women deal with harassments on daily basis.

Therefore, additional efforts are needed, not only to accelerate the above achievements but to ensure that those accomplishments are protected, especially under the reconciliation processes with the Taliban, who did not just suppress women but also dehumanized them. Afghan women should be supported not to find themselves again in the horrifying circumstances of abuse and suppression. They shall be reinforced in carrying their efforts further with pushing the harmful cultural and social boundaries.

Persistent supports are needed in increasing women and men’s awareness about the essentiality of women’s role and participation, whose inclusions are crucial for national, regional and international peace keeping, resilience building and accelerating sustainable development.

We need awareness programs that will advocate for policies, actions and initiatives that address the barriers, violence and discrimination faced by women and girls on day-to-day basis in Afghanistan, while highlighting the efforts that can prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls on all levels. We should promote to include women in planning, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation for a sustainably developed Afghanistan. Recognizing those needs and the significance of empowering Afghan women and girls for accelerating the economic growth, development and help sustain peace and stability across Afghanistan. While also advocating ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls, which is not only their basic human right, but also crucial to growth and resilience-building in Afghanistan, Zan TV was created. This thematically spotlights on all aspects of women’s empowerment through TV programs that contributes to:

Women’s Cultural Empowerment

- Participation in domestic decision-making
- Control over spouse selection and marriage age
- Control over childbearing decisions
- Draw attention to child marriages
- Draw attention to domestic violence

Women’s Social Empowerment
- Freedom of movement
- Access to education and health care
- Freedom from gender based discrimination, violence and harassment

Women’s Economic Empowerment
- Knowledge about financial resources and micro credits
- Financial literacy & financial management
- Promoting women in business

Women’s Legal Empowerment
- Participation in domestic decision-making
- Knowledge of legal mechanism
- Tools and support for exercising their basic human rights
- Anti -Violence Law Advocacy
- Anti - Harassment Law Advocacy

Women’s Political Empowerment
- Knowledge of political system and means of access to it
- Political engagement and ability to exercise vote
- Active participation in peace and reconciliation processes
- Right to hold political office and engage in peace-building decisions
- Women’s role in peace and security

Zan TV programmes go beyond the mere presentation of factual information, but explore its larger significance by stimulating critical thinking and deepening the audience’s understanding about women’s empowerment and its impacts on overall development of Afghanistan. Zan TV is also designed to train and foster professional media production competencies: harnessing a variety of media technologies in women. Enabling them to master basic approaches and advance their technical knowledge to have a critical eye for selecting attention-grabbing, educational and thought-provocative media content, to inform, educate, inspire behavior change and thereby impact the lives of millions of women in Afghanistan. Which can profoundly change the way women are perceived in society? Henceforth, it has the potential to revolutionize the status of women in Afghanistan.
Media profession in Afghanistan and especially for women is not seen as an honorable profession. Women on-screen are usually seen as “not honorable women” and subjected to assault, verbal abuse, false accusations and allegations of moral crimes. Accusations, such as media houses being a place of unmoral relationships where men employees misusing the women employees sexually and otherwise; or media houses not being a place for honorable women have been targeted against every media house in Afghanistan. Zan TV, which primarily hires women would obviously be at a higher risk of such allegations and endangered.

Unemployment, which is currently higher than 40% in the country, at such a high rate is not just an economical problem, but also a security and social one, since the unemployed are extremely vulnerable to be attracted to terrorist organizations, drug addiction, criminal groups and finally, dangerous irregular migration. Job insecurity on the other hand is another problem that those already employed face, where 48% of already employed is considered underemployed and almost all jobs are insecure long-term. Unemployment rises both direct and indirect consequences for returnees and especially if you are women. Women’s drug addiction is on the rise and effect a large group of women today.

Security issues prevent women from progressing: the biggest challenge becomes the movement barriers faced by women and girls caused by insecurity, being banned from going to school, work and sometimes left with the responsibility to run a whole family by herself, if she loses her husband in an attack and ends up responsible for raising multiple children, usually with no skill sets or education.

Ironically, women are often excluded from the planning, policies decisions, precautions, actions and programs that address security issues, while they are the most affected parts of society. Causes and consequences of security on women’s live are substantial, these take the women back to the dark era of war, where women were seen as weak and vulnerable and in need of male companions to live a life.

Failure of media engagement with the objective of promoting and broadening awareness of the benefits of including women in achieving peace makes Zan TV even more important. We have to use this platform to bring attention to the positive impacts of including more women in peace provisions. Stimulating conversations, dialogues, and monologues focused on:
• Mentoring and teaching young boys about how to be men in ways that do not involve degrading or abusing girls and women
• Showcasing men working for gender violence prevention
• Highlighting the constitutional law that protects women against violence
• Highlighting the responsibilities of police, prosecutors and courts in regard to convicted crimes against women and children.
• Raising awareness about SDG 5 and ending violence against women
• Breaking the cycle of abuse from fathers to sons
• Teaching values of human dignity, equality and respect in young men and boys for women

Traditionally, media focus more on the negative stories. Afghanistan, considered the worst country, being a woman obviously does produce many negative content. However, that does not tell the full story and should not overshadow all the achievements, women have been able to accomplish despite all those challenges, which make them extraordinary women, and they deserve to be acknowledged for pushing boundaries in many fields and are now recognized as qualified and capable workforce who help Afghanistan to go forward with the peace efforts, institution building, peacekeeping, financial growth, private sector development etc.

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Ahmad: My first question is on the role of Pakistan. Because you mentioned that Pakistan is using the Afghan refugees as political tool to influence the politics in Afghanistan. Sanaa, you mentioned the Durand Line and the politics behind the Durand line. What is Pakistan going to achieve by pressurizing Afghanistan and using the Afghan refugees as a form of pressure? Is it only the Durand Line or anything beyond? Jelena: How is this discussed in Afghanistan.

Alimia: I think this is an important question. The Afghanistan-Pakistan border goes back to this old colonial Durand Line agreement, but in practice the border is very very fluid as I mentioned before. You have what is effectively called a geographic buffer zone, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, which is political state of exception within Pakistan. They are not part of the constitution; they have separate laws that govern them, which mean that the Pakistani police can’t enter into the areas. Therefore the border is quite a fluid border.

The overall relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan will never really be resolved until FATA is actually included and incorporated into the Pakistani state properly. This is one challenge that Pakistani state faces. It is quite interesting to see that the desire to perform this border has started when the global war on terror started. You have for example a lot of WikiLeaks documents revealing that in 2009 the U.S. government was quite heavily pressurizing on Pakistan that this border should be maintained. And now the Pakistani government is saying to the U.S. Administration: “If you help us to build a fence, this will help us to manage the population flows”.

Much of the conflict within the Afghanistan-Pakistan region is related to this unresolved border issue. Pakistan believes that it has to put pressure on Afghanistan, because the former President of Afghanistan only last year said: “We still do not recognize the Durand Line”.

Bjelica: Well, first I will answer your question with a question. Why Pakistan would actually challenge Afghanistan when Pakistan is totally fine with the Durand Line. It’s the other way around.
I just want to explain you a certain dynamic on Afghanistan and using the refugees as a pressure button in the last three years, actually since 2015. It’s linked to the big attack in Peshawar in December 2014, which was carried out by the Pakistani branch of the Taliban. After this attack Pakistan pushed for the first time around 50,000 – 100,000 of undocumented Afghan refugees out of the country. Since 2015 we see this dynamic of Pakistan using this extension of the proof of registration cards as a pressure button on Afghanistan. Obviously there are other things why Pakistan is pressuring this refugee button. This has to do with regional dynamics and geo-politics. Afghanistan allying itself closer to India, becoming a partner in Chabahar Port between India, Iran and Afghanistan as a competitor project to the Chinese-financed project in Pakistan, Gwadar Port. The distance between the two ports is 70 km only. I suppose that the two ports will be key channels for trade in the region, one of them is financed by India and the other by China.

Ahmad: Just one question to Setara. There was a statement on the UN website that Afghanistan is the largest prison for women in the world, and reporters without borders said that Afghanistan is the most dangerous country for a journalist to work. You are both: you are journalist and a woman in Afghanistan. How does it make you feel?

Hassan: That makes my job the most interesting job in the world. We have started something that will take a lot of women very far and it is going to be impactful. But you mentioned security, security concerns keeps me up at nights, because I always fear that something might happen at the TV station: an attack or somebody just follow one of our employees, because they recognize faces and just blast cars. This is something that’s in your mind on a everyday basis before you sleep. There was a comment by a scholar in Afghanistan. He was a religious scholar who had shared that these half-naked women of Zan TV, if they were beheaded, it wouldn’t be against Islam. Imagine somebody was sharing that kind of statement on social media and other people were liking it and agreeing with that.

But I will also bring something else up. I think this is very important and is it also engages women. The unemployment rate in Afghanistan is over 40% and this does not only cause economic but also social problems, such as drug abuse and violence. If then the Afghan government says: “Send our refugees back”. What is with the 40% without a job? Unemployment is such a big issue. So this is something we all need to take care before inviting the refugees coming back and returning.
Audience: Q&A

Ahmad: Thank you. That was very important. Now I want to take questions from the floor.

Question: We have a lot of media discussions in Austria about people who have returned to Afghanistan. Therefore Ms. Hassan, could you follow up on what you just have described: How does it affect Afghanistan and especially Afghan women when so many people are repatriated, because normally you don’t prepare the country for such a huge repatriation of mostly men. And if there is an unemployment rate of 40%: How does the returnees earn money? How do they survive in Afghanistan when they return?

Question: I came to Austria two years ago. I lived in Afghanistan and worked in the human rights civil society and the human rights network in Afghanistan. As far as I know the government in Afghanistan doesn’t have a clear policy to fight Islamist groups like the Taliban, IS, Al Qaeda, Haqqani and other terrorist groups. In such a situation, how can we ensure women rights are stable in Afghanistan?

Question: My question is to Ms. Alimia, is there anybody who is doing monitoring of the repatriated refugees from Pakistan and from Europe. Are they able to return to their places of origin or do they eventually end up in a safe place like Kabul?

Question: My question is for Sanaa Alimia. You elaborated about the problematic relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. So what is the main point by your idea that the U.S. already put Pakistan on a black list, because they have supported the Taliban?

Hassan: Well, on the first question and how the returnees make a living, especially women. Imagine how hard it is if 40% are unemployed, and it is even harder when a husband, brother or somebody else who brings in the food is dead, because of a bomb blast. Usually there is a young woman of 25 years, no educational background, no skills, no job training with 4 - 5 very young children. Now she has to feed them and is responsible for them alone. That’s why a lot of Afghans are now being forced to flee the country. Immigration is partially because the people would like to go to a country where they can work and they can have a
living, a normal life. Women specially are at higher risk. They are mostly affected by security tensions and if there is a job position, it is usually offered to men; since historically men are more equipped with skills than women, because women have been deprived of education and trainings. There is no source of income for a lot of these people, this affects their social life, and this affects their education, the education of their children, the nutrition they get in their body. They are living a very bad life and the poverty is not only an economic poverty but poverty in many ways.

And I will quickly answer the next question. How could we secure women rights in Afghanistan? I think it’s important that we include women in the peace process. Women in Afghanistan are the most affected, whether your son or husband is a Talib or not - as a mother, as a woman, you go through the same pain. Your life is affected by those things, but women in Afghanistan are usually excluded from all peace processes, from all negotiations, from all precautions in regard to security, etc. I think that Ashraf Ghani is a good ambassador for women’s rights. Is it enough? No, of course not, but it is very encouraging that he is acknowledging his wife as a member of the Kabul Peace Conference, a good symbol of how we could include more women. And hopefully this is not only a symbolic role, but a real power role.

The 1970s and 1980s, when Afghanistan’s situation in terms of security changed and the Taliban went into the regime, changed the whole mentality. Generations of Afghan men have been affected by the mentality of degrading women and looking at them as objects that can be owned, controlled, suppressed and locked up in their own four walls. I always say, and this is very important for me, women’s right and equal rights are not only about women, it’s about men mostly. It’s also introducing positive masculinity. Manhood should not be about suppressing women. Manhood should be about equal opportunities, about supporting women, which is something we highly focus on.

**Alimia:** Thank you for your question. Pakistan once again takes on his role as the key frontline ally that is incredibly trusted by the U.S., and Pakistan is still the key route in terms of NATO supplies. But you could see now that the US Administration is shifting its policy towards Pakistan and is getting harsher. The actual relationships are particularly low, perhaps the lowest since the Osama bin Laden scandal of 2011 when Osama bin Laden was found in Abbottabad in Pakistan.
Will this impact the Pakistan-Afghanistan dynamic. This is something that remains to be seen. I wouldn’t put it absolutely out of the window that the U.S. Administration will make a total break, because they still continue to use the heavy reliance between the two states. So it’s an interesting question to us what this financial blacklisting will mean for Pakistan, because at the moment, for the past two to three years, Pakistan is becoming increasingly more reliant on China.

**Bjelica:** There are monitoring mechanisms in place. UNHCR is dealing with the returnees from Pakistan or Iran and IOM (International Organization for Migration) is dealing with the returnees from Europe. The returnees from Europe go under the Joint Way Forward memorandum between the European Union and Afghanistan. There are special provisions and packages that are provided for those, who are being returned from Europe and there is additional support provided to the relevant ministry to deal with the returnees from Europe. To answer your question, there is something called migration data tracking mechanism. It is available online and you can follow by week. All the agencies feed on this website: [http://www.globaldtm.info/afghanistan/](http://www.globaldtm.info/afghanistan/).

**Ahmad:** I will go through a second round of questions very quickly.

**Question:** My question is about the status of Afghans in Pakistan, whether they are born in the FATA region or in Pakistan. Could they get Pakistani citizenship?

**Question:** Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen! We need to remember that the legacy in the region left from 140 years ago; from the former Great Britain, the super power who was thirsty for oil, water and leadership. We should not forget that. How do you see these issues; the global reconciliation, the regional reconciliation?

**Question:** Ms. Alimia, you said that over 70% of Afghan refugees are born in Pakistan, but what is the long term solution to stay in Pakistan?

**Question:** In Afghanistan there are so many organization and parties hindering women’s liberation. How could we overcome this situation?

**Question:** My question refers to Ms. Alimia, because she used the term ‘invasion’ for the presence of international forces and American forces in Afghanistan. I would like to know
the idea behind using this term, because this term is used by the extremists also, like the ones who give Fatwa for killing people in Afghanistan.

**Ahmad:** Thank you very much, we have just four minutes to wrap up and finish tonight’s discussion.

**Alimia:** Perhaps I shall start with the last question. The reason why I use the term ‘invasion’ is because there were troops on the ground and there was also bombardment, so this is used as a technical term and it shouldn’t be mistaken as sympathy for right wing extremists. Now to the question: Shouldn’t the refugees go back and rebuild their homeland effectively? Of course, we should support people who like to return to their homeland, but the return to the so-called homeland could become quite difficult and problematic. People who do migrate don’t necessarily belong to an ethnically and territorially pure land.

Very simply to this broader polemical speech about global factors, we should take them into account. Of course we live in an uneven world with vast disparities of power that are shaped by long legacies of colonialism and inequalities etc. Of course we should be taking these broader facts into account, but it can’t be about these big polemical narratives, we need to see what is happening on the ground. How people’s lives are being affected? How people are engaging? How people are responding?

I was asked about this idea of Pakistani citizenship. Afghans who are born in Pakistan are not given citizenship. It is incredibly difficult for an Afghan who is living in Pakistan to be naturalized and to be given citizenship; birth right does not give you citizenship. Birth right means you are registered on an Afghan PoR card with your parents’ card, and you are also only an Afghan citizen with temporary protection in Pakistan. There is a broader issue of how Pakistan citizenship laws are given and have been managed. This is rooted again in colonial legacies.

**Hassan:** There was a question about male dominance in Afghanistan and how it’s going to limit us from gaining gender equality. This is a very accurate point and I agree with you, it’s very difficult. I come from media and we usually focus on a lot of negative stories, but this is not the full story. Afghan women have been able to push a lot of boundaries and reach stages, although Afghanistan is still a male dominant country. So it’s not an impossible path, it’s very difficult and challenging, but overall this is something that the women, not
foreigners, not U.S. or anybody but the Afghan women could achieve. We are strong enough to say: No when it’s no and it’s enough when it’s enough; and we are doing so. Especially when it comes to the 8th of March we should acknowledge how far women have come, how hard women have fought. It is time that we acknowledge those and supporting them to carry that kind of accomplishments further and make it widespread in whole Afghanistan.

Bjelica: I actually don’t have an answer to your question about regional peace. I think what we need in Afghanistan is a peace and reconciliation process, which is in my opinion an internal Afghan process. That process can possibly be extended at some point to include parts of the region or the entire region. After forty years of atrocity and after forty years of terrible war crimes and crimes against humanity, and this completely ridiculous amnesty which is written in the 2004 Afghan constitution the people and many victims in Afghan society need to address the atrocity, weather that channel will be the International Criminal Court or that’s going to be some other mechanism, which doesn’t need necessarily to include a criminal justice component but maybe a truth telling commission.

Ahmad: That’s a really good point to end. We hope we will see long and sustainable peace in Afghanistan as soon as possible. Thank you very much Dr. Sanaa Alimia, Jelena Bjelica and Setara Hassan and thank you all for your inputs and for attending our event.