



# Supporting Women's Rights and Peace in Afghanistan

## 2014 - A Key Year for Women in Afghanistan:

2014 was a crucial year for Afghan women. In the backdrop of Afghan women human rights defenders being murdered, NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan at the end of December. The UK also hosted two summits that were central to peace and women's rights: the NATO Summit; and London Conference. GAPS maximised these to secure commitments to women and peace.

At the NATO Summit Afghan women were given neither a platform nor means to input into the peace and security decisions that affect their and their country's future. As a result, GAPS worked with its members, Afghan organisations and international partners to highlight women's exclusion (see protest photograph above) and ensure that the London Conference would deliver for women's rights and women's role in peacebuilding.



Ahead of the conference, GAPS worked tirelessly with UK officials and parliamentarians, GAPS members, international governments, and representatives of the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) to ensure the best possible chance of their representation. At the Oslo Symposium on Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan in Norway GAPS met with the UK, US, Swedish, Norwegian, Netherlands and Finnish governments to influence their governments; developed [a briefing](#) for how women's rights could be included in the conference agreement; provided practical support, such as supporting AWN with their conference speeches; met UK Ministers; co-organised a parliamentary event where parliamentarians were photographed with messages of support to Afghan women; briefed parliamentarians who included key GAPS messages in parliamentary debates and questions; organised a meeting in Parliament with All-Party Parliamentary Groups and Afghan civil society; and was quoted in a [Guardian article](#) on Afghan women's rights.

## GAPS Achievements and Impact:

- Following extensive GAPS lobbying of the UK and other governments, the international community dedicated a Conference plenary session to women's rights at which AWN Board Member, Arezo Qhani addressed the main conference plenary. Arezo highlighted the importance of women rights and peace and Women's Rights Organisations to Afghanistan's development and security. Arezo was the only civil society speaker in a thematic session at the Conference.
- GAPS secured a meeting on women's rights with the UK Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening, AWN and representatives of Afghan civil society (photograph to the left). This was the first meeting the Minister had on Afghanistan during the Conference week. Interventions made by the Afghan women were reiterated by the Minister during the Conference itself.
- GAPS was the only international organisation to present at breakfast meeting at the London Conference which was hosted by the UK Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening and Afghanistan Government CEO (Deputy President) Dr Abdullah Abdullah and attended by ten other states, including Ministers from the USA, Denmark and Sweden (see photograph below). GAPS presented with Hasina Safi, Director of AWN, on the importance of women's rights, women's role in peacebuilding, and key steps required by the international community and Afghan Government to advance peace and gender equality.



- Following GAPS direct input into drafts of the conference communiqué, the international community and Afghan Government's development prioritises effectively promote women and peace.
- As a result of these achievements, Afghan women were given a platform to influence the conference and women and peace is prioritised in the agreement with the Afghan Government and donors.