

# Beyond the military exit

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Against the backdrop of the planned military exit and the coming Bonn II conference in December, Norwegian NGOs working in Afghanistan share serious concerns regarding the manner of the withdrawal, and the nature of Norway's future commitment to Afghanistan. We are alarmed by the seeming lack of any meaningful inclusion of women and civil society in the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan as well as the persistent lack of investment in education and health. There are also serious concerns about the continued large-scale humanitarian needs manifested particularly in the growing number of conflict-induced internally displaced persons.

## 1. Support to the Afghan Government

Afghans are justifiably asking why more has not been achieved, given the large volume of aid allocated to the country. Over 56.8 billion dollars has so far been disbursed by 54 countries. We believe there is a need for certain changes that would increase the impact of assistance, and we ask the Norwegian Parliament to engage in making these changes happen.

### *The Parliament should call for the Norwegian Government to:*

- Uphold its current aid level to Afghanistan and ensure flexible humanitarian funding. The funds should be allocated to humanitarian and development efforts, including disaster prevention and risk reduction. Support to the police and security sector should not be included in this budget post.
- Allocate funds based on human rights and needs, rather than in pursuit of military, political and strategic interest. This will ensure that the population is protected, and will help enable a transparent and bottom-up community-based development process to take root. Specific steps should be taken to make sure that funding is made available to the provincial level.
- Take a leading role in implementing the UNSC resolution 1325 and strive to make it a foundation pillar in the peace process. There will be no peace in Afghanistan without women's participation.
- In committing to the Kabul process on budget funding, ensure that the Afghan Government is fully supported to implement projects, and is held to account on making key achievements in the areas of human rights and protection.
- Ensure that aid is accountable to the Afghan people and the donor public by increasing transparency and improving results management, especially regarding key indicators pertaining health and education and the achievements of key markers related to human rights and protection.
- Investing in local governance structures that gives room for active citizens' participation is a crucial element in building a sustainable Afghan society.
- Support to basic services like education and health is fundamental (support to these sectors were only 2 and 4 percent respectively of total Norwegian funding for 2010). Children and youth represent the majority of the Afghan population and their right to health, education and protection must be met. Access to clean and sustainable energy and creating livelihood and employment are also crucial factors to address the sustainability perspective.

## 2. Support to civil society

Civil society actors play a crucial role in building democratic and participatory societies. Civil society organizations provide basic services, organize and represent ordinary citizens and

provide checks and balances to the established power structure. In the context of a fragile state, like Afghanistan, these functions are particularly important to build a democratic and viable state. In Afghanistan faith based institutions as well as traditional leaders have a particular legitimacy and are therefore a potential for strengthening the interface between governance and citizens.

***The Parliament should call for the Norwegian Government to:***

- Gradually increase the proportion of funds to civil society actors prioritizing actors that promote anti-corruption, women's, children's and youth's participation and accountable governance.
- Put pressure on the Afghan Government to give space for civil society and women in particular so that they can actively and freely fight for human rights and hold the government more accountable.
- Put pressure on the Afghan government so that civil society and women are present and given space at Bonn II in a more representative manner. If they are not represented, Norwegian delegates should make an effort to make sure that women's rights and civil society perspectives are brought into the debate.

### **3. The military exit**

There is broad political agreement that the PRTs must be transformed into a civilian entity and integrated into provincial planning structures. However, as 2012 approaches, there is now less than 2,5 year remaining until the military withdrawal is due to be complete. We are concerned there is now barely enough time to ensure continuity and sustainability. Reconciliation and negotiations with anti-government groups are delicate processes, in which there is a risk for women's rights to be eroded. We are also concerned about capacities of the Afghan security forces, as we see that they are some way from being sufficiently equipped and adequately trained to be able to protect the population and there are very few accountability measures in place to monitor.

***The Parliament should call for the Norwegian Government to:***

- Ensure that women's rights are not negotiable at any stage and protect the legal and social advances made after 2001.
- Secure women's participation and full involvement in all the stages of the transition process. UNSC Resolution 1325 must be implemented in policy and practice to ensure meaningful inclusion of women in the peace process.
- Share a clear and transparent plan concerning how the Norwegian government intends to ensure continuity of project investment and the partial sustainability of the investments made thus far. Uphold that international governments are sharing PRT transition plans so there is consistency of approach. The withdrawal must not be implemented in a manner that damages humanitarian and development efforts.
- Make sure that Norwegian mentoring of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) includes substantial training in human rights, international humanitarian law, and protection of civilians, as well as the role of civilian and humanitarian national and international actors in Afghanistan.
- Provide a clear plan for future Norwegian support to ANA and ANP beyond 2014, ensuring their respect for human rights and international human law.