



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Adisa Busuladzic

Phone: +93 (0) 702636328

Email: ABusuladzic@state.gov

Afghan Women Judges Rise from Taliban Terror to Top of the Class

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | JUNE 20, 2012 – Professor Abdul Salam Azimi, Chief Justice of the Afghanistan Supreme Court, U.S. Embassy Justice Attaché David Schwendiman, USAID Deputy Mission Director, James Stein and other Afghan and U.S. government officials attended the Judicial *Stage* graduation ceremony held at the Afghanistan Supreme Court today. The Judicial *Stage* 2-year training program prepares law, *Shari'a*, and *madrassa* graduates for appointment as the country's next generation of judges. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided technical assistance in the development of the curriculum and training on teaching methodologies. USAID provides one third of the funding for the first year and the entire second year of the program, as well as housing for the women stage students from outside of Kabul.

Most remarkably, and for the second consecutive year, the overwhelming majority of the top graduates in the class are female. Nine women judges were among the top ten graduates last year, while eight of them made it to the top ten this year.

U.S. Embassy Justice Attaché David Schwendiman addressed the graduates, saying, "The United States Government is proud to be a part of the judicial education experience in Afghanistan, helping Chief Justice Azimi and others realize their vision for the robust and independent judiciary Afghanistan needs to serve its people well now, and into the future. I am particularly pleased, as I know Ambassador Crocker and Secretary Clinton would be, to note the number of women graduates in this class."

In total, 123 students were conferred degrees this year, along with the privilege and opportunity to serve a crucial role in the Afghan judiciary and the further development of rule of law in the country.

USAID supports the Judicial Training Program through its Rule of Law Stabilization Program, which is designed to develop the human and institutional capacity of the justice sector, increase the public's access to justice, particularly women, and promote the public's demand for a robust rule of law environment in Afghanistan.

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