



PRESS RELEASE

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150 Afghan Women Judges Form Professional Association

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | JULY 18, 2012 – Afghan Women Judges formed their first association today at a Supreme Court ceremony attended by Afghanistan’s President, Hamid Karzai, U.S. Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Chief Justice Abdul Salam Azimi and other Afghan and U.S. government officials. The creation of the Afghan Women Judges Association (AWJA) adds force to the active participation of female judges and lawyers in Afghanistan’s judicial system and promotes access to high-quality, reliable legal services for vulnerable Afghan women nationwide.

“Very often today, the people of Afghanistan still turn to informal systems because government institutions are not adequately represented and do not perform well. Therefore, it is up to us - in the state system - to ask ourselves if we have been able to deliver adequate services and justice to the people of Afghanistan. This becomes even more crucial with the departure of international forces. We need a strong government structure so that no outside force can interfere with our affairs. A powerful government represents a powerful people,” – said Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

In the last six years of the judicial *Stage* program, a mandatory training program for Afghan judges, each class has consistently boasted approximately 20 to 30 women graduates, the majority of whom have ranked at the top of their graduating class.

Educated and empowered women are vital to democracy and vital to the development of all countries. By serving as judges, educated and empowered Afghan women play a critical role in promoting equal rights for every man, woman, and child in Afghanistan. The United States government stands alongside the Afghan government, the Afghan people, and especially the women of Afghanistan, to ensure that the hard-won gains made by women in the last ten years are not only protected, but also advanced.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) facilitated the creation of the Afghan Women Judges Association through its Rule of Law Program, 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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