



Women's Rights are human rights



Send your support to Malala Yousufzai

Contents

Page

Pakistan & Women's Rights – the case of Malala Yousufzai	1
Take Action 1: Send message of support to Malala	2
Take Action 2: Write to the Prime Minister of Pakistan	2
Afghanistan & Women's Rights: Young Women for Change (YWC)	3
Take Action 1: Send a message of support to YWC	4
Take Action 2: Write to the UK Ambassador to Afghanistan	4
Afghanistan & Women's Rights: background information	5
Placard template	6

We hope you will feel inspired to take action on all of our campaigns but remind you that all actions are optional.

This mailing is also available to download at

www.amnesty.org.uk/youth

YOUTH GROUP ACTION

PAKISTAN & WOMEN'S RIGHTS: THE CASE OF MALALA YUSUFZAI

You've no doubt heard about 14 year old Malala Yusufzai in the news over the past few weeks.

On October 9th 2012, gunmen opened fire on her as she was travelling home from school in Mingora town in Pakistan. She was hit by two bullets. Two fellow students, **Shazia Ramzan** and **Kainat Ahmed** were also injured in the attack.



Since the age of 11 Malala has spoken out for the education for girls in Pakistan ever since the Taliban took over her town and banned female education. Her father ran one of the last girls' schools to defy this ban.

Although they have since lost control of the region, a Taliban spokesperson has claimed Malala was targeted for 'promoting western culture' and for being 'anti-Taliban'.

At the time of writing, she lies fighting for her life in a hospital bed in the UK. She remains in a critical condition while Shazia and Kainat thankfully appear to be on the way to recovery.

Malala wrote a blog for the BBC. You can read it here: <http://tinyurl.com/8p253d>

"She is a Western-minded girl. She always speaks against us. We will target anyone who speaks against the Taliban." - Spokesperson for the Pakistan Taliban.

The Taliban

The Taliban movement emerged in the early 1990s in north Pakistan. They believe in a very strict form of the Islamic faith and Shari'a law (the holy laws of the Islamic faith). This interpretation of Shari'a law has very strict rules on how women should behave and dress and the Taliban use this to justify treating women badly.

The Taliban movement took power in the neighbouring country of Afghanistan in 1996. In 2001 the US government with its allies, including the UK, launched a military intervention in Afghanistan. One of the main reasons given for doing this, in addition to overthrowing the Taliban regime and finding camps of the group 'al-Qa'ida' was the need to improve the human rights situation and in particular women's rights.

Since 2005, the Taliban, along with other armed groups who were against the new Afghan government, have increased their attacks. The government have struggled to keep power outside the capital, Kabul. The rights of women and girls have been particularly threatened with frequent attacks, threats and killings.

YOUTH GROUP ACTION

Take Action 1: Send a message of support to Malala

You can do this on cards, posters or any creative way you like (just make sure it's a size that can easily be posted!). It's best to write a message in your own words but here are a couple of suggestions:

Your courage and strength is an inspiration to us all. Our thoughts are with you and your families during this difficult time.

We are sad and shocked to hear about the attack on you, Shaizia and Kainat. We wish you all a quick recovery and support you in your cause for education

Send your messages to:

Anne Montague
Education and Student team
Amnesty International UK,
Human Rights Action Centre,
17-25 New Inn Yard, London,
EC2A 3EA

Take Action 2: Write to the Prime Minister of Pakistan

Unfortunately, what happened to Malala is not uncommon. Women campaigning for human rights in northwest Pakistan live under constant threats from the Taliban and other armed groups. In the last twelve months at least two other women working on women's education, Farida Afridi and Zarteef Afridi, were killed in a wave of attacks by the Taliban and other groups in the region.

Write to Prime Minister of Pakistan asking him to:

- ensure that those who attempted to kill Malala are found and brought to justice.
- ensure that human rights defenders, particularly women activists in northwest Pakistan, receive the necessary protection to carry out their work without fear of attack.

Send your letters to:

His Excellency Raja Pervez Ashraf
Prime Minister of Pakistan
Prime Minister House
Islamabad
Pakistan

YOUTH GROUP ACTION

AFGHANISTAN & WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In 2011, we launched a campaign on Afghanistan and women's human rights that coincided with the 10th anniversary of the military intervention into Afghanistan. Our campaign aim was to ensure the UK government supports Afghan women's rights in any peace process and that Afghan women participated in all peace processes. Some of you may remember the 'Kites for women's rights' in Afghanistan action from September 2011. We asked Amnesty supporters to make kites for women's rights to send to Foreign Secretary, William Hague who attended the conference, to show that there is wide public support for women's rights in Afghanistan and make sure it was discussed at the event.

We have been successful in ensuring that Afghan women could participate at conferences in Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo and in calling for the UK government to speak out about women's rights. However, there is still much more the UK government should be doing to support Afghan women's rights. We are now expanding the campaign to cover four areas:

- 1) Ensuring Afghan women can participate in peace processes
- 2) Ensuring women's rights are protected and promoted as security is transferred from international forces to Afghan forces;
- 3) Ensuring tackling violence against women is a key priority for the Afghan government
- 4) Ensuring the work of Afghan women human rights defenders is supported and their rights protected.

Young Women for Change

This mailing focusses on the campaign's fourth area - supporting the work of Afghan women human rights defenders.

Young Women for Change (YWC) is an organisation whose aim is to improve the lives of women across Afghanistan and to give women the confidence and skills to fight for their rights. They help women to take a greater part in society through their awareness programme of films, courses, lectures, walks, and meetings. They helped to organise the first ever anti-street harassment march with another youth organisation, Hadia. They also led two protests asking for justice for women experiencing violence. YWC involves both men and women volunteers, and they set up the first men's group fighting for women's rights in Afghanistan. The group has also opened up a women's internet café in Kabul, a tailor shop for women and a learning centre where women teach literacy, language, work and computer skills.

YWC operate in one of the most dangerous places to be a woman where women's rights are constantly under threat. Women's human rights defenders frequently face harassment attacks and threats. Without the brave work of organisations like YWC, work to improve the situation for women in Afghanistan would stop.

YOUTH GROUP ACTION

Take Action 1: Send a message of support to YWC

Show your support for YWC's important work for women and girls' human rights in Afghanistan by writing them a message of support on a piece of A4 paper. Make sure your messages stand out as we would like to photograph them.

If you'd prefer you could send us a photo of yourself holding your message.

Suggested message:

Again, it's best to come up with your own message but we've enclosed a suggestion if you prefer to use that. It's YWC's key message (with translation in Arabic):

**Injustice to one woman is injustice towards the entire human race.
Wherever you are, be the voice of equality.**

Send them to:

Anne Montague
Education and Student team
Amnesty International UK,
Human Rights Action Centre,
17-25 New Inn Yard, London,
EC2A 3EA

Or email them to student@amnesty.org.uk

Take Action 2: Write to the UK Ambassador to Afghanistan

In your letter you could:

- Say that you are concerned about the attacks and intimidation faced by Afghan women human rights defenders. They work bravely to defend their own rights and the rights of others.
- Request that the UK government should work to support women human rights defenders like the YWC by encouraging the Government of Afghanistan to speak out publically about the importance of women's rights.
- Ask the UK ambassador to ensure that financial and political support is available to groups such as the YWC over the long term.

Start your letter: Dear Sir Richard Stagg

Post it to:

Sir Richard Stagg
British Embassy
15th Street, Roundabout Wazir Akbar Khan,
PO Box 334
Kabul, Afghanistan

YOUTH GROUP ACTION

AFGHANISTAN & WOMEN'S RIGHTS

1996: Before the Taliban

Before the Taliban came to power in 1996 women and girls in Afghanistan faced discrimination and inequality. There were high rates of maternal mortality*, low literacy* rates and high levels of violence against women including domestic violence. However, women's participation in their communities increased and there was some progress. For example:

- In 1919 Afghan women gained the right to vote.
- In 1964 women took part in drafting the Afghanistan constitution*, which established equality for women.
- Until the early 1990s, women held posts as teachers, government ministers, and medical doctors. They worked as judges, lawyers, journalists and writers.

* *maternal mortality: death of women during or shortly after pregnancy*

* *literacy: the ability to read and write.*

* *constitution: the set of laws and principles that a country's government must obey*

1996-2001: Taliban rule - few rights for women

The Taliban movement took power in 1996. Women were particularly badly treated by the Taliban and they encountered discrimination in all walks of life. In effect women were confined to the home:

- Women were not allowed to study, work or participate in politics.
- They couldn't leave the house unless accompanied by a *mahram*, a male blood relative.
- Forms of violence against women were also carried out by the Taliban state including stoning to death for adultery.

2001: Military intervention - some gains for women

In 2001 the US government with its allies, including the UK, launched a military intervention in Afghanistan. One of the main reasons given for doing this, in addition to overthrowing the Taliban regime and finding al-Qa'ida camps, was the need to improve the human rights situation and in particular women's rights.

After the fall of the Taliban, women and girls gradually began to claim their basic human rights: they sought work, sent their daughters to school, and voted in local and national elections. Some entered politics even though it was still very risky.

- In 2001, fewer than 1 million children attended school, almost none of them girls. In 2008-9 more than 5 million children attended school, more than a third of them were girls.
- In the 2010 parliamentary elections 40 per cent of voters were women and women won 27 per cent of seats (more than the 25 percent reserved for female candidates under the constitution).

2005: Women's rights under attack again.

Since 2005, the Taliban, along with other armed groups who were against the new Afghan government, have increased their attacks. The government have struggled to keep power outside the capital, Kabul. The rights of women and girls have been particularly threatened with frequent attacks, threats and killings.

2011: The peace progress

Over the past few years, Afghan leaders have been calling for reconciliation (a peace process) with the Taliban. This would involve negotiating with the Taliban. But many Afghan women fear that their rights may be sacrificed or traded away as part of these negotiations. If Taliban leaders are given any political power without restrictions, the rights of women and girls could be under threat again.

It is critical that women are involved in the peace negotiations. Not only is it their right to be there, the involvement of women will help to ensure that rights of women and girls are respected. Any peace process should include Afghans from all backgrounds, not just male leaders, and ensure that women are equal partners at the negotiating table.

**INJUSTICE TO ONE WOMAN IS
INJUSTICE TOWARDS THE ENTIRE
HUMAN RACE.**

بی عدالتی در مقابل یک زن، بی عدالتی در مقابل همه انسانهاست.

**WHEREVER YOU ARE, BE THE VOICE
OF EQUALITY.**