



The Chancellor of the Federal
Republic of Germany
Dr. Angela Merkel
Office of the Federal Chancellor
10178 Berlin

The Foreign Minister of the Federal
Republic of Germany
Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier
Office of the Federal Minister
10113 Berlin

📞 medica mondiale
Hülchrather Str. 4
D-50670 Köln

Fon: +49/221/9 31 89 8-0
Fax: +49/221/9 31 89 8-1

info@medicamondiale.org
www.medicamondiale.org

Selmin Çaliskan
extension: 29

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Dear Chancellor Merkel,
Dear Foreign Minister Steinmeier,

In view of President Hamid Karsai's ratification of the law on "Family and Personal Status" for Shia citizens, *medica mondiale* is extremely concerned about the negative effects of this law on the future development on womens' rights and human rights for all the citizens of Afghanistan.

medica mondiale, along with other national and international NGOs and members of the Afghanistan Parliament worked hard for many years to ensure within the Schiite Family and Personal Status Law, that the minimum age of marriage for young girls was raised from nine to 16 years and the so-called temporary marriage abolished. This allowed Afghani men to legally marry women for an hour or a day, to have sexual intercourse with them and subsequently abandon them. The regulation of family matters under customary law by which women have no access to administration of justice was also eliminated.

Despite these improvements the Law still contains paragraphs which discriminate against women. This is contrary not only to the Afghanistan Constitution but also international agreements to which Afghanistan is a signatory.

1. We urgently request you to intensify your efforts to critically examine the legislation and ensure that both female and male civilian representatives with expertise in gender and the legal matters are included in the evaluation process which has been announced. This is a requirement of womens' groups in Afghanistan.
2. On Saturday 18th April President Karsai and representatives of the Afghan Women Civil Society Network are meeting with the aim of opening a dialogue over the evaluation process. Before this, it is important that you personally contact President Karsai to emphasise the negative consequences from the Government's point of view should the discriminating paragraphs remain in place.

We would ask you to insist that womens' rights are finally made the focus of your Afghanistan strategy and to concentrate on the civilian rebuilding of Afghanistan instead of continuing with military solutions. In the last five years we have seen that also in the German decision making process, the protection and support of women and girls during the rebuilding in Afghanistan has slipped completely into the background. The low valuation of women and human rights is reflected in the extremely small share of only one percent of the total German contribution to the rebuilding of Afghanistan allocated to women's' projects.

Had women and girls been a central part of the international Afghanistan politics in the last 7 years it would not have come to an intensification of the social and political climate in which women's organisations have to perform their efforts in favour of achieving justice and human rights for women. The behaviour of the German players through ignorance and indifference enabled such a law to be introduced and womens' rights activists who protested openly against it paid with their lives.

Violence against western helpers and the rejection of womens' rights as western values in the last five years was nourished by the lack of rebuilding, growing poverty and NATO bombings of civilian targets leading to the deterioration of living conditions for women and girls.

medica mondiale further requests that the government presents a concrete, comprehensive rebuilding concept spanning 10 - 15 years, that involves women and girls in core areas such as education, health, participation in peace and the rebuilding process and which in its implementation is based on UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

It is not possible to "make a country" without women and girls, their protection and support - and certainly not one which guarantees women and girls human rights.
What will be your contribution to this?

With friendly greetings
medica mondiale e. V.



Selmin Caliskan
Dept. Head - Human Rights, Politics