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Women's Rights

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As the most of the International forces withdrawn from Afghanistan, there are signs that women's rights in Afghanistan may start rolling back as violence against this vulnerable segment of the society is already on the rise and policymakers fail to provide sufficient protection for women. What compound to the fears about a possible setback in preserving the hard-gained achievements for women is the fact that the Afghan government is persistently failing to commit to protect women's rights and international community's interests in defending Afghan women is declining. The latest case of domestic violence against a woman is only one of a small portion of reported cases of predominantly domestic violence to the government's institutions and human rights groups. Due to the male-dominant and deeply-conservative society, most of the cases of violence are not reported to the authorities as it is deemed against the customs and family pride.

According to officials, the real level of violence against women in Afghanistan is much higher than those reported, though, the increase in numbers means that more and more cases of violence are now reported to the government. As human rights activists and pro-women groups have been organizing campaigns for fighting domestic violence, a number of fresh cases of violence against women were reported by the media. In addition to widespread domestic violence, women's rights are violated in tribal feuds and marriage-related issues. Despite government's efforts for improving women's situation, violation of women's rights in forms of child marriage, feud-settling marriage, or Bad giving, are still widely practiced in conservative rural areas across the country. In many cases, tribal elders and councils deal with cases which involve women, and in most of such dealings, priority and favor are given to family and tribal pride rather than implementing justice.

A recent report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) has disclosed that NUG has failed to make significant gains in achieving human rights reforms in 2015 and little progress has been made in reining in abusive militias, reducing corruption, promoting women's rights, and reforming the courts. However, what is even more of concerns about the prospect of the hard-gained achievements of Afghan women is that commitments of the Afghan government are declining as the ongoing security and political transitions are the top priorities for the time being. The Afghan government has been failing systematically to take concrete measures for fighting violence against women and considering robust protective arrangements for protecting them.

Overwhelmed by challenges such as anti-insurgency campaign and the pervasive corruption, the Afghan government is continuing to fall short of taking sufficient measures for protecting women and preserving their rights. With the passive role of the government, conservative groups and opponents of women's rights are now have a louder say in opposing human and women's rights. Comparing to previous years, the conservative circles are exerting unprecedented level of pressures for reverting back the achievements gained during the last years. As the main force behind improvements of women's rights, the international community is losing interest in weighing in for the rights of the women in Afghanistan. Recently, the International support for Afghan women has been faltering, with the US and other allied countries focusing more on withdrawing forces from Afghanistan and ending the costly war. With the increasing apathy of the international community towards the Afghan conflict, Afghan women are posed to lose the hard-gained achievements of the past fifteen years. What is encouraging is that a number of highly-influential US officials and political figures are vehemently trying to fight the public apathy in the West towards women's rights in Afghanistan.

The United States recently announced programs for empowering the women in Afghanistan which is an encouraging sign of international concerns towards the Afghan women. Amid the political disengagement from the plight of the women, civil organizations and the media can play a crucial role in raising the issue to the international level and persuading the government – and the international community – to do more for protecting the women in Afghanistan. As the ongoing security transition and the forthcoming elections are currently top priorities for the government, the civil organizations needs to step up campaigns to get international attention to the worsening situation for the Afghan women. The shocking news of mutilation of a woman may only be an instance of another case of violence but is also an alarming sign for a possible rollback of the achievements of Afghan women in the future.