



Fact Sheet

“Come, Pray for Peace with Justice”

The Women of Afghanistan Unite for Peace

International Women’s Day

8 March 2009

BACKGROUND: In 2008, a small group of women in Kandahar, one of the most volatile areas of Afghanistan, came up with a simple but powerful idea: to gather in a public square to pray for peace with justice in Afghanistan. They began to spread the word to friends and colleagues, and decided to stage the action on 8 March, International Women’s Day. Expecting only a few women to show up, more than 1500 women gathered in Kandahar that day.

While the seeds were planted in 2008 in the heart of the conflict in Kandahar, Afghan women peace activists are determined to spread the action nationally for International Women’s Day in 2009.

8 MARCH 2009: From 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., women from throughout Afghanistan will gather in public spaces to pray for peace with justice. An end to the conflict cannot be negotiated by giving away the human rights of women, and security means more than a military end to the conflict: it means, for women, access to education, access to health, access to employment, access to justice.

This is the first coordinated Afghan women-led and women-owned national peace action since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. Thousands of women are expected to turn out across Afghanistan, all wearing a sky-blue scarf to highlight unity and solidarity across generations, languages, geographic locations, ethnic identity and tribal affiliations. The sky blue scarf symbolizes the immense possibility of a clear and open sky.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT Friends from around the world have already begun to show their support in solidarity with the women of Afghanistan. Five women’s human right activists — including Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi from Iran — are sending radio messages to be played throughout Afghanistan on 8 March. A delegation of Afghan women leaders attending the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York City will gather women, all in blue scarves, to show their support for the women of Afghanistan on 8 March, while another delegation of Afghan women, expected to meet with high-level policy makers in Washington, D.C. on 8 March, will also wear blue scarves to call attention to the activities on-the-ground in Afghanistan.

On 8 March, we congratulate all women of the world, and in particular we show our solidarity with the women of Afghanistan, who are present today praying for peace with justice.

Please spread the word about this action – and women’s desire to participate as full partners for peace with justice in Afghanistan – and wear a sky-blue scarf on 8 March 2009 as a sign of your support and a symbol that, when women stand together, the possibilities are as endless as a clear and open sky.