

## PRESS RELEASE

### The Women of Afghanistan – United in the call for peace with justice

7 March 2009

To mark International Women's Day at least 15,000 women across Afghanistan will come together, united, in a call for peace with justice.

On 8 March at 10am across the country, women will meet in their thousands wearing blue scarves, to stand side by side, regardless of language, ethnic and tribal differences, to pray for a common vision for the future, for peace with justice in Afghanistan.

The gatherings will take place in Kandahar, Bamyan, Kabul, Herat, Mazar, Daikundi, and Jalalabad

In making history, this will be the first gathering in Afghanistan of this size and scope, uniting Afghan women under a common vision of the future.

Last year on 8 March 2008 three brave women from Kandahar defied all the odds to bring together more than 1500 women in one of the worlds most hostile environments, Kandahar.

The women came together in peace, to meet in a public space to pray for peace with justice in Afghanistan, and the action caught the attention of the world.

"We can not gain peace only through guns, through bombs, and through killing people. If that were the case, we would have had peace by now. Real peace relates to security, but it also relates to justice, equality and access," said a young woman peace activist from Mazar.

"Afghan women are tired of being subject to egregious acts of violence, they are tired of watching their family and friends killed, and they refuse to accept the pervasive political, cultural, and economic violence which woman face on a daily basis both in home and in their pursuit to participate in public life," said Rangina Hamidi from Kandahar.

This year, to highlight the importance of seeking a regional solution to the conflict in Afghanistan, and to demonstrate that all women stand together for peace with justice, the 8 March action will be supported by radio messages from Nobel Laureates and other prominent men and women in the region.

The messages will be played on Afghan and international radio throughout 8 March.

The cross-border women already participating in the radio message are:

**Ms. Shirin Ebadi (Iran)** – Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi is an Iranian lawyer and human rights activist. She is the first Iranian to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

**Asma Jahangir (Pakistan)** – Asma Jahangir is a Pakistani lawyer and human rights activist. She has been the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief since 2004 (first attached to the former Commission on Human Rights, now to the Human Rights Council).

**Ms. Bushar Gohar (Pakistan)** – Bushar Gohar is a long time human rights defender and an MP in one of Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

**Ms. Zeng Jinyan (China)** – Zeng Jinyan is the online progeny of the protesters who blocked a column of advancing tanks during China's Tiananmen uprising in 1989, and is a vocal human rights defender in China.

**Ms. Mutabar Tajibayeva (Uzbekistan)** – Mutabar Tadzhibaeva is a human rights defender, chairwoman of the human rights organization Fiery Hearts and a founder of the national movement Civil Society. She is a Nobel Peace Prize Nominee and the 2008 Laureate of the Martin Ennis Award. In 2005 she was arrested and jailed in Uzbekistan for political opposition, and was recently released in June 2008 for health reasons.

**For more details on Praying for Peace with Justice**

Tel: +93 0700 295 856

Email: [p4p.withjustice@gmail.com](mailto:p4p.withjustice@gmail.com)