

The report states that education is the current critical issue for Afghanistan, noting that conditions are bad for both girls and boys while, at the same time, providing extended commentary on the measures taken against girls and women. In the section dealing with gender-based discrimination, the report refers to: the fact that many women are cut off from the media and other sources of information; the lack of opportunity for women to raise their voices; the ban on most employment for women; lack of access to education; restrictions on freedom of movement; continued closure of bathhouses for women; and the rise in the number of widows supporting families as a result of the armed conflict.

The recommendations in the report include that:

- ▶ a human rights resource person be deployed to advise the UN on human rights issues in the present situation, organize human rights education programmes and identify possible activities that will have a positive impact on governance in general and human rights in particular;
- ▶ Afghan authorities act in accordance with international human rights instruments to which Afghanistan is a party;
- ▶ provincial authorities cease to store weapons and munitions in residential areas;
- ▶ all authorities in the country lift the restrictions on women as well as those imposed on the international aid community;
- ▶ steps be taken to restore immediately education for all in all parts of the country;
- ▶ the international community pay much greater attention to the implications of the current education policies in the medium and long-term in terms of their impact on the capacity of the country to face the needs and challenges of the next century;
- ▶ greater gender awareness be created in society, in particular among men and with attention paid as well to the international community through mandatory training on the subject;
- ▶ the UN and all member states examine in detail the human rights record of the Taliban when considering its request for international recognition;
- ▶ the ICRC be given access to all prisoners, prisoners not be used as bargaining chips or human shields, all non-criminal prisoners be released, and the practice of arbitrary arrest and detention be halted; and
- ▶ all sides to the conflict definitively stop laying land mines.

Appendix II of the report reproduces a letter from the President of the Department for the Preservation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Annex 1 of the letter sets out regulations for all international and national agencies, to the effect that: all humanitarian assistance provided by the international community should be given without condition; all international agencies and Afghan NGOs must observe the laws stipulating that women may not work in government departments or international agencies and may not leave their residences; women may only work at hospitals and clinics, and agencies should not employ women in any other sector; any local staff members of agencies who do not observe the

Sharia should be advised by the agency and, if necessary, the Department will take serious action against the staff member; assistance to widows and poor women must be provided through blood relatives without the employment of "female surveyors"; women may work in vocational sectors such as embroidery and weaving and may leave their houses provided that the Department is advised beforehand by blood relatives; international agencies and Afghan NGOs must receive prior permission from the Department if they intend to employ or assist women; and the Mullah, Wakil and three elders of the district should be contacted when conducting a needs assessment to identify the real beneficiaries of aid programmes.

Annex 2 sets out the regulations for hospitals and clinics and states: all humanitarian assistance provided by the international community should be given without any condition; where women are hospitalized, male doctors and visitors should announce their presence before entering a room; it is illegal for women to use cosmetics and wear fashionable dress in hospitals; wherever women are employed they should preserve their dignity and walk calmly; women should avoid creating noise by their foot steps; women are forbidden to visit hospitalized male patients when there is someone else in the room unless a blood relative; all male and female patients and others must pray at the proper time, except for those who may have a legitimate and reasonable excuse; all hospital personnel should observe the Sharia and, in case of a violation where the person resists, serious action should be taken or the Department informed; women using official vehicles should not sit beside the driver; no Afghan woman may travel in a vehicle with expatriates; Afghan women may not be appointed as senior staff in an expatriate hospital; and agencies working in the health sector do not have the right to send Afghan women outside the country for any reason; if there is an urgent need, agencies should get approval from the Department.

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

At its 1997 session the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. (A/C.3/52/L.75)

The General Assembly: recalled that Afghanistan is a party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and a number of the international human rights treaties; noted with deep concern the intensification of armed hostilities, called on all parties involved immediately to cease hostilities and engage in a political dialogue aimed at achieving national reconciliation and the voluntary return of displaced persons to their homes in safety and dignity; noted the further deterioration of the situation of human rights, including the situation of women, and condemned the violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law; expressed deep concern at the frequent practice of arbitrary arrest and detention and summary trials throughout the country, resulting in summary executions, as well as the application of forms of punishment prohibited under the Convention against Torture; called on all the Afghan parties to respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms fully, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion; urged all parties to bring an end without delay to discrimination on the basis of gender and the deprivation of human rights of women; urged all parties to work closely and cooperate with the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan to achieve a