



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

**Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Human Rights Sub-Committee**

MEDIA RELEASE
Issued: 12 May 2014

*Chair: Mr Luke Simpkins MP
Deputy: Senator Anne McEwen*

PUBLIC HEARING FOCUSES ON RIGHTS OF AFGHANISTAN WOMEN AND GIRLS

A colonel who mentors policewomen and a woman who has spent 20 years advancing the rights of women and children are among several experts to give evidence before the parliamentary inquiry into the rights of women and girls in the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific regions.

The Human Rights Sub-Committee will hold its first public hearing on Tuesday 13 May 2014 to examine the circumstances of women and girls in Afghanistan – a country that has been a significant focus of Australian military, diplomatic and development efforts over the past thirteen and a half years.

The Human Rights Sub-Committee will hear from four witnesses:

- **Ms Zulaikha Rafiq** – With over 20 years of experience working with national and international organisations in Afghanistan as a women’s rights activist Ms Rafiq is the Afghan Women’s Educational Center (AWEC) director.
- **Colonel Najibullah Samsour** has over 30 years of experience in the Afghan National Police serving in a range of positions. Colonel Samsour has mentored Afghan policewomen and supported their advancement through the Afghan National Police resulting in a large increase in the numbers and seniority of policewomen in the districts under his command.
- **Mr Mohammad Sharif** is the Policy and Advocacy Officer at Oxfam in Afghanistan, managing Oxfam’s national advocacy work on the protection and promotion of women rights, particularly in the context of peace processes and the security sector in Afghanistan.
- **Ms Stephanie Cousins** is Oxfam Australia’s Humanitarian Advocacy Lead and is responsible for managing Oxfam Australia’s policy and advocacy work in relation to Afghanistan.

The public hearing will on **Tuesday, 13 June 2014, from 12.45pm** in Committee Room **1R6**, Parliament House, Canberra.

The proceedings will be audio webcast live on: www.aph.gov.au/live

For a program and more details, visit the Committee’s website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/jfadt>

The Sub-Committee welcomes submissions to this inquiry and encourages the lodgement of electronic submissions from anyone with an interest in the issues raised by these terms of reference.

Further information on the inquiry, including how to lodge a submission, is available on the Committee’s website: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt.

For media comment: contact the Sub-Committee Chair, Mr Luke Simpkins MP, on (02) 6277 4009 or via Mr Bill Coghlan on the same number. For all other inquiries, contact the Inquiry Secretary, on 02 6277 4318 or visit the committee website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt.