

## **Written evidence submitted by the Association of Women Judges (AFG0042)**

### The continuing work of the UK Association of Women Judges with the Afghan Women Judges.

We were approached at the start of the year by a consultant working with the FCDO in Kabul on the development of the justice system in Afghanistan. Women judges, and others, were working under increasingly more worrying conditions. Two senior women judges were assassinated on their way to the Supreme Court in January.

We liaised with the consultant at the FCDO about how best we could offer support to women judges there. A support group was set up, pairing a woman judge here with a woman judge there. The judges here are from all levels and disciplines, Tribunals, District, Circuit and High Court. They chatted regularly about their lives as women judges. We did not offer training in law. We have no expertise in the legal system there, it was a support network not judicial training. The women involved have become good friends.

At the time of the change of regime in Afghanistan the contact became very insecure but even more precious. Contact was increased, particularly for the women who were in chaos and terror, the contact with the judges here was a lifeline.

Since August, and the arrival of the first women the work has changed. We have set up ways of helping those who got out with little more than the clothes they were wearing. The Council of Circuit Judges and others have already made generous donations. We have taken on a mentoring role for more women than were in the original group but the numbers are still small.

Personal contact has continued, for the small number of women here the UK judges continue to offer support and friendship, helping them with applications for places at universities and language training etc.

Some of the judges have been guests at conferences, seminars and dinners to meet their colleagues here and to start to gain insight into the legal system in the UK. A few have already been offered university places and all aspects of re-training and re-qualification are being investigated and pursued with the direct and practical help of the judges here.

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