

# Bargaining with the Taliban: Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan

Dr Jacqui True FASSA FAIIA in conversation with Dr Farkhondeh Akbari

Thursday 27 October 2022: 5.30pm for 6pm-7pm AEDT. Dyason House, 124 Jolimont Road, East Melbourne, VIC 3002

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021 undid the significant achievements of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in Afghanistan and reinstated gender apartheid.

Since 2001, there have been concerted efforts, at least institutionally, to promote women's participation in the parliament, in government and the security sector, and to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and other violations of their human rights.



*Credit: Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona/Unsplash*

As a conflicted society, Afghanistan had a long way to achieve its gender equality goals sustainably and meaningfully.

The irresponsible withdrawal of western forces not only destabilised these achievements, but revealed the lack of commitment to protecting women's rights as the Taliban were ceasing power militarily. On 15 August 2022, UN Women issued a Gender Alert saying that one year on from the Taliban take-over in Afghanistan, women "are systematically excluded from public and political life, and restricted in their access to education, humanitarian assistance, employment, justice and health services".

What can the international community do to restore women's fundamental rights and freedoms? What is the scope for supporting Afghan women representatives to negotiate directly with the Taliban, and for including Afghan women as equal partners to inform advocacy and policy priorities? What can Australia do to promote an inclusive peace settlement in Afghanistan?

AIIA Victoria invites you to join Dr Jacqui True and Dr Farkhondeh Akbari to discuss the challenges for the women, peace and security agenda in Afghanistan.

*(Speaker bios overleaf)*

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**Dr Jacqui True FASSA FAIIA** is Professor of International Relations and Director of Monash University's Centre for Gender, Peace and Security. She is also a Global Fellow, Peace Research Institute (PRIO), Oslo and received her PhD from York University, Canada, and an honorary doctorate from Lund University, Sweden in 2018. Her research is focused on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, violence against women, and the gender dimensions of foreign policy and international relations. Her book, *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women* (Oxford, 2012) won the American Political Science Association's 2012 biennial prize for the best book in human rights, among other prizes. Recently she published *Violence against Women: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2020). and with Sara E. Davies *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security* (2019). In 2021 Jacqui True was recognised as a Fellow of the AIIA for her excellence in scholarship on international relations and gender, peace, and security.



**Dr Farkhondeh Akbari** is a postdoctoral research fellow at Gender, Peace and Security Centre at Monash University. Her research focuses on diplomatic actors, peace settlement negotiations with non-state armed groups and women, peace and security in Afghanistan. Farkhondeh completed her PhD in diplomatic studies at the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs at the Australian National University. Her thesis examined the required characteristics for non-state armed actors to engage meaningfully in diplomacy for the purpose of peace settlements, and looked at the cases of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Farkhondeh has work experience at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and Afghanistan's Independent Directorate of Local Governance in Kabul. Farkhondeh is also an activist, using her research to advocate for human rights – especially the rights of women and girls, and vulnerable ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

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