

Special issue on Goftegu debates

A Periodical on human rights and civil society





Armanshahr Foundation

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Goftegu

Seven years of Armanshahr books and Goftegu in Afghanistan

Ups and downs of a cultural policy



Jawad Darwaziyan: 118th public debate – Goftegu, a bridge between the elite and the citizens – was held in the hall of French Institute Afghanistan (FIA) on 3 July 2013 to mark 7 years of Armanshahr Foundation's (AF) operation in Afghanistan.

Speakers were Ms Homeira Ghaderi (writer and women's rights activist), Mr Zia Moballegh (writer and civil rights activist), Guilda Shahverdi (director of FIA) and Mr Abdollah Ahmadi (civil rights activist).

The first speaker Ms Shaverdi discussed joint cooperation of Armanshahr Foundation and FIA: "Armanshahr Foundation began the Goftegu debates in FIA and that is a great honour. The topics and debates are increasingly fine tuned every month and year. Citizens from different walks of life show special interest. We are thankful to Armanshahr Foundation for creating this atmosphere in FIA."

Subsequently, the meeting's moderator Mr Rooholamin Amini (deputy director of AF) gave a report on the AF's activities in the past seven years (See Page 8). Next, Ms Ghaderi spoke about AF's activities regarding women (See Page 18).

Mr Moballegh said the activities of AF were "unique" and "a specific initiative to organise direct debates among the citizens." He went on: "Armanshahr Foundation lit a torch

that aims to elevate culture and reading and to condemn physical confrontation. To publish one hundred thousand copies of books in a land where three thousand were printed until a few years ago is tantamount to a cultural movement. It familiarises the people with books and reading, whereas they knew explosions, suicide bombing and killing until a few years ago. The debates deepen the understanding of topics that can facilitate transition from warmongering and violence to lasting peace.

"Armanshahr Foundation has helped our understanding of concepts such as justice, federalism, human rights, globalization and scores of other issues. This cultural policy should move farther than the elite and expand to people of all walks of life."

The last speaker Mr Ahmadi discussed the Armanshahr Foundation's activities in the fields of civil society and citizenship rights. He summed up those activities as follows: the Goftegu public debates, printing of more than one hundred thousand copies of books on human rights, justice, civil society, peace, democracy, citizens and culture that have been offered to the citizens for free. The Simorgh peace prize, advocacy for justice, democracy and human rights on the national and international levels constitute other activities of the AF. The First Women's International Film Festival in Herat and

publication of 32 issues of Armanshahr human rights and civil society periodical are other achievements in this field.

After the speeches, a number of the participants commented. Mr Didar from the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Group said: "I took part in one of the AF debates about globalisation four years ago when I was a student. The ideas presented at the meeting were topics of discussion



among the students for a week. I find the AF colleagues quite different from other organisations. AF has always spoken the first words in all collective activities."

Mr Wahiduddin Arghun, commissioner of

the AIHRC said: "If Armanshahr Foundation could undertake more activities in the provinces, there are many enthusiasts. We hope there will be more diverse programmes and we will cooperate more with the AF than before."

Mr Massoud Hassanzada, a writer and poet, said: "Armanshahr did a great job by publishing two works by George Orwell and Virginia Woolf, but I do not grasp its publishing strategy in the field of literature."

Mr Mojib Mehrdad, a university professor, said: "Unlike Mr Hassanzada, when I see Edward Said's Representations of the Intellectual, or the works of Orwell or the Little Prince, AF's literary policy gains a meaning. Armanshahr Foundation cannot publish all books, but it has published the most important ones."

In the final part of the meeting, Mr Rafii Behroozian and the 40s Decade group gave a concert. Then Mar Farid Rastegar was accompanied by the 40s Decade group in his songs. Ms Sousan. Ms Sousan also performed two Rap songs.

Around 200 students, university professors, human rights activists, media activists and other people were present at the meeting.

Goftegu: Face-to-face series

Elections and young people's red line

Armanshahr Foundation held its 117th public debate "Goftegu, a bridge between the elite and the citizens" (7th year) with the title of "Face-to-Face: Elections and young people's red line" at Allameh Saljouqi Hall in Herat on 13 June 2013.

The meeting's moderator, Hamid Saljouqi (Dean of the Law and Political Science School of Jami University) spoke about action and the participation of the young people in various political, social and cultural affairs in the past decade. In conclusion, he asked questions about the relationship of the young people with elections as political action and called on the speakers to address the issue.

The first speaker, Seyyed Masoud Hosseini (deputy president of Jami University for

academic affairs) discussed "political, cultural and social initiatives of the young people for expressing their demands in the past decade" and argued that the young people's achievements had been very valuable in political and cultural dominance.

Criticising the ruling administrations, he said: The young people have been tools of the powerful throughout Afghanistan's history, but they have taken the initiative in various political and cultural dominance during the past decade. They are protectors of national interests and revivers of religious realities. Their strong presence in the field of politics shows their advanced political knowledge. The young people have grown considerably in the field of culture. They have extensive participation in the media and other areas.

Unlike you, I do not agree that the student movement is inactive and disorderly. The student movement is not based on the capital and has not originated from the Kabul academic environment. It is mainly based in different provinces. I also strongly disagree with your view that the student movement has ethnic and sectarian tendencies. The student movement is a pluralist movement and the only movement that represents the different ethnicities and groups in Afghanistan.

past few years cannot be used to deny the reality that women's social, political and economic conditions are deteriorating by the day.

She concluded: Women must go to the ballot box based on a political concept free of ethnic, cultural and sexual prejudices.

Mohammad Faghiri (journalist and civil rights activist) examined "the 10-year experience of the young people and its impact on the coming elections." He said: The trend of historic despotism in Afghanistan is the biggest obstacle to the presence of the young people on the important political and social domains. On the other hand, the religious traditional ideas pose a great danger to the young people's intellectual development. In the 1960s, the young people were in much better intellectual conditions because, unlike today, they participated considerably in various groups and parties.

Outlining the present political, social and cultural problems and the decisive role of the economic system, he stated that political development will be impossible in

Ms Lilma Nemani (University professor and women's rights activist) asked "why do young women vote and what do they want?" She then said: women's idea of the newly established government in Afghanistan – that had used modern western concepts to pretend to support them – was that they can achieve all their demands with the support of the government. However, it seems that their conditions and status have not changed considerably after 10 years. Even though their educational conditions have progressed, the little achievements of the

Afghanistan so long as the economic crisis has not been overcome.

Omar Ghodus Khatibi (student of law and political science) discussing "students, elected representatives and the coming elections," said: The role of the students in the elections is very important and influential. They look to the future and they are able to benefit from the past experience. We hope the young people will produce constructive ideas in the future.

A question and answer session followed. Mr Abdullah Elham, a student of Herat University, asked: There is a conflict between what Mr Hosseini said – who described as a valuable achievement the students' activities in the university – and Mr Khatibi's assessment who described them as some kind of rule breaking. Which one is true and acceptable?

Mr Hosseini defended the student movements and said: Their actions to gain their academic identity are essential. Mr Khatibi endorsed his remarks and said: I support the student movement but they should not take a violent and nondemocratic form. The student movement in Afghanistan, in my opinion, is influenced by ethnic and sectarian tendencies and has produced none-civil results.

Ms Belghais Azizi, a literature student from Herat University, asked Ms Nemani: What is the main reason for women's defeat in the past decade in your opinion?

Referring to the history of the women's movement and the challenges facing it, Ms Nemani answered: The main reason for the failure of most movements of women has been the abuse of women's conditions and the absence of goal-oriented movements.

Mr Mohammad

there are major differences between urban and rural women. Elections are a luxury and unreachable phenomenon to the rural women, as they are deprived of their most basic rights. Our young people do not base themselves on values to approach the modern world; they are deprived of reasonable ideologies and have become completely materialistic.



Ahmadi (an engineering student) objected to Mr Khatibi saying: Unlike you, I do not agree that the student movement is inactive and disorderly. The student movement is not based on the capital and has not originated from the Kabul academic environment. It is mainly based in different provinces. I also strongly disagree with your view that the student movement has ethnic and sectarian tendencies. The student movement is a pluralist movement and the only movement that represents the different ethnicities and groups in Afghanistan.

Mr Khatibi defended his ideas and asked: what have been your achievements in the university in the past decade? What have you done to advance the student movement?

Mr Barzin Khatibi (deputy president of the National Congress Party of Afghanistan) objected to Mr Hossaini – who had equalled the achievements of the past decade to all achievements of the previous decades – saying: The history of Afghanistan did not begin with the last decade and the achievements of the past decade are closely related to the country's past.

Mr Saljouqi (the moderator) said that one

of the most important requirements for a fair and transparent election was the modernisation of elections and using mass communications, e.g. the media and the social networks, which the young people have access to. He asked the participants to comment on the issue.

Ms Nemani said: In my opinion, the issue of government's legitimacy is more important than modernisation and technology in elections. The large gap between the government and the people has reduced the hope for the young people's participation in the elections. Mr Hosseini agreed to some extent with her and said: I am pessimistic about the future and the elections.

Mr Mohammad Nasser Rahyab (Herat University professor) said: In my opinion, there are major differences between urban and rural women. Elections are a luxury and unreachable phenomenon to the rural women, as they are deprived of their most basic rights. Our young people do not base themselves on values to approach the modern world; they are deprived of reasonable ideologies and have become completely materialistic.

Armanshahr's feast: 118 Goftegu and 100,000 books

Mr Rooholamin Amini (Deputy director of Armanshahr Foundation), moderator of Armanshahr's 118th Goftegu public debate that was held on 3 July 2013, presented a report on the activities of Armanshahr in the past seven years as follows. (See the report of the Goftegu meeting on page 4).

This is the story of 16 years of experience, with seven years of it in Afghanistan, and lots of ups and downs. In the past seven years, a small group by the name of Armanshahr has produced more than 100,000 copies of books and 118 Goftegu public debates as well as engaged in national and international advocacies to fulfil human rights; to achieve freedom of humans.

The title of this Goftegu is "discussion of a cultural policy" because our policy in the past seven years has consisted of perseverance in listening to the elite and telling the citizens to institutionalise the culture of dialogue and offering it as an alternative to war, spreading knowledge at the service of humans.

118 invitation letters of Armanshahr bear the phrase "Goftegu, a bridge between the elite and the citizens." This indicates our emphasis on using the reserves of the elite of the society to solve the crisis. The citizens play a fundamental role. They are neither subjects nor people but dedicated actors who are conscious of their rights and respect the rights of others. If they vote, they will vote consciously; if they do not vote, that will also be a conscious act.

We are living in a society where, despite the symbolic existence of democracy, there are people who talk of Subjects. However, in all these years, we have worked for citizens – a concept far beyond subject and people.

We managed to address more than 20,000 people and listen to more than 200 speakers in the past seven years. We sought a long-term programme that led to cultural policy-making; publication of more than 100,000 copies of books; 32 issues of Armanshahr periodical; more than 700 films in our YouTube channel; 118 Goftegu public debates; scores of reports and statements; several cultural-artistic festivals and plays;

production of several documentaries as well as national and international interventions.

Publications

Armanshahr has provided more than 100,000 copies of books to the citizens for free. Besides, it has contributed to supply of information to justice activists by disseminating knowledge through publications, website and social networks. Most books of Armanshahr are available online through Armanshahr's website.

Throughout these years, we have dispatched caravans of books to various corners of this lingual geography: Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamiyan, Daikandi and Kandahar. We also sent a caravan of books to the city of Dushanbe in Tajikistan and held the final ceremonies of the first and second Simorgh international peace Festival in the National Library of Tajikistan.

Armanshahr books are published in the following series: Let's break the silence; Goftegu; Simorgh; Women; Children and Young People; and Politis Asia.

"Let's break the silence" series includes books on human rights and narratives of the war victims. The series includes such titles as A Practical Guide for Victims to the International Criminal Court, Against Oblivion, the Past Enlightens the Future, Afghanistan in Search of Truth and Justice, A Review of War Ruins.

The "Simorgh" series includes leading works of writers from Afghanistan and other parts of the world: Flames of Love, Calligraphy of Master Najibullah Anwari; The end of the three invulnerable, articles by Ranavard Zaryab; Simorgh's Feather (Selected poems of Simorgh Peace Prize); 1984 and Animal Farm by George Orwell; Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Douglas Bradbury.

The "Women" series includes such titles as Justice for Women in War and Peace; Nothing can be said in fifty years (collection of poems) by Homeira Nekhat; A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf.

The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry; the illustrated Universal Declaration of

Human Rights for Children and Adolescents; The Emperor's New Clothes and 44 other stories by Hans Christian Andersen have been published in the Children and Young People's series.

Politis asia periodical is one of the important aspects of Armanshahr publications, which deals with the most important strategic issues in Afghanistan and worldwide. The series has included such titles as Violations of Human Rights and US Policy, NATO, Exceptions to Democracy and Decline of Empires, Discrimination and Political Participation of Women-Role of Education, War and City, and Federalism and Democracy.

32 issues of the bilingual "Armanshahr - human rights and civil society periodical" have been published so far. It is also available online.

On the other hand, four separate weekly human rights news bulletins ("7-day human rights newsletter") are published about Afghanistan, Iran, International Issues and Women. They are disseminated by e-mail to 20,000 recipients.



The Armanshahr website aims to create the most comprehensive source of human rights instruments and establish an international women's network.

Goftegu public debate

Armanshahr Goftegu public debates have been held in the cities of Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif and Badakhshan in the past seven years. The first Goftegu meeting was concerned with an appraisal of Ahmad Shamlu, poet of humanity and freedom, in Kabul. Over the past seven years, the public debates have dealt with different political, social, human rights and women's issues, such as "a decade of international presence in Afghanistan", "Afghanistan women's movement, national and transnational experiences", "in search of truth and justice

in Afghanistan" and film shows and concerts, as well as plays such as Two Women, Two Poets; Simorgh at Mount Qaf; Simorgh Peace Caravan (with famous theatre actors of Tajikistan).

In this framework, special face-to-face meetings were held in the context of the presidential and parliamentary elections, where candidates met the people to report their programs and to answer their questions.

In addition, our activities have included weekly book reading and critique meetings, statements on different occasions in defence of human rights and justice, national and international interventions, cooperation with other civil, human rights and cultural institutions.

Throughout these years we have tried to cooperate with progressive, civil, cultural, and academic institutions, an example of which is our consistent cooperation with the French Institute Afghanistan during the past seven years. Armanshahr's first Goftegu was held in this hall and today we are eyewitness to its 118th session. About 70% of the Goftegu meetings have been held in this hall.

Our activities have never been accidental. We publish books, hold dialogues, award a peace prize, organise film festivals, and all these activities serve to achieve a progressive society. Those activities cover a much bigger scope than the present political borders.

We have cooperated with various groups and campaigns, e.g. Transitional Justice Coordination Group or Women's 50% Campaign, out of respect for collective action to achieve a common social goal. We have consistently supported progressive institutions, groups and individuals and have asked for their support.

We believe that it is impossible to achieve freedom and progress without women's participation. Indeed, without their active participation in all political, social, economic and cultural domains, one cannot talk of any achievement.

We express our gratitude to all those who have worked with us and help us; all those who have addressed or been moderators in our meetings; all those who have participated in our programmes and all institutions that have cooperated with us. Let's hope to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Armanshahr together.

Goftegu: A bridge between the elite and the citizens

Views of opinion makers on Armanshahr

A number of participants of the 118th Goftegu public debate on 3 July 2013 expressed their views about Armanshahr's activities.

Roya Sadat, filmmaker:

I congratulate Armanshahr colleagues for their success, because they are a small group but full of energy, new and useful ideas. Some of our friends say that the number of participants in the Goftegu meetings is occasionally few. My opinion is that the people are not ready for such topics yet. Therefore, Armanshahr should not be worried even if there are five participants. One should not expect too many people in such meetings, because these issues have not taken root yet.

Didar Ali Didar, member of Human Rights Research and Advocacy Group:

I remember that I took part in one of the Goftegu meetings four years ago when I was a student of Kabul University. The topic was two interpretations of globalisation, where Messrs Latif Pedram and Professor Nooreddin Alavi spoke. The university students discussed the speeches of the speakers for a week after the meeting. This signifies the importance of such meetings, which really bridge the gap between the elite and the citizens.

I have other experiences with Armanshahr and find other friends working for it quite different from other friends who work in others civil institutions. I was once in Herat and planned to organise a meeting. When I



contacted a friend in Armanshahr's Herat Office, I received about 300 copies of books on human rights and women's rights in less than half an hour. In collective civil activities, Armanshahr has the first word. For example, in Transitional Justice Coordination Group of which we are also a member, Armanshahr is always an advocate of rights of the victims and the citizens.

I suggest to Armanshahr to concentrate more on students and the young people, because they are open to change and can bring about change in the society. I also ask Armanshahr to expand their projects to schools so that school students can also be informed of such issues as human rights, democracy and citizens' rights.

Wahiddudin Arghun, Commissioner of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission:

I was a participant of two programs that Armanshahr organised in Badakhshan province, which were enthusiastically received by the people. The participants were also highly interested in the books that were distributed. I wish to ask Armanshahr friends to expand those programs in the provinces. There is interest in such topics in the remote provinces.

Massoud Hassanzada, poet and writer:

There are two very pleasing events as far as Armanshahr's book publishing is concerned: two novels by George Orwell and *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf. I also wish to say that Armanshahr is one of the successful non-governmental organisations in Afghanistan. The publishing of about 100,000 copies of books in Afghanistan by a non-governmental organisation is something unprecedented.

Yassin Negah, poet and writer:

By some account, I was born in Armanshahr. I learned from it, I was a participant as well as a speaker and a friend of its managers. As a person who has been involved in culture and literature to some extent, my take is that Armanshahr is among the institutions that says less and does more. It has been

organising the Goftegu programmes for seven years, publishing books, taking positions on civil and human rights issues, working in the fields of women's and children's rights, on the war, peace, promotion of peace and other human rights values. They are all worthy of praise.

Mojib Mehrdad, poet and writer:

Unfortunately, the Ministry of Information and Culture has been highly politicised at some stages. It has been the mouthpiece of unpleasant political wishes of the government. In the absence of the government, institutions such as Armanshahr become more significant. Publishing of 100,000 copies of books is not an easy task, but a great achievement. That is also true of organising more than 100 Goftegu meetings on different topics.

It is fortunate that we have such good institutions, in the absence of a cultural government, which have held up the torch of literature and culture. I am also one of the people who have learnt from Armanshahr. Our first literary criticism meetings as poet and writer began with Armanshahr.

Abdullah Ataei, coordinator of Heinrich Böll Foundation's programmes in Afghanistan:

Armanshahr is one of our close colleagues with which we have been cooperating since 2012 and shall continue to do so in order to promote human rights and civil values.

Jawad Hamidi, law student at Kabul University:

I came to know Armanshahr in 2010. Many institutions engage in routine affairs and vanish away. However, Armanshahr has been speaking of values that others hardly referred to. It has swum against the current in the past seven years. Our celebration of its seventh anniversary in Afghanistan signifies that it is a dedicated and honest institution.

We do not seek to wash blood with blood!

"We do not seek to wash blood with blood; we seek justice!" This was the message of a one-day conference organised by Human Rights Focus Organisation with the support of 100 other civil institutions (including Armanshahr) in Kabul on 23 May 2013.

People from the four zones across the country, officials from some of the civil society institutions in Kabul, representatives of the High Council of Peace and the National Assembly and Senate of Afghanistan and from the national and international media took part in the conference.

The organisers of the conference were of the opinion that misinterpretation of transitional justice in the past few years and failure to pay attention to other parts of Afghanistan have slowed down the trend of transitional justice.

Guests representing the civil society in the provinces and zones offered their views, reported on their problems and their recommendations to improve the trend. Most of them regarded war, violence, corruption, bullying, the presence of criminals at high levels of the administration, the General Amnesty and National Reconciliation Law, lack of interest of Afghanistan's international supporters to implement transitional justice as obstacles facing the process in this country.

The participants generally believed that there are still opportunities to implement transitional justice. They referred to the Constitution, international conventions to which Afghanistan is a state party, the three branches of the state, schools, universities, civil institutions and collective consciousness as aspects of the existing opportunity.

There were representative from the High Council of Peace and the Senate of Afghanistan, who answer questions and criticisms of the peace process.

Jawad Darwazian, Human Rights

Officer of Armanshahr, who chaired the meeting, addressed Mr Ismail Qasim Yar, representative of the High Council of Peace as follows:

"Where has the Constitution foreseen the High Council of Peace in the government structure? Who is the council accountable to and what have been its achievements in the past few years? Afghanistan is committed to a series of international covenants including the Geneva Conventions, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Statute of the International Criminal Court, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and some others. The Constitution has specifically required the government to implement those covenants, but the High Council of Peace and the government have violated some of those conventions and acted against them. What are your answers to these questions?"

Mr Qasim Yar answered: Before the General Amnesty and National Reconciliation Law, there was the Peace Consolidation Committee led by Sebghatullah Mojaddadi. After that, the High Council of Peace, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, was created. They and the general amnesty decrees were all intended to consolidate the pillars of peace in the country.

It was recently reported that the High Council of Peace had released 640 offenders. These are rumours. The Council has a committee which refers names of the people mistakenly detained as members of the Taleban – whose release would help the peace process – to the judicial authorities as required by the presidential decree. But, those 640 people have definitely not been released by the High Council of Peace.

The leadership of the Taleban and the Islamic Party or other groups have not engaged in any official negotiations with the government to this date and they have

never said that they are prepared to talk to the government or to the High Council of Peace. We held a series of talks with some leaders of the Islamic Party, but they came to a halt after the signing of the strategic agreement with the US.

He emphasised: We believe that the peace process should be popular and encompass all. The civil society institutions, women, the young people and ethnic groups must be able to see their demands in it. We cannot and we do not want to sacrifice the rights of any group, ethnic group or achievements of the people for the peace process.

The second speaker was Ms Belquis Roshan – senator for the Farah Province - who spoke about Afghanistan's past. She said: The people have been sacrificed in the course of coup d'états and inefficient peace processes throughout the history. The Khalq [People's] party imprisoned and executed the people. Subsequently, the mujahedin and the Taliban massacred the people of Kabul. Khalq and Parcham founded violence and war, but the mujahedin and the Taliban complemented it. The first crime the Americans committed against us was to raise the criminals to rule us. The president of Afghanistan promised the people he would not compromise with the criminals, but he allowed the highest number of criminals to join him. The same criminals in Afghanistan's parliament, most of whom are war criminals, passed the Amnesty Law in the parliament.

She added: Democracy arrived once from Russia and once from the US. Imported democracy has always been detrimental to the people. Democracy should arise from among the people.

In the question and answer section, one of the participants asked Mr Qasim Yar: what will be the status of the victims if the government and the Taliban reach agreement? Another participant asked: Is the result of the peace process anything but bringing the Taliban criminals and the ruling criminals together to complement the assembly of the criminals?

Mr Qasim Yar answered: The structure of the High Council of Peace arose from the Loya Jirga. The social structure and texture and the power groups in Afghanistan are known

to you and the people. Justice requires us to seek the rights of the victims.

Another participant asked: why is the case of Afghanistan not referred to the International Criminal Court? Mr Qasim



Yar replied: it is the task of the government to cooperate with the court. I believe that the reason for the delay is that the conflict Mapping report and the war criminals list of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission have not been published and if it is not possible to prosecute the past crimes in Afghanistan, they must be referred to the International Court.

In the news conference that followed with a number of the national and international media, the statement of the civil society institutions was read out and the journalists asked their questions.

Mr Reza Hosseini, university professor and a member of the Transitional Justice Coordination Group, concluded as follows: Transitional justice is not the dominant discourse in Afghanistan; it is on the sideline. If we wish to be active in this field, we have no choice but to make it a dominant popular discourse. Transitional justice has been deemed as a danger for peace in Afghanistan. Some groups view it as an obstacle to peace because they feel threatened by it. Some other groups have a mistaken understanding of transitional justice and see only its criminal dimension. We know some people as criminals who have the support of the people on the one hand and are offenders on the other. This is a contradiction that has no solution unless we reconcile our views. We suffer from a theoretical weakness and poverty of concept on the question of transitional justice in Afghanistan. If we do not find a way out of this, it will be impossible to build the road for transitional justice.



Civil society groups to Afghan government and donors: Live up to your promises on mining sector!

Press Release

June 28, 2013

An alliance of 36 Afghan and international civil society organisations have urged the Afghan government and its donors to deliver on their commitment to effective oversight in the country's extractives sector. The call, made in letters sent to the Afghan Minister of Mines, Wahidullah Shahrani (<http://cts.vresp.com/c/?GlobalWitness/929710e6d6/18f696b56d/6462613399>), and key international partners (<http://cts.vresp.com/c/?GlobalWitness/929710e6d6/18f696b56d/c95e81902f>) comes ahead of a crucial meeting taking place in Kabul on the 3rd July.

The July meeting will help decide how agreements made at a major international conference on Afghanistan, held in Tokyo in 2012, will be implemented - including a promise to create a governance framework for extractives industries. The civil society groups called on the participants to include a clear commitment for this framework to address the full range of potential challenges in the sector - including environmental and social issues, community engagement and consent, security and the need for transparency and accountability measures.

"The Afghan government and its international partners need to send a clear signal that they are committed to strong oversight of Afghanistan's natural resources," said Jalil Benish, the current chair of the Civil Society Natural Resource Monitoring Network, and a signatory of the letter. "An effective and comprehensive framework is essential to ensure Afghanistan's rich mineral wealth actually benefits the Afghan people, rather

than providing more fuel for conflict and corruption."

At the 2012 Tokyo conference, Afghanistan and its international partners agreed to develop a framework "that governs Afghanistan's natural wealth through an accountable, efficient and transparent mechanism which builds upon and surpasses international best practices." But there have been widespread reports in recent months that this commitment would be interpreted as meaning nothing more than the publication of mining revenues.

The Afghan Ministry of Mines has said it supports an effective governance framework, and has produced an unpublished initial outline of what this should look like. A strong, public written commitment at the July meeting is needed to ensure that this promising start is followed through across the Afghan government, and to secure the commitment of donors, as well as their practical support.

"The experience of other countries in conflict has repeatedly shown that there is a major risk that natural resources can harm, not help, development," said Stephen Carter, Afghanistan Campaign Leader at Global Witness. "The Afghan government has made some positive steps, but it is still unclear whether they will deliver on a truly effective extractives framework. If they do, Afghanistan has a chance to be a model for other countries. We urge both the Afghan government and its international partners to fulfill their responsibility and act for the

long-term benefit of the country.”

“We have already seen cases where mining projects in Afghanistan have directly led to conflict,” said Yama Torabi, Executive Director of Integrity Watch Afghanistan. “That damages local communities, but it also damages the companies who see their investments disrupted and their reputations undermined. For everyone’s sake, we have to get strong mechanisms in place that ensure mining activity has public support, and prevents these problems before they happen.”

The 36 NGO signatories of the letter, which went to the Afghan government and major donors, are as follows: Afgana Afghan Development Association; Afghanistan Civil Society Forum; Afghanistan Watch; All Afghan Women Union; ARCSO; AYWCBO; British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan

Group (BAAG); Christian Aid; Civil Society Natural Resource Monitoring Network; ENNA; Equal Access; Foundation for Culture and Civil Society; Foundation of Solidarity for Justice; Global Witness; Green Wave; Hajigak Council; Heinrich Böll Stiftung; HRRAC; Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization; Integrity Watch Afghanistan; Khorasan; Logar Civil Society Association; MADERA; MONDO; Norwegian Afghanistan Committee; OXFAM; People in Peril; Relief International; Revenue Watch; Shuhada Organization; Socio-Economic Development & Environmental Protection Organization; SWABAC; Tearfund; The Liaison Office.

<http://www.watchafghanistan.org/press-releases/civil-society-to-afghan-government-and-donors-live-up-to-your-promises-on-mining-sector.html>



Protecting Tajik migrants’ rights: positive aspects of new migration policy require implementation

18 July 2013

Two years after the release of a report¹ calling for increased protection of the rights of Tajik migrant workers, in June 2013 FIDH and ADC Memorial returned to Tajikistan to investigate institutional and legal changes and new challenges faced by Tajik migrant workers and their families. Particular attention was paid to gendered aspects of migration, the situation of women migrants and of the spouses of migrant workers.

Today, FIDH publishes the mission’s preliminary² findings and recommendations.

Since 2011 there have been positive developments: migration remains prominent on the government agenda, the

Migration Service has started its work, NGOs are involved in discussions on related draft laws. Yet, during a mission to Tajikistan in June 2013, organized in collaboration with the Tajik Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law and the Tajik Human Rights Centre, FIDH and ADC Memorial observed that measures taken thus far have not led to significant changes in the situation of migrant workers and fall short of what is needed to ensure effective protection.

Tajik migrant workers in Russia remain vulnerable to illegal practices by employers and intermediaries: confiscation of passports, retention of salaries, police raids, arbitrary controls and xenophobic attacks. The FIDH/ADC Memorial investigation revealed cases indicating that such violations are not adequately dealt with by the Migration Service or the Ministry of

¹ http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/taj_report2-.pdf

² <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/-154493712tj-mission-migration-note.pdf>

Foreign Affairs.

According to official statistics, women migrants represent 14% of labour migrants (124 007 out of 877 335 in 2012) and migration of families or couples is thought to be on the rise. FIDH and ADC Memorial also investigated the situation of women whose husbands leave to work abroad. Although the receipt of migrant remittances undoubtedly leads to an improvement in living standards, this system is fraught with serious social problems, health issues and leads to an increased burden on women. Increasing numbers of cases of men migrants staying in Russia, leaving wives and child behind without any support, have been documented.

The impact of positive institutional and policy reforms has been impaired by insufficient budget allocation. Although draft laws on Labour Migration and on Private Employment Agencies have been under discussion since 2010 in working groups, they still have not been presented to the Parliament. Neither draft is available on official web sites and no public discussion or parliamentary hearings are planned. The draft versions that were shared with the FIDH/ ADC Memorial delegation in June 2013 contain elements of concern, including the tendency to place responsibility for social protection and care of elders on labour migrants themselves, rather than the state (articles 14 and 18 of the draft law on Labour Migration).

Based on these preliminary findings, our organisations make the following recommendations:

To the government of Tajikistan:

Ensure that the process of drafting legislation is open and transparent;

Ensure that the provisions of the laws on Labour Migration and on Private Employment Agencies are in complete conformity with the provisions of international human rights conventions ratified by Tajikistan and in particular

with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;

Ensure that people of Tajikistan are able to exert control on those in charge of the elaboration and implementation of migration policy at different levels, in particular through pluralist and transparent elections;

Ensure the effective investigation, prosecution and punishment of employers, intermediaries and human traffickers responsible for violations of the rights of migrants;

To the governments of Tajikistan and Russia:

Refrain from any negotiation or agreement linking the issue of labour migration to other political, defence or security issues;

Ensure that no collective expulsions take place;

Enhance cooperation to make available to those concerned, the list of Tajik citizens who have been forbidden to enter Russia, following expulsion or deportation. Ensure that this information is given on a confidential basis and that the protection of personal data is guaranteed

<http://www.fidh.org/protecting-tajik-migrants-rights-positive-aspects-of-new-migration-policy-13695>



Oral statement at CEDAW 55th session

The fifty-fifth session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), took place 9 Jul- 23 Jul 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland, where also Afghanistan's combined first and second reports were examined. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Armanshahr Foundation / OPEN Asia made a joint oral statement the session.

The session considered reports from the following seven State parties: Afghanistan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Serbia, and United Kingdom.

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1979, CEDAW is an international human rights treaty that focuses on women's rights and women's issues worldwide. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. CEDAW is not only an international bill of rights for women but also an agenda of action. Countries that ratify CEDAW agree to take concrete steps to improve the status of women and end discrimination and violence against women.

FIDH/Armanshahr joint oral statement at the review of the combined initial and second reports submitted by Afghanistan - CEDAW 55th session

Since 2001, progress has undoubtedly been achieved in the field of women's rights in Afghanistan. This includes, the establishment of a Ministry of Women's Affairs (albeit without executive power), the participation of women in political institutions, and accession to CEDAW. Nevertheless, discrimination remains

entrenched in law and practice, violence against women continues to be perpetrated on a massive scale, with almost complete impunity and there are worrying signs of setbacks.

Although incidents of violence remain largely unreported and reliable statistics are therefore unavailable, the latest UNAMA/OHCHR report notes further increases in the perpetration of harmful practices and violence against women. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) recorded 4,010 reported cases of violence against women from 21 March to 21 October 2012 throughout Afghanistan, compared to 2,299 cases the previous year.

Meanwhile, the number of women and girls in detention on the grounds of "loose morals" is the highest since the ouster of the Taliban. Most of those detained are victims of abuse and have committed no crime under Afghan law.

Victims face major obstacles in accessing justice. In December 2012, a UNAMA report entitled *Still a Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan* highlighted that the Afghan National Police and the prosecutors' offices continue to resort to jirgas and shuras for advice or resolution of cases, including serious crimes. Resort to parallel legal bodies undermines the implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women.

Conservative groups have blocked reforms aimed at increasing protection. In May, attempts by several parliamentarians to strengthen the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by presidential decree in 2009, were blocked by conservative lawmakers. They opposed articles criminalizing child marriage and forced marriage, banning the traditional "BAAD" practice of exchanging girls and

women to settle disputes between families, making domestic violence punishable up to three years in prison, protecting rape victims from prosecution for adultery or fornication, limiting the number of wives a man can have to two, and establishing shelters for battered women, considering them as violating Islamic law.

Women's participation in political and decision-making processes is also under threat. The electoral law is being revised and is currently under examination by the Senate to omit passages setting aside 25 percent of seats on provincial and district councils for women and/or reducing the quota to 15%. Incidents of violence against women remain obstacles to women's participation in public life. There are frequent acts of aggression against women human rights defenders promoting gender equality and women's rights. Prominent women rights defenders have been directly threatened and obliged to leave the country. Among the many attacks reported in 2012, Ms. Najia Seddiqi, Acting head of the Women's Affairs

Department was the victim of a targeted killing in Laghman province.

In this context, the government of Afghanistan should:

1. Prevent women's rights being put on the bargaining table in negotiations with the Taliban and other stakeholders in the peace process.
2. Ensure the effective implementation of the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, including the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women, in accordance with national laws and international obligations.
3. Strengthen the "formal" justice system, including by ensuring the effective participation of women in the judiciary.
4. Repeal or revise discriminatory laws against women, including the Shiite Personal Law, the Law on Marriage and discriminatory provisions of the Criminal Code and Property law.

Women must enjoy and be proud of their sexuality



Ms Homeira Ghaderi (writer and women's rights activist) made the following speech during the 118th Goftegu public debate of Armanshahr on 3 July 2013. (See the report of the Goftegu on page 4).

I express my gratitude for the persistence and fruitful citizenry action of Armanshahr Foundation. In a society where we need

dialogue more than anything else, Goftegu (dialogue) even with its 10-year history in Afghanistan is still a new topic. The various institutions, civil society, groups and organisations that should engage in dialogue and bring about corrective education to change our mentality, play a very valuable role in our cultural development.

My presentation concerns the seven-year performance of Armanshahr in its numerous meetings on women to find out what it has done for women. Let's begin by examining not just Armanshahr Foundation but all civil institutions in Afghanistan.

After the fall of the dark reign of the Taleban, a government took over that was quite powerful and efficient in the opinion of many people, because it enjoyed popular support. We all thought that the peace dove had nested in our country with the support

of the international community, and that was something we badly needed in the context of our economic problems and the unstable political situation. Therefore, the 2000s were pleasant and promising years for our nation and our government.

Spontaneous non-governmental organisations gradually took shape and different spectra of converging ideas got together pursued the discourse of justice and equality in cultural, social and political domains; they impacted one another. There were so many groups and healthy demands that we were witness to rainbow movements. It was perhaps the result of our important achievement, i.e. the presence of an active civil society that brought about the same achievements in the domain of political

in my opinion, Armanshahr has basically stayed away from sexual apartheid. This means that you should first try to gain a sexual understanding of yourself. As a man, you should enjoy your manliness, your body and not be ashamed of your body. As a woman, you should enjoy your sexuality and be proud of it.

monitoring. The goal of all those movements was to eliminate the discriminatory transitional operation. The equality seeking independent discourses on the cultural, political and economic domains were quite influential for establishing a healthy society. Those topics were discussed within the civil society, even though they resembled a project at first, each of those institutions pursued its own specific path later.

Some of them aimed for financial issues; some others supported the power institutions and engaged in political activities. However, it was fortunate that many of them were able to stay away from such issues and

convert the dialogue projects to dialogue processes. These dialogue processes are still in place in Afghanistan and have borne fruit as well. Let me now introduce one of the good institutions that have gained a special status within the civil society, away from political issues, through social cultural activities.

I knew Armanshahr as a spontaneous

civil move that has spared no efforts to achieve the people's civil rights. We have two kinds of developments. One concerns reconstruction of the ruins that have resulted from natural events and wars. The other type is cultural development, which is much more important and valuable than the first. Storms will not destroy culture but wars do. We may build a building in six months and a city in six years, but we need a long time to rebuild the cultural and social ruins caused by war. The only solution to this problem comes through actions such as those of Armanshahr. That does not mean that we should underestimate the activities of other civil institutions, but here we wish to talk of a totally independent, dynamic and consolidated move. One of the things that Armanshahr has done, at least in the past two or three years when I have taken part in most of its meetings, is the publication and dissemination of diverse books in the women's domain. Most books of Armanshahr have challenged the gender issue. Armanshahr has specifically concentrated on women's issues.

In the developing countries, gender issues are hot social topics. In Afghanistan, after the collapse of the Taleban, the gender issue was one of the most important topics in the past few years. Challenging those sporadic, out of place topics and putting forward organised theoretical topics regarding women is one of the most important achievements of Armanshahr.

Alongside this topic, in my opinion, Armanshahr has basically stayed away from sexual apartheid. This means that you should first try to gain a sexual understanding of yourself. As a man, you should enjoy your manliness, your body and not be ashamed of your body. As a woman, you should enjoy your sexuality and be proud of it. This means having sexual consciousness and that is keeping away from disorderly sexual identity. That means our men should not be referred to with the identity of their women. Our women should not be referred to with the identity of their husband, brother and son. This is sexual consciousness. When you stay away from sexual apartheid, you wish to go beyond the discourse in the country. That has happened in modern countries, where sexual identity is not a question now and humans view themselves and others beyond

I have the feeling that Armanshahr has chosen different courses to achieve its goal. What makes Armanshahr superior for me is its reliance on and belief in arts. The film festival that Armanshahr organised was unique. That is the basis of work in a modern country.

their sexual identity. The most important cultural index in modern societies is the humanity index. Consequently, if we wish to lead our government – which consists of men and women – beyond sexual identity, the human aspect will gain much more significance than the sexual aspect.

Arriving at this culture depends on social conditions.

Occasionally, such talks at some places lead your words towards blasphemy and atheism. I believe Armanshahr has been able to overcome all these problems. It is up to the nation to reach a conclusion. At what historical stage does our nation stand mentally and how much can it accept?

In the developed countries, apart from other small differences, there is a discussion about the wage difference between men and women. It is possible that a woman receives less pay than a man for the work she does. However, in the developing countries, the difference concerns wage and knowledge, i.e. the difference is not based on wages alone. Virginia Woolf says knowledge and wealth have never been distributed equally among men and women. This means the accumulation of capital and advance of science have always been in the hands of the male sex; patriarchy has always ruled wealth and knowledge.

As far as I have witnessed, Armanshahr has based its work on education both in regard to gender and other issues that have given us knowledge about our discourses. For example, when it publishes the *Animal Farm* by George Orwell in the domain of arts and literature, that is not a coincidence; it contains the social and political topics. By education and Armanshahr's activities, I mean the nurturing of social mentality through disseminating knowledge.

Armanshahr has also realised that it should be the mouthpiece of a cultural outlook and defend a humanitarian structure in

order to arrive at a consolidated economic structure as the foundation of the society. In the advanced countries, the most important and highest expenses are made to nurture human beings. Therefore, we need a human structure in order to achieve the appropriate social, cultural, political and economic structures. To achieve that goal that is a feature of advanced countries, Armanshahr has concluded that this can be done through cooperation of the various forces and powers within the society. Let's keep in mind that education and knowledge always cause steadfastness. Empowerment of the people is somehow empowerment of the society. Empowerment of the society raises knowledgeable individuals and that cycle of knowledge will go on. This happens in meetings and dialogues and these dialogues are somehow the tool of a superior struggle to achieve the best.

I have the feeling that Armanshahr has chosen different courses to achieve its goal. What makes Armanshahr superior for me is its reliance on and belief in arts. The film festival that Armanshahr organised was unique. That is the basis of work in a modern country.

There have been novels published, with different ideologies. For example, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is a feminist ideological discussion. When Armanshahr publishes a cultural book from Iran, Afghanistan or Tajikistan, it indicates that evaluation of the society and culture in this domain is very significant for Armanshahr. Throughout these years, Armanshahr has tried to examine women's status both in our customs and our behaviour. For instance, in the past the local elders used their influence to settle the disputes, but the citizenship movements that have somehow substituted the traditional institutions are now trying to achieve people's rights through legal channels.

Armanshahr is trying to teach us that, in order to reach an optimum condition in the society, we do not only have to comply with the laws that the government sets; we must also take spontaneous actions and cultural initiatives, because we are the ones who have to engage in civil activities in order to advance the society. That means, we have to take our responsibility in our own hands.

11th anniversary of AIHRC celebrated

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Armanshahr Foundation and the Herat Young People's Literary Society organised a poetry reading night at the regional offices of the AIHRC in Herat on 4 June 2013 to celebrate the 11th anniversary of the commission's establishment. Poets, writers, cultural activists and members of the AIHRC from different provinces were present at the meeting.

A number of the guests recited their poems. The moderator, Ms Farideh Rahmani, opened the meeting with a poem on love. She then went on: The works of the leading Persian-language literature indicate their respect for human dignity. We praise human dignity in this poetry reading night.

Subsequently, director of the AIHRC's regional office, Mr Abdulqader Rahimi, recited a couplet from Hafiz to begin his welcoming remarks to the guests.

Master Nesar Ahmad accompanied the poetry readings with his music. The poems were mainly concerned with social and

political issues but there were love poems to shed the tarnish of war and to remind that the glorious history of the Persian literature is full of affection and love, where we find the human beings as part of one body and the suffering of humans as the common suffering of humanity.

When social and political poems were recited, there exploded bombs, bombs, human bombs; and humans were crushed under militarism and despotism.

The poets who recited poetry at the meeting were: Javid Nabizadeh, Ali Akbar Nazari, Roya Sharifi, Vida Sharifi, Mojgan Faramanesh, Khaled Qaderi, Saeed Haydari, Najib Babrakzai (from Khost), Mr Fetrat (from Faryab), Ramin Arabnejad, Ahmad Mousavi, Rashed Ramez, Nazir Ahmad Behrad, Esmatullah Asem, Gholam-Haydar Qodsi, Moshen Jamshidi, Mojgan Sadat, Farhad Farhat, Ehsan Baratpour (From Iran), Morsal Ahmadzai (From Kandahar), and Vahid Vahidi.



Armanshahr's new books



Editors: Guissou Jahangiri and Khalil Rostamkhani

Translator: Khalil Rostamkhani

Cover design: Rooholamin Amini

Layout: Kabir Ahmad Neshat

Original in English by the European Union Council; March 2009

Preface

When the EU launched the Common Foreign and Security Policy ten years ago, it placed Human Rights at the heart of this policy. This stemmed from our conviction that respecting and promoting the rule of law as well as fundamental rights and freedoms not only defines the EU but is also in our interest. The European Security Strategy, adopted in 2003 and reviewed last year, states clearly that “spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order.”

An integral part of our Human Rights Policy is a series of Guidelines on issues of importance to the Union. These Guidelines are practical tools to help EU representations in the field better advance our policy. The first Guideline, on the Death Penalty, was elaborated in 1998. It was followed by six others focused on Torture, Dialogues with Third Countries, Children Affected by Armed Conflict, Human Rights Defenders, the Rights of the Child and Violence Against Women.

The first five Guidelines were published as a brochure four years ago; this new edition adds those Guidelines adopted since then. In preparation for publishing this booklet, all of the older Guidelines underwent a review and renovation to reflect changes both in the Union and the external environment that have taken place since 2005.

There is one other innovation in the edition you hold in your hands: for the first time, we have included a guideline developed in 2005 by Member State legal experts on the topic of International Humanitarian Law. Because of the explosive growth of operations and missions conducted under the European Security and Defense Policy and as a result of our conviction that counterterrorism be conducted within the framework of international law, the Guideline on IHL is growing in importance.

Javier Solana,

Secretary General/High Representative for CFSP

The status of Family and Women: According to the Shari'a Law and Customary Practices in Afghanistan

Editor: Abdulwahed Zia Moballegh

Layout: Kabir Ahmad Neshat

1st Edition: 2013

Publisher's Foreword

The question of women's equality has always been a complex and challenging one in all societies, democratic and undemocratic included. This poses a historical challenge against the promotion of women's rights, while the lower status of women has been regarded as completely natural issue and inevitable. Men and women are considered only as “body” and the different possibilities that can advance human beings' aptitudes and capabilities are ignored.

The women's issue and the status of women in society and family pose many deep questions, the answers to which are often doubtful and stir great resistance from the society. Nevertheless, women's conditions are deeply dependent on macro structures and complicated class relations. Women have been able to force a new knowledge of their presence and existence on the society and leave a different impact besides the naturalist definition of women as a reproductive being.

Nowadays, the scope of women's rights has expanded in many societies as a result of the endeavours and struggles of women's rights defenders as well as the progress of those societies and the expanding requirements of capitalism. Human experience has shown that equality shall be established when the two sexes enjoy equal rights in law and the fulfilment of those rights are made possible in practice in all domains of life.

Armanshahr Foundation/OPEN ASIA, which has been operating in the region to raise consciousness of the citizens and to create democratic atmosphere for dialogue and exchange of ideas since 1996, accomplished the first national sociological study of violence against children and women in Tajikistan. It has organised around 120 Goftegu public debates in Afghanistan in the cities of Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif and Badakhshan. It has also organised the first regional women's film festival, in collaboration with Roya Film, has published more than 100,000 copies of books in different series, the majority of which have directly or indirectly dealt with women's issues and human rights. Soon, Armanshahr Foundation shall publish several new books on women's rights, some of which shall appear for the first time in Persian.

The present book (in two volumes) is a part of a campaign to raise consciousness about the process of amending the Family Law in Afghanistan, and deals with the legal status of women within the institution of the family. This book deals with the need to amend the laws to improve the status of women and to support children as well as to give legal support to marriage and establishment of family with consideration for the realities and problems of women and the gap between empirical and social experience and the applicable laws. In the second volume, the draft Family Law has been published for the information of the public.



Seven years and 101 public debates of Armanshahr

Cover design & layout: Rooholamin Amini
1st Edition: 2013

A word from the heart

"Armanshahr Foundation is an independent, not for profit citizens' organisation and is not affiliated with any economic, political, religious, ethnic groups or governments. The Foundation's mission is to create proper forums to ensure citizens social demand for democracy, human rights, justice and rule of law and to create through cultural manifestations and publications a broad constituency of well-informed citizens. Armanshahr Foundation also actively promotes reflection and debate at the heart of Asia with the goal of ensuring solidarity, progress and safeguarding peace."

We have stated the above sentences and written them many times in books, in Goftegu debates, on the website and other publications. We keep repeating it to emphasise our independence and endeavours to provide for social and cultural demands and we think, to achieve this goal, the most important tools available to us are publication of books and creation of a democratic atmosphere to exchange ideas and thoughts. This is important for us from two angles: first, we create the ground for expression of enlightening and democratic ideas; second, we offer an incomparable alternative to war and that is writing, reading and dialogue.

We seek to promote understanding and believe that justice is the basic prerequisite for institutionalisation of dialogue in the war-afflicted and despotic society. We believe the first step for achieving democracy is to respect human beings. And we believe it is not possible to achieve any civil demand in a reasonable way without going back to culture.

We believe in women; in the human beings who have lived in oblivion in the darkness of houses for centuries and the society had omitted them. We believe it is a joke to talk of freedom and justice without eliminating sexual discrimination. We believe it is impossible to achieve a progressive and affluent society without women's participation in all political, social, economic and cultural domains.

These are all our beliefs and that is why we have been uninterruptedly walking this route for 16 years; and this is why we have strengthened our steps in Afghanistan in the past seven years, published more than 100,000 copies of books, brought together the best children of this land in more than 100 Goftegu debates to speak of human beings and freedom.

This booklet is published to mark the seventh anniversary of Armanshahr's operation in Afghanistan. Beside our books and public debates – which constitute the foundations of the activities of our civil-cultural institution

– we have been involved in other activities, including the organising of cultural-artistic festivals, e.g. the Simorgh International Peace Festival, active participation in various progressive groups and campaigns aiming to achieve a just climate in the country, showing timely and consistent reactions by issuing statements and engaging in consultation whenever human rights are violated, and in international consultations to bring the voice of the people to supporters of justice in the world.

Armanshahr Foundation was established in Tajikistan 16 years ago and has ever since fought for human beings, not with bombs, aircraft and guns but with words and language. As of its establishment, Armanshahr has been thinking of the oppressed humans who have been deprived of the right to live; it has addressed the people with whom it could speak better. This is why, prior to moving to Afghanistan, Armanshahr organised the “Caravan of 1001 poems for peace in Afghanistan” and migrated to this land with one thousand and one poems from humans living at four corners of the earth. We spoke of humans, whom Saadi Shirazi described as:

Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you’ve no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain!

In celebration of 16 years of Armanshahr and its seventh year in Afghanistan, we offer you this booklet and take this opportunity to express gratitude to all our close colleagues throughout the years: the late Qays Dehzad, Kabir Ahmad Neshat, Jawad Darwaziyan, Shourangiz Dadashi, Ajmal Baluchzada, Khalil Rostamkhani and our other colleagues and friends.



Stories from the Book of Kings

Narrator: Atusa Salehi
Illustrator: Niloofar Mirmohammadi
Cover design & layout: Rooholamin Amini
Typesetting: Kabir Ahmad Neshat
1st Edition: 2013

Armanshahr has published a nine-volume anthology of simplified stories from the Book of Kings (Shahnameh). The anthology includes stories on Zahak, Zal, Esfandiar, Forud & Jarireh, Bijan & Manijeh, Bahram & Gordieh, Gord-Afarid, Rostam & Sohrab, and Siavosh.

The book has been published in the Children and Young People’s series, which has previously included the Little Prince, the fully illustrated simplified Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Emperor’s New Clothes and 44 other stories from Hans Christian Andersen.



Translator: Safoora Noorbakhsh

Layout: Rooholamin Amini

1st Edition: 2013

Armanshahr has published the Persian translation of Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own,” which some people regard as the pioneer of feminist theory.

For an introduction to the book, see:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Room_of_One's_Own



Cacau

Translator: Behrooz Al-Naddaf

Layout: Rooholamin Amini

1st Edition: 2013

Armanshahr has published the Persian translation of Cacau by Jorge Amado.

For an introduction to the book, see:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cacau_\(novel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cacau_(novel))

For the writer, see:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jorge_Amado



7-day human rights news bulletins

“7-day newsletters”¹ are a collection of human rights news bulletins in Persian, which Armanshahr Foundation publishes on a weekly basis. They follow the most important news of the week in diverse governmental and non-governmental sources in several languages in the following areas: International, Women, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Each bulletin provides links to the original sources and a summary of the human rights news in the week before. The news concerns violations of human rights by state or non-state, national or international actors. The titles of “women” and “culture” are common in all the bulletins.

The International Human Rights News Bulletin strives to raise collective knowledge and induce sensitivity to the world and experiences of other countries. It covers the various events under the following titles: violations of human rights, justice, civil and political rights, globalisation & economic, social and cultural rights, third generation rights (the right to development, peace, clean environment and solidarity), women, and culture.

1. <http://openasia.org/item/category/journals/human-rights-bulletins>

The Women’s news bulletin combines the most important events in the heart of Asia and covers violations of human rights by state and non-state actors and includes such titles as laws and bills, political, economic, civil and cultural rights, culture, society and politics.

The other two bulletins, Iran and Afghanistan and reports on human rights news in those two countries.

The Iran news bulletin includes such titles as prison, women, political, economic, civil and cultural rights, culture, society and politics as well as violations of human rights by state and non-state parties.

The Afghanistan news bulletin covers such issues as the war and elections, women, political, economic, civil and cultural rights, culture and society, and politics as well as violations of human rights by state and non-state parties.

The new bulletins also try to report on positive local initiatives. Articles, reports and studies published in the library² section of Armanshahr’s website³ are offered at the end of each bulletin to promote a regional outlook

2. <http://openasia.org/item/category/human-rights-2>

3. <http://openasia.org/>

and approach, exchange of experience and solidarity among the citizens.

It should be noted that the PDF version of each bulletin and its link are made available on the social networks including Facebook and Twitter.

At the end of each week, a compilation of the week's news bulletins are disseminated among around 20,000 recipients by e-mail. Contact us or follow us on our website if you wish to receive Armanshahr's "7-day newsletters"

Armanshahr/OPEN ASIA Publications

Series: Goftegu, Let's break the silence, Politis asia, Simorgh, Children & Young People, Women, Armanshahr Periodical

1. One Thousand and one Poems for Afghanistan (anthology of writings and poems trilingual edition), 2003
2. Caravan of Poetry for Peace and Democracy in Afghanistan (An anthology of poems); 2003
3. Caravan of Light (for young readership); 2003
4. Poems for Peace (Tajik edition in Cyrillic), 2003
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