UNAMA Press Release | UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

UNAMA COMMENDS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND DEMANDS THEIR PROTECTION

KABUL, 10 December 2016 - Marking International Human Rights Day, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) spotlighted the crucial work of Afghan human rights defenders and joined the call for all citizens to stand up to protect the rights of vulnerable women, men, and children.

At a UNAMA-sponsored event on Thursday in Kabul, leading human rights defenders described how Afghanistan's armed conflict had made their work more challenging, but all the more essential.

By defending the rights of others, the activists affirm that the loss of anyone's rights diminishes the humanity of everyone. The work of human rights defenders has become ever more crucial amid ongoing human rights abuses and violence across Afghanistan. These abuses can occur during armed conflict, but also in the workplace and in the home.

"Afghanistan's human rights defenders embody this year's theme, which is to *Stand up for Someone's Rights Today*," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. "These women and men are true champions, and we need more brave individuals like them to protect human rights the world over. It is totally unacceptable that the risks they face are increasing with the intensification of the armed conflict," said Yamamoto. "More must be done by the parties to the conflict to ensure their protection."

UNAMA will continue to seek through its "good offices" assurances that all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan respect and work with human rights defenders. The UN also closely monitors human rights violations against vulnerable groups, including women, children and disabled citizens, as well as their defenders.

UNAMA backs the call of human rights organizations from across Afghanistan for the necessary space to be ensured for human rights defenders to conduct their work in standing up for the rights of all Afghans.

Peace, reconciliation, truth-seeking, accountability and justice are key to Afghanistan's future, stressed Afghan human rights defenders at the Kabul event on Thursday.

The UN is observing Human Rights Day around the world and in Afghanistan today by recognizing human rights achievements made since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN after the trauma of the Second World War. This marked the beginning of a worldwide recognition of the need to promote and protect the human rights of all people. Human rights defenders are at the forefront of this ongoing effort.

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UNAMA is mandated to support the Afghan Government and the people of Afghanistan as a political mission that provides 'good offices' among other key services. 'Good offices' are diplomatic steps the UN takes publicly and in private, drawing on its independence, impartiality and integrity, to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating or spreading. UNAMA assists the process of peace and reconciliation; monitors and promotes human rights, including the protection of civilians in armed conflict; promotes good governance; and encourages regional cooperation. The Mission also promotes coherent development support by the international community.

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