

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 6, 2012 12:17 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Ulema Council's declaration on women
Attachments: POA translation of Ulema Council on Women and Qu'ran.docx

Latest

From: Verveer, Melanne S
Sent: Tuesday, March 06, 2012 12:09 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: Ulema Council's declaration on women

Latest from Embassy Kabul

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From: Walker, Peggy J
Sent: Tuesday, March 06, 2012 12:03 PM
To: Crocker, Ryan C; Verveer, Melanne S; Olson, Richard G; Cunningham, James B; O'Connor, Eileen; Pearce, David D
Subject: RE: Ulema Council's declaration on women

Sir, Eileen just replied on separate email chain with this information. I've pasted the language from the Ulema statement below that, along with an update on what the Political section has been working today on this.

Eileen's Note

Just in case you didn't see it: Herewith attached is the original Ulama Statement, translated by the President's office and issued last week. He endorsed this today by an answer to a question at the press conference held with the Polish President. Ambassador Cunningham had been told at the UNAMA breakfast by a MoFA person that the Palace would issue something "walking this back." That did not happen as far as we can see and in fact, he praised the Ulama's overall work as "wise." Eileen

Political's Take

Heera Kamboj in POL has been engaged with civil society contacts all day today on this via phone, and will be sending a cable in to the Department by mid-day tomorrow. She's already alerted the desk and DRL about the issue and that a cable is coming.

At this moment, Heera reports that civil society is mobilizing and plans to meet with MPs, and high-level GIRoA women to discuss the statement and what to do. They do not want it to seem as if just civil society is complaining. One of Heera's contacts said if CS groups push too hard on it or ask for clarification, that the government or Ulema Council could turn around and make something that was a statement into a law/edict – they want to avoid this. General

consensus – this is not good (and that was before the news that the Palace had issued a statement backing the Ulema Council). POL LES was also approached on this by Fawzia Koofi today at parliament.

Strother Murray points out that MPs and women's groups themselves need to engage directly with the Palace and the Ulema Council about their legitimate concerns, and some of them seem to be doing that. We were planning to set up a meeting with Amb. Olson and female MPs sometime next week anyway; that would be a good opportunity to engage.

Language on women from the Ulema Council statement issued March 2 (per PAS, some press have mistranslated this and have said that the statement says beating is OK, per Sharia)

5-The religion of Islam is contrary to other nations and human civilizations of the current era and the past. It has a lot of respect for women and Islam believes that women are the foundation of the civil society and should be granted respect and human dignity. In the past centuries and before Islam, women had been deprived of any respect and human rights. Women were sold like goods and even buried alive under the ground. After the appearance of the Islam sunshine, Islamic religion granted a lot of rights to women as follow:

- A- The ownership and trade rights
- B- The inheritance right according to Islam.
- C- The Maher [Islamic dowry] is the specific right of the women and nobody has the right to take over that right from the women. Some people have practicing dowry [Toiana and walwar in Dari and Pashto] which against the Islamic Sharia.
- D- The right of choosing the husband and nobody can force a woman to marry against her wishes but the parents' advice is allowed according to the Islamic principles.
- E- Women have the same dignity and respect as men, no one can give away women as compensation for peace, killing any person, it is unlawful in Islam.
- F- No one can get women as inheritance. The women have several rights according to the Islam religion, the women beside having many rights in Islam they have some responsibilities and obligation as well such as:
 - A- Women should follow all Islamic Sharia in faith and practice.
 - B- Wearing veil according to the Islamic Sharia which give more respect and dignity to the woman.
 - C- Stay away from strangers and unknown men during education, social relation and other interactions.
 - D- According to Aia 1 Sora 34 of the Holy Quran which indicate that male is the base [Principal] and women is a corollary [Not base]
 - E- Multiple marriages is allowed according to Islam.
 - F- Avoidance of travel without lawful man
 - G- Divorce right according to Mohammadi Sharia

It is worth mentioning that beating, abuse, harassment of the women is unlawful, any kind of the abuse, misconduct and rape against women is illegal and it is unlawful and the Afghanistan requests the legislative and judicial institutions to punish and bring to justice according to approved Afghan government laws and Mohammadi Shari those who commit crimes against women. In the Islamic religious books, a lot of information are published about the women rights and obligation which any one can refer to it when there is a need for it.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Crocker, Ryan C
Sent: Tuesday, March 06, 2012 9:17 PM
To: Verveer, Melanne S; Olson, Richard G; Cunningham, James B; Walker, Peggy J; O'Connor, Eileen
Subject: Re: Ulema Council's declaration on women

I am stuck in a FOB near Kandahar. I don't know what the Palace may have said today. Can we find out?

From: Verveer, Melanne S
To: Crocker, Ryan C
Sent: Tue Mar 06 21:06:49 2012
Subject: RE: Ulema Council's declaration on women

It would be nice if he'd get that out. Can we say that?

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From: Crocker, Ryan C
Sent: Tuesday, March 06, 2012 11:18 AM
To: Verveer, Melanne S; Cunningham, James B; Olson, Richard G
Subject: Re: Ulema Council's declaration on women

Karzai told me last night he had rejected the part on women in the Council statement, and it was not in the version released by the Palace.

From: Verveer, Melanne S
To: Crocker, Ryan C
Sent: Tue Mar 06 19:34:52 2012
Subject: FW: Ulema Council's declaration on women

Not that you don't have enough on your plate.....I meant to send this to you as well.

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From: Verveer, Melanne S
Sent: Tuesday, March 06, 2012 9:28 AM

To: Grossman, Marc I; Feldman, Daniel F; Olson, Richard G
Cc: Noory, Lida S; Nuland, Victoria J
Subject: Ulema Council's declaration on women

I participated in an event with Sima Samar yesterday at the World Bank and she told me that the Ulema Council just promulgated new bans regulating women's conduct. I have been trying to get more information and understand that their pronouncement hit the Afghan press today. What I understand is that, among other items, they called for a separation between women and men during work hours and in education, banned women traveling without a male escort, recommended the imposition of complete adherence to the hijab, adherence to Sharia, including in divorce (whose interpretation is always key), and it looks like polygamy is respected as well. Perhaps the worst part of all of this is the approval by Karzai. We need an exact readout as I've put this together from the various reports I've received.

I have been hearing from several of the women activists who see this as a very troubling reassertion of the Taliban mentality on these issues, and they view Karzai's assent to be of particular concern. Moreover, they are noting that this is in contradiction of the Afghan constitution's guarantee of equality between men and women and a bad omen for their future.

We may begin to get press questions as this gets picked up.

Finally, as you know Karzai had asked a few months ago for the resignation of those on the Human Rights Commission whose terms were up. Sima told me that he basically told her that the Commission has been too independent (they are the Independent Human Rights Commission). Although no new members have been named and the Incumbents continue to serve, it is not clear how much new control over their work Karzai is intending to seize.

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