

## **Afghan Youth Debates: Women Must Vote to Secure Rights**

**Author:** [Sayed Taj Mohammad](#)

Women across Afghanistan will be constantly undermined by a male-dominated political elite unless they exercise their right to vote, according to Masuma Moradi, a senior lecturer at Kandahar University in the south of the country.

Moradi told dozens of female undergraduates attending an IWPR-backed debate that each of them had a personal responsibility to go out and vote in the April 5 presidential and provincial elections.

Female voters could only secure real change by confronting societal barriers head-on, she said.

"It is women who raise the children of this country, and women form half of Afghan society," Moradi said. "If women fail to participate on election day, then our rights will be further undermined and we will continue to face thousands of problems in society. We must be active in the political arena and exercise our rights."

The IWPR debate was held on February 12 at the Kandahar Institute for Modern Studies (KIMS). During the discussions, many students took the opportunity to question the panellists about women and politics.

Nazia, an undergraduate, said many men would ban their wives and daughters from going to the polls. Another student, Belqis, asked why there were no female candidates in the presidential race.

"Our democracy is not yet fully mature, and this is partly a security issue," explained Mohammad Omar Satay, Kandahar's representative on the High Peace Council, the body tasked with negotiating with insurgent groups. "But the constitution has given women the right to stand as presidential candidates and to run the country's affairs."

Ehsanullah Ehsan, the head of KIMS, said much needed to be done before women could claim to be treated the same as men.

"We have this problem [of women being prevented from voting] all around Afghanistan," he said. "Together with the international community and religious scholars, we must work to raise public awareness and fight against this. People must understand that the role of women in society is very important."

Farida, a student at KIMS, asked the panellists which of the 11 male presidential candidates had a track-record of supporting women's rights.

Serena Faizi, a provincial council candidate, said it was up to each voter to review the "past performances of those standing and consider who was mostly likely to help push for reform.

"Based on your observations and analysis, you should vote for the candidate you feel will care most about the future of this country," she said.

Satay added, "Democracy means rule by the people, for the people, and that does not apply exclusively to men. If we want to bring about real democracy, then the only way to proceed is through sound elections.

"If women do not take part, then in my opinion the vote cannot be seen as legitimate."

**Sayed Taj Mohammad is a student at Kandahar University and an IWPR trainee.**

*This report was produced as part of **Open Minds: Speaking Up, Reaching Out - Promoting University and Youth Participation in Afghan Elections**, an IWPR initiative funded by the US embassy in Kabul.*

**Location:** [Afghanistan](#)

**Topic:** [Elections](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/afghan-youth-debates-women-must-vote-secure-rights>