

## **Residents of Afghan Province Demand Better Healthcare**

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Event hears that serious measures are needed to deal with the shortfall.

Residents of Nuristan province demanded improved health services in a debate organised by IWPR in the provincial capital Paron on July 29.

The remote, mountainous province is one of the most underdeveloped in Afghanistan and Sebghatullah Jenah, representing the local branch of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), said that most people simply could not access proper health services.

"A major problem is that medical centres in most remote areas just have nursing staff, with medical doctors located only in clinics in the district centres," he said. "This has caused longlasting health issues."

Civil society activist Noor al-Huda Fakoore accused officials of only supporting projects that would serve their own interests, adding that there was just one female doctor in the whole province, located in Barg-e Matal district.

Provincial council member Zahir Nuristani acknowledged that there were problems with health provision, but said that serious measures had been taken to address the shortfall.

"In the past, there wasn't a single health centre in the whole of Nuristan province, but now there are dozens of clinics here."

He added that local officials had raised the issue of the lack of female doctors with the ministry of public health several times, but that no action had been taken.

Mawlawi Shafiqurrahman, the imam at the main mosque in Paron, said that Islam placed great importance on hygiene and healthcare. He also dismissed local rumours that vaccinating children was against Islam.

Debate participant Abdul Satar complained that local doctors were corrupt and siphoned off aid for their relatives and friends. Another participant, Bashir Ahmad Jalali, said that he had personally witnessed how staff at local health centres ignored and dismissed people seeking treatment, only checking on patients when they felt like it.

The provincial director of public health, Nooruddin, accepted that there were problems with local healthcare provision, but told the debate that his department was working to address them.

He said that central government and the ministry of public health were still providing Nuristan with medical services based on an old census, although the population of the province had massively increased.

"We are in the process of opening new wards at Paron's 50-bed hospital for children, addicts and mother and child healthcare," he said. "Their establishment will resolve these problems to some extent."

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

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

**Focus:** [Afghanistan: Promoting Human Rights and Good Governance](#)  
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