

Public execution of Woman Raises Fears for Afghanistan's Future



This still image taken from undated video footage depicts a man Afghan officials identified as a member of the Taliban firing his rifle at a woman accused of adultery during her execution in a village outside Kabul, Afghanistan.

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July 09, 2012

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - A video apparently showing the Taliban executing an Afghan woman accused of adultery has sparked international outrage. The killing highlights ongoing fears of what will happen to women's rights in Afghanistan once international forces leave.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Monday condemned the execution, describing it as an "unforgivable crime" and an "act of brutality." He called for an investigation into the shooting and the arrest of those responsible.

In the video first obtained by Reuters and circulated on the Internet, the apparent daylight execution of the woman is cheered on by male spectators. The incident reportedly took place in the northern province of Parwan, not far from the Afghan capital, Kabul.

For Afghan women's rights activist Wazma Frogh, the incident highlights the country's lack of security despite millions of dollars spent on strengthening its forces.

"Where were the police officers when this whole act happened? It didn't happen in a matter of seconds, it happened in one, two hours," said Frogh. "Where were the foreign, or for example the Afghan national police? Where were the Afghan national army?"

She says if the Taliban are allowed to rejoin the Afghan government and society without any accountability for their actions in the last ten years, the country would once again see the public stonings, hangings and beheadings that marked their time in power.

“So what does reconciliation mean with such a notorious insurgent group?” she asked.

The United States and the Afghan government hope to come to a political settlement with the Taliban before international combat forces leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

But Afghan lawmaker Fawzia Koofi warns that women risk losing out in a such a deal.

“We see the signs now, there are signs now that politically, nationally, that the women’s gains and achievements both the international community and the government of Afghanistan have on women’s rights will be immediately compromised for the sake of peace, so in a way justice will be sacrificed for peace,” said Koofi.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Sunday that women’s rights must be an integral part of Afghanistan’s future. Clinton was speaking on the sidelines of an international aid conference that raised \$16 billion in development aid for the war-ravaged country.