

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Asia > Afghanistan > Women, patriarchy, sharia (Afghanistan) > **Afghanistan: About Rawa...**

Self-presentation

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RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, was established in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1977 as an independent political/social organization of Afghan women fighting for human rights and for social justice in Afghanistan. The founders were a number of Afghan woman intellectuals under the sagacious leadership of Meena who in 1987 was assassinated in Quetta, Pakistan, by Afghan agents of the then KGB in connivance with fundamentalist band of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar . RAWA's objective was to involve an increasing number of Afghan women in social and political activities aimed at acquiring women's human rights and contributing to the struggle for the establishment of a government based on democratic and secular values in Afghanistan. Despite the suffocating political atmosphere, RAWA very soon became involved in widespread activities in different socio-political arenas including education, health and income generation as well as political agitation.

Before the Moscow-directed coup d'état of April 1978 in Afghanistan, RAWA's activities were confined to agitation for women's rights and democracy, but after the coup and particularly after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in December 1979, RAWA became directly involved in the war of resistance. In contradistinction to the absolute majority of the vaunted Islamic fundamentalist "freedom fighters" of the anti-Soviet war of resistance, RAWA from the outset advocated democracy and secularism. Despite the horrors and the political oppression, RAWA's appeal and influence grew in the years of the Soviet occupation and a growing number of RAWA activists were sent to work among refugee women in Pakistan. For the purpose of addressing the immediate needs of refugee women and children, RAWA established schools with hostels for boys and girls, a hospital for refugee Afghan women and children in Quetta, Pakistan with mobile teams. In addition, it conducted nursing courses, literacy courses and vocational training courses for women.

Demonstrations against the Soviet invaders and their stooges and later on against the fundamentalists, and unrelenting exposure of their treason and heinous crimes has been a hallmark of RAWA's political activities. It was in consequence of its anti-Soviet occupationist struggle and agitation that RAWA was marked for annihilation by the Soviets and their cronies, while the Islamic fundamentalists vented their wrath on our organisation for our pro-democracy, pro-secularist and anti-fundamentalist stance. Our uncompromising attitude against these two enemies of our people has cost us dear, as witnessed by the martyrdom of our founding leader and a large number of our key activists, but we have unswervingly stood, and continue to stand, by our principles despite the deadly blows that we have been dealt.

For the purpose of propagating our views, aims and objectives, and to give Afghan women social and political awareness in regard to their rights and potentialities, RAWA launched a bilingual (Persian/Pashtu) magazine, Payam-e-Zan (Woman's Message) in 1981. Publication of this magazine is on-going and by-issues in Urdu and English for non-Persian/Pashtu speakers.

Since the overthrow of the Soviet-installed puppet regime in 1992 the focus of RAWA's political struggle has been against the fundamentalists' and the ultra-fundamentalist Taliban's criminal policies and atrocities against the people of Afghanistan in general and their incredibly ultra-male-chauvinistic and anti-woman orientation in particular. Apart from the political challenges facing RAWA, tremendous social and relief work amongst unimaginably traumatised women and children lie ahead of us, but unfortunately we do not at the moment enjoy any support from international NGOs or governments, therefore we can't run our humanitarian projects as effective as we wish due to lack of funds..

The US "War on terrorism" removed the Taliban regime in October 2001, but it has not removed religious fundamentalism which is the main cause of all our miseries. In fact, by reinstalling the warlords in power in Afghanistan, the US administration is replacing one fundamentalist regime with another. The US government and Mr.Karzai mostly rely on Northern Alliance criminal leaders who are as brutal and misogynist as the Taliban.

RAWA believes that freedom and democracy can't be donated; it is the duty of the people of a country to fight and achieve these values. Under the US-supported government, the sworn enemies of human rights, democracy and secularism have gripped their claws over our country and attempt to restore their religious fascism on our people.

Whenever fundamentalists exist as a military and political force in our injured land, the problem of Afghanistan will not be solved. Today RAWA's mission for women's rights is far from over and we have to work hard for establishment of an independent, free, democratic and secular Afghanistan. We need the solidarity and support of all people around the world.