

AUSTRALIAN JUDICIAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Media release

Atrocity in Afghanistan

From Justice Glenn Martin
President of the Australian Judicial Officers Association

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Last month, two women judges were assassinated in Kabul as they were on their way to their posts in the Supreme Court. Judges Zakia Herawi and Qadria Yasini were murdered in broad daylight while they were in an official car on the way to their work at the Supreme Court. The perpetrators of these violent killings have not been identified or charged. These two judges were among approximately 250 women judges in Afghanistan. Many fear for their safety, others have been harmed. The Supreme Court of Afghanistan has been advised by security personnel that all women judges are potential targets of violence.

Judges Qadria Yasini and Zakia Herawi were known to judges in Australia and elsewhere through their involvement with the International Association of Women Judges (IAJW). Most of the women judges in Afghanistan serve on primary and appellate courts and must rely on their own private resources to find transportation that will offer a modicum of anonymity to reduce their risk of exposure to violence. This is an added financial and logistical burden borne by women judges that must be redressed. For the very few women judges who work in the Supreme Court who have the benefit of official transportation, the existing measures were obviously insufficient to prevent the assassinations in Kabul.

The Australian Judicial Officers Association agrees with the IAJW that “the targeting of women judges is part of a campaign to intimidate women in prominent roles -journalists, rights advocates and others who support change towards a more inclusive and fair society that respects human rights. Advancement towards a just order and equitable development is not possible without women's participation in all aspects of society. In the judiciary, in particular, women judges at all level are essential to the legitimacy, integrity and fairness of courts in the eyes of the people and key for effective and fully informed decisions that affect lives. This attack on women judges is an attempt to undo the progress that has been made in recent years in the treatment of women and the establishment of the rule of law in Afghanistan.

The Australian Judicial Officers Association joins with the IAJW in calling on the government of Afghanistan to adopt and scrupulously implement proper and effective security measures to ensure the safety of judicial officers.

(The complete statement by the IAWJ can be found at www.iawj.org)

The Australian Judicial Officers Association is the professional association of judges and magistrates in Australia. For further information, contact Lillian Lesueur, Judicial Conference of Australia Secretariat: secretary@jca.asn.au | 0401 048 322

The President of the AJOA is not available for broadcast or television interviews on this matter.