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Justice Reform

PARTNERSHIP PROMOTES RULE OF LAW IN AFGHANISTAN
BY TEMIM H. NUSRATY

Launched in December 2007, the Department's Public-Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan is an innovative initiative of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, which leads U.S. justice-sector reform efforts in Afghanistan.

Bureau Assistant Secretary David T. Johnson co-chairs the partnership with Robert C. O'Brien, a partner at the law firm Arent Fox. The initiative's founding members include U.S. District Court Judge Stephen G. Larson of the Central District of California, U.S. District Court Judge David O. Carter of the Central District of California and former Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts Dr. Kerry Healey.

The partnership is a non-partisan initiative that seeks to involve American judges, lawyers and representatives of business and academia in U.S. efforts to develop the rule of law in Afghanistan. By bringing Afghan lawyers into the larger international community of legal professionals, the partnership helps the people and government of Afghanistan establish a fairer and more transparent justice system.

High Impact

The partnership also funds low-cost, high-impact projects that support women in the legal

profession, local bar associations and legal aid organizations, and professional development of Afghan judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys. Through the partnership, the Department and the American legal community have promoted lawyer-to-lawyer dialogues, conducted training programs in the United States and provided financial assistance to Afghan law schools.

Additionally, the partnership has organized events in the United States to raise

public awareness of the needs in Afghanistan's justice sector.

Since its inception, the partnership has received more than \$1.3 million in monetary and in-kind contributions. This includes financial donations by major law firms and private individuals, tuition waivers provided by more than a dozen U.S. law schools, U.S. Agency for International Development funding of the travel and lodging expenses of those studying for a Master of Law degree and

other training-related expenses donated by U.S. businesses and educational institutions. The figure doesn't include the thousands of hours of work donated by volunteers or the travel expenses covered by the private sector to participate in the partnership's activities.

Workshops Held

The partnership has planned and implemented two major



Members and supporters of the public-private partnership pose with former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, center, at a reception at a Washington law office.



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton meets at the Department with 14 prominent female Afghan judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys who were in Washington for a training program arranged by the public-private partnership.

workshops in the United States. The first was a 21-day intensive summer program at the University of Utah Law School for 16 Afghan prosecutors, including three women. The second was a 14-day program in Riverside, Calif., and Washington, D.C., for 14 prominent Afghan women judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys. Among the workshop's speakers was former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

The Afghan women also met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who praised their bravery and courage and said, "It is your work for women lawyers in the tough environment of Afghanistan that will bring real reform and the rule

of law to the Afghan people."

The third workshop, planned for this summer, will focus on Afghan defense attorneys. Each workshop enlists experts from the American legal community to provide hands-on basic and cross-national training on institutional justice reform, Islamic law, comparative constitutional law, criminal procedure, mediation, domestic violence and international human rights. The lessons taught are already bearing fruit in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Visits

In addition, the partnership has conducted two assessment visits to Afghanistan, sponsored

events in several U.S. cities, placed its first Afghan judge into a master of laws program in California and secured commitments from more than a dozen American law schools to provide a year of tuition-free legal training to Afghan lawyers. This year, the partnership is preparing to endow a law professorship at a university in Afghanistan.

Assistant Secretary Johnson said he is amazed at the commitment and dedication shown by the private sector.

"It is an inspiration that so many U.S. lawyers and judges have rallied to support this initiative," he said. "The success of the partnership is a testament of what can be achieved when

the public and private sectors come together."

One of the greatest challenges facing the Afghan government in restoring the rule of law is the lack of trained legal professionals. Through its legal education programs and lawyer-to-lawyer dialogue, the partnership plays an important role in helping Afghanistan rebuild a society based on the rule of law.

To learn more about the partnership, visit <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/partnership/index.htm>. ■

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