

Women Moderating Extremism in Pakistan

Female Leaders Advocate for More Inclusive Ways to Address Terrorism

WASHINGTON, DC – May 31, 2011 –The Institute for Inclusive Security today announced a groundbreaking initiative that will elevate the voices of millions of Pakistani citizens who oppose extremism. Building on its decade-long work with Pakistani women leaders, Inclusive Security, with support from the US Institute of Peace and its local partner PAIMAN Alumni Trust, launched the multiyear Women Moderating Extremism program.

A growing body of evidence from conflicts around the world suggests women are often at the forefront of preventing violence, ending war, and helping their societies heal after conflict. From Afghanistan to Colombia to Nepal, women leaders are mobilizing communities to cross deep divides, reconcile animosities, and offer fresh solutions to seemingly intractable conflicts.

Building on this momentum, Inclusive Security and PAIMAN convened a group of women leaders in April 2011 from the provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh, as well as from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Kashmir. The participants discussed ways to directly tackle the root causes of extremism and agreed to work together as a coalition. Over the next two years, coalition members will highlight women's roles and contributions to Pakistan's stability, analyze the causes of terrorism and confront the drivers of extremism through a national action plan they will implement at both federal and provincial levels. Specifically, the women leaders identified and will address the following root causes of extremism: societal denial; weak governance; misuse and misinterpretation of religious and cultural ideologies; and the lack of economic development, education, and a moderate counter-narrative that offers an alternative worldview.

“‘Obama gets Osama’ is the news reverberating around the world today. Remember with Osama's death, terrorism and terrorists do not end. If we really want to address the menace of extremism, we need to recognize the role women can play in moderating extremism,” said Pakistani activist Mossarat Qadeem, PAIMAN's executive director. “We women prioritize health, education, and jobs creation—issues essential to increasing societal well-being in the long term and decreasing conditions that breed extremism. We must recognize the power of women to rid the world of terrorism.”

“Having been on the frontlines of fighting global terrorism, Pakistan is now at a crossroads,” said Miki Jacevic, Inclusive Security's chief training officer. “Recognizing the courageous work of these women and ensuring increased support for their efforts will be the safest ways to guarantee the country's long-term stability and prosperity.”

Just this month, coalition members have led discussions about the role of women in peacebuilding in the Swat Valley and Peshawar, analyzed school curricula, and advocated for the integration of peace education in the Punjab province. In the fall, the coalition will gather again to further mobilize Pakistani and international policymakers, the media, and general public to advance rehabilitation, reconciliation, and conflict prevention efforts.

The Institute for Inclusive Security uses research, training, and advocacy to promote the inclusion of all stakeholders, particularly women, in peace processes. We work with a global network of well over 1,000 women leaders from more than 40 conflict regions. Our research gives policymakers new strategies to drive inclusion by examining tangible contributions of women peacebuilders. Our training provides leaders with the specialized skills and knowledge to direct local, national, and international peacebuilding. Our advocacy to high-level policymakers promotes change that makes peace processes more broad-based, and thus sustainable. Learn more at www.inclusivesecurity.org.