

A women garden in Herat ?



March 2005, at Paris City Hall Grand Salon : five women from all over the world came to France to expose the women situation in their countries, and their actions to improve it. Their host is Amnesty International French Section, which gives commitment to support and find partners for their projects.

Among the ladies is Palwasha Kakar, Women Rights Officer in Herat with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). For two weeks at various meetings in Paris she insisted that the international aid should be better organized, better structured, and committed for a longer term so that Afghans would feel a real improvement in their lives... and more so Afghan women, who still live apart from society. Illiteracy, extreme mother death rate, forced marriages still take a heavy toll on them. When violence occurs, women are discriminated by family honour and can be left helpless. When they realize this injustice, they tend to overrule traditional values and become outcasts. Sometimes they end up in suicide.

When heading back to Afghanistan, Palwasha has received many warm feelings and some words of good intents. The French Foreign Affairs ministry would start in Herat a new instance of the Kaboul Bâgh-e Zanâna which rebirth it supported through a French NGO – ADSI – and with other international donors. A journalist from the Persian language French radio RFI would give his political contacts in Herat, which could help to change minds and start a pilot shelter for runaway women. A French Iranian woman performer would launch a staging workshop for traditional tale telling. The president of the women rights sub-committee of the French consultative body for human rights (CNCDH) would give institutional support to the AIHRC. A French woman TV journalist would voice a project for Afghan women.

Could these good intents convert into action ? This seems far from the needed long term commitment, but may amount to something. A volunteer is heading for Afghanistan in a 3-month exploratory mission. A report about perspectives will be given in September 2005.