

Afghan women's rights protest

Wednesday 20 May 2009, by [MACDONALD Lisa](#) (Date first published: 17 May 2009).

More than 100 members of the Australian-Afghan community and supporters protested in front of Parliament House and the Afghan embassy in Canberra on May 12.

Under a new law in Afghanistan, women are prohibited from leaving their homes without their husband's permission to seek work, receive education or attend a doctor's appointment. Further, a woman is now legally obligated to have sex with her husband whenever he wants to, unless she is ill.

The new law, signed by President Hamid Karzai in March, also strips women of other rights, including to ask for the custody of children (custody is now granted only to fathers and grandfathers) and to be free of rape (rape is now a crime only when the victim is a minor).

Protest organiser Abdul Hekmat said: *"This legislation literally legalises rape within marriage and pushes Afghanistan back to the Taliban times in relation to women's rights. As Afghan-Australians and Hazaras we find this law odious and want it repealed immediately."*

Hekmat added: *"Afghanistan's constitution gives equal rights to men and women. This law contravenes the constitution, and also many international treaties signed by the Afghan government, including those specifically related to women's rights."*

The protest demanded that the Australian government join other Western countries in condemning the new law and pressure the Afghan government to repeal it.

P.S.

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