



Australian Federation of University Women Inc.

PO Box 224, Enmore NSW 2042

<http://www.afuw.org.au>

January 17, 2009

The Hon Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Smith,

Re Denial of Education to Girls in Pakistan

The Australian Federation of University Women was dismayed to hear, via the International Federation, that the *Times* of 26.12.08 has reported that:

The Taliban is once again imposing its militant rule, ordering the closure of all girls' schools in the Swat district of Pakistan. Announcements in mosques and on radio have given a deadline of 15 January 2009 for the order to be obeyed, threatening to blow up school buildings and attack schoolgirls if the order is not carried out. "Female education is against Islamic teachings and spreads vulgarity in society," Shah Dauran, leader of a group that has established control over a large part of Swat district in the North West Frontier Province, declared. It is also reported that more than 125 girls' schools have already been destroyed in the area during the past year. Further, women have been told not to move outside their houses without being fully covered.

I am sure that you will be well aware that such actions are totally contrary to obligations that Pakistan has voluntarily accepted as a member of the UN. It is contrary to CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and Millennium Development Goal 2. It flouts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the mandates of UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, CEDAW and CSW.

Apart from breaching the right of every human being to education, such actions are against the best economic and social interests of Pakistan. There is abundant evidence that educating women is a major step in decreasing poverty and improving health, especially in relation to maternal and infant mortality and HIV/AIDS across the whole of society. It is difficult to understand why aid should be given to a country that disregards such a fundamental human right.

We request that you communicate to Pakistan Australia's extreme concern at this development, requesting that the Pakistani government do everything in its power to ensure that Pakistani girls and women are able to access their rights to education and involvement in public life.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr) Jennifer Strauss AM
President, AFUW Inc.
2/12 Tollington Ave, East Malvern 3145

cc: Ms Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for the Status of Women