INSTITUTE FOR
LAW AND SOCIETY
IN AFGHANISTAN

# Never Give Up

## A Letter to my Afghan Sisters

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As an Afghan girl who once experienced the restrictive rules of the Taliban regime, my journey mirrors the current situation of many Afghan women today. My story begins in Afghanistan, a place controlled by the oppressive regime that hung our freedoms, choked our aspirations, and imposed rigid rules that dictated every aspect of our lives. In this environment, I was too young to dream more, but I saw how the dreams of my sisters and brothers were replaced by early marriages and poverty.

To escape the death of our souls, my family sought refuge in Iran, hoping to find peace and respect in a different country. However, the promise of safety came with its own set of challenges. We were allowed to breathe but in return we gave away our rights such as the right to education.

I was denied access to education, I felt the weight of uncertainty left by the absence of learning. It was amidst this darkness that I found a glimmer of hope—an NGO that embraced me, nurtured my spirit, and opened my eyes to my true potential.

Within the sanctum of this organization, I embarked on a journey of self-discovery. I unleashed my voice, my passion for music, and most importantly, my rights. It was here that I began to heal from the traumas I witnessed in Afghanistan. The scars of forced marriage, the limitations imposed by society, and the shackles of fear slowly started to fade as I immersed myself in education and self-exploration.

No, it was not that easy, I agreed to risk my life to fight not only the society but also my family to let me dream more.

The pivotal point of my story came when I faced a second forced marriage. In that crucial moment, it wasn't the presence of wealth or the power of a “man” that altered my destiny.
Instead, it was the endless trust I had found in myself, my dedication, and the resilience that convinced me to take risks, to question more and to obey less.

Today, as I look back on my journey, I see a lot of similarities faced by Afghan women. But what really hurts me is to sometimes witness a lack of motivation, and willingness to pay the price of freedom. It pains me to witness people being content with only having the right to breathe, surviving, unaware that the path to freedom demands a willingness to fight for it and to bet your life.

I'm writing this essay not to talk about myself, but to emphasize the importance of how having dreams can change my life. I urge my Afghan sisters to break free from the fear that keeps them trapped at home. I know it's not easy, especially as I'm now in a safer place and you are not. But I want you, Afghan women, to know I was once like you, without freedom, and I fought hard for it. I wanted to be free or die proud.

People used to call me a 'bad girl' because I didn't follow society's rules. But I didn't let all the different bad labels put on me stop me. I focused on my dreams, and they kept me going, even when things were tough.

Afghan women, I beg of you to cast aside the fear of judgment, the fear of repercussions, and the fear of what others might think of you. Embrace the courage to demand your rights, to dream, and to strive for a life of your own choice. It makes me sad to see people living in fear, following orders instead of living the life they truly deserve.

You might blame me for encouraging you to step into a battlefield without a weapon, but do you realize you hold the most powerful weapon - your voice? Think of any role model worldwide; none reached their destination without taking risks.

My sisters, I care for you deeply, and I want the best for each of you. But what I'm saying is, the first step towards freedom is letting go of your fears, and not surrendering to the current situation in Afghanistan.

For instance, if schools are closed, don't let this kill your ambition to progress. Instead, say to yourself, "I will be my own teacher." Read more, think more, act more. Get a notebook, call it "My Dreams Book," and put pictures of your old and new dreams inside. Then take steps to make them real. It might sound childish, but I assure you, this is a roadmap to freedom. It's a way to guide yourself to a great ending or an incredible beginning. In both cases, it will serve you best. So, once again, I urge you all to dream because without hopes and dreams, we'll be nothing but puppets.

And know that facing challenges is a normal part of life. Life isn't always easy; it's like a trip full of bumps and hurdles. If we keep worrying about things going wrong, it can stop us from moving ahead, just like worrying about accidents on a road trip.

Imagine life as a thrilling journey, packed with experiences and challenges. It's not just about reaching a destination but enjoying the adventures along the way. But if we let fears hold us back, our progress stops, and we miss out on growing.

Staying in one place or following the same routine all the time can make life boring and will drain our energy. It makes every day seem the same, without excitement. When we stick to what's available, we miss chances to grow and explore new things.

Yet, if we see life as an exciting journey full of chances to risk and change, it can make a huge difference. Instead of seeing challenges as big problems, we can look at them as ways to become better. Each challenge teaches us something new and helps us move forward in our own unique story.

So, even though life brings challenges, it's important not to see them as roadblocks. They're part of our journey, shaping who we are. When we change how we see challenges, even small steps can take us toward a fulfilling and exciting life journey.

ای، تسلیم نشو دختر،
برو جلو و بجنگ قویتر،
ای دختر تو باش راهنمایی،
به سمت رویا ها و روشنایی،