

International Director's Report (Mona Lynch)

Mona became North American director at the IAWJ Conference in May and agreed to serve on subcommittee with respect to security of Afghan Judges given the assassination of two women judges in January 2021– as well as to address requests for assistance in skills training and technology.

There were about 30 women judges in Kabul who asked for assistance with security. They reached out July 15, 2021 as the Taliban was advancing. Most had fled other provinces to Kabul. All the judges are very proud of the work they had done over last 20 years and wanted to continue that work.

The committee began getting the issue out to media and assisting judges in getting documents online to use if they had to flee. Mona gave several interviews. After Kabul fell the women judges were getting rid of anything that might identify them as a judge.

Prisoners sentenced by women judges were released by the Taliban and the Taliban took over the courts with access to personal information of the judges. There were threats to judges. There was some success in assisting judges to get out on flights. Many countries offered seats on flights but there was a great difficulty getting to the airports and dealing with crowds there. Many remain in Afghanistan but about 30 judges and their families have gotten out. Others have gotten out overland to neighbouring countries.

The rules keep changing as the Taliban are now requiring passports but will not issue them. Many countries have stepped up to provide visas – notably Poland and Romania.

There is an issue with respect to donations to IAWJ specified to be for assistance of Afghan Women Judges. The Board of Managerial Trustees does not necessarily agree that we should be doing this work and so are holding onto donated funds. They have paid for interpreters to assist in communications. Mona suggest that our fund-raising efforts should be directed to assist with re-settlement in Canada rather than to the IAWJ. There are some 160 Afghan women judges who have asked to be considered for re-settlement in Canada.

The first IAWJ Board Meeting is October 15, 2021 and Mona will report after that meeting.