

“The “New Afghanistan” began its history with the collapse of the Taliban in November 2001. Returning to Kabul from refugee camps in Pakistan in December 2001, I found my native city transformed beyond recognition. Despite the terrible devastation from many years of war, the gates of Afghanistan were now open to the world, and the windows of the world were open to Afghanistan.



Building the Marefat High School in the poverty-stricken community of western Kabul has been my lifelong mission. From a small team of faculty and just 37 students, the school now has more than 3,000 students, 43 percent of whom are girls. Ranked first among all private schools in Kabul, Marefat takes great pride in its success. At the core of its curriculum is an emphasis on civic awareness and democratic values. Courses on humanism and civic education, along with a student parliament, parent-teacher sessions, and community dialogue are all helping to develop an engaged citizenry.

Nevertheless, the achievements of the past decade are threatened by fanaticism, a culture of violence, and a lack of reliable democratic institutions. Beyond the security transition of 2014, Afghans need to work toward a political and ideological transformation as well. Sustaining democratic progress, ensuring a safe and smooth transition of power, and sharing a message of collaboration between the international community and civic activists are the biggest missions ahead of us in Afghanistan.”

—Aziz Royesh, March 15, 2012

“Today is Thursday, March 15, 2012. The day I first came face-to-face with the realities of life was also a Thursday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1978. Over 32 years have passed since. In these years, between the two Thursdays, I have travelled a long journey through blood, dust and gun-smoke, through homelessness & vulnerability.

At the end of this journey, I am here in Washington, DC. and stand at NED, to talk about the positive transformations in my country. This moment itself epitomizes one of the biggest changes in my country: the change in me, in the outlook of my generation, and in the relationship of my country with the rest of the world.

What worries me, however, is the presence of an ever stronger resistance to this change. In the late 1970s, the Communists of my country eradicated the antiquated traditions of the monarchy. But they also inseminated people’s minds with violence, fundamentalism, & hatred that has passed from generation to generation. Will my generation be able to replace this violence, fundamentalism and hatred with affection, moderation and love?

This, I suspect, may turn out to be a huge challenge, one that will require the next generation of my country to undertake a long journey of its own.”

—*The last paragraph from my book “Let Me Breathe”*

# CIVIC EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY IN AFGHANISTAN

*Insights from the Kabul-based Marefat High School*



**Aziz Royesh**

March 15, 2012

The views expressed in this presentation represent the opinions and analysis of the speaker and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for Democracy or its staff.

# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

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## **I. THE MAREFAT HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**

- 1. A Decade of Change**
- 2. Civic Education**
- 3. Words from Marefat Students**

## **II. THE NEW AFGHANISTAN & THE CHALLENGES AHEAD**

## **III. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

# I. MAREFAT HIGH SCHOOL

## Civic Education

for

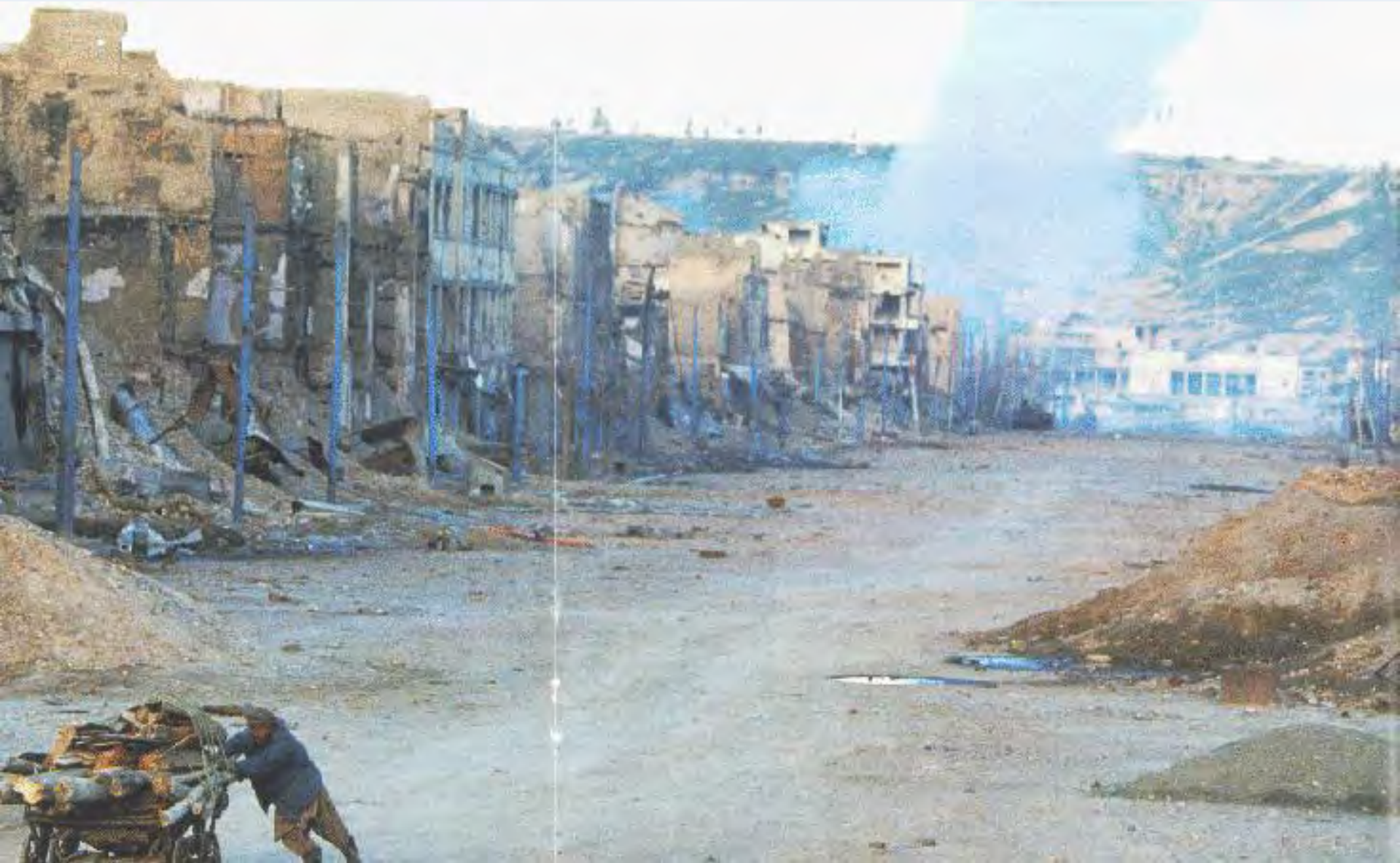
## Sustainable Democratic Change in Afghanistan



**Promoting Hope and Democratic Aspirations**

# FOUNDED IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS OF PAKISTAN (1994)





**KABUL IN 2001**



## 1. A DECADE OF CHANGE

	2002	2012
<b>Students</b>	37	3,000 (43% FEMALE)
<b>Staff</b>	7	180
<b>Assets</b>	550 USD	2,000,000 USD
<b>Graduates</b>	—	+300 (100% UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE)

\* 64 scholarships (almost half to female students) to study in eight countries

\* In 2011 Marefat was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> among 150 Kabul-based private schools

# A HOLISTIC SYSTEM OF EDUCATION



**General Education**



**Adult Education**



**Accelerated Learning Program**

# MAREFAT GRADUATES RETURN TO TEACH



Director of Finance



Deputy-Director of Finance



Director of Education

# SOURCES OF SUPPORT



- Contributions from Afghans
- Annual tuition fee of \$233

**2006: USAID grant for electricity**

**2008: U.S. Embassy grant for English Language Program**



- **Baroness D' Souza, Speaker of the UK House of Lords, sponsors female students**

## 2. CIVIC EDUCATION: Awareness, Freedom, and Equality

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# Democracy



## **Sima Samar**

*Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)*

## **Habiba Sarabi** Bamiyan Governor



## **Azra Jafari** Daikondi Mayor

# CIVIC EDUCATION

## Humanism, Human Rights, and Democracy

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### HUMANISTIC VALUES IN HOLY QUR'AN

#### A Human Being is:

- ❖ The Caliph of God
- ❖ Bearer of God's Soul
- ❖ Entitled to Dignity and Freedom of Choice

# BOOKS PUBLISHED BY MAREFAT HIGH SCHOOL

15



## ■ Civic Education:

Humanism  
Human Rights  
Democracy  
Ethics

## ■ Farsi

## ■ Philosophy

## ■ Qur'anic Studies

## ■ Social Studies

## ■ Economics

# FINE ARTS





**Top: Play: "The Leader and the Sultan"**

**Bottom: Art Exhibition at NATO HQ**



# “BEING WE THE PEOPLE”

## Collaborative photography project between students from Marefat and Constitution High School (Philadelphia)



Counters to Hate - Photo by Zara Rizvi, 19 ساله  
دانشگاه عالی از راهبه رضایی، 19 ساله  
Bead - Photo by Eric Rivera, 15 ساله  
خستہ گلشن از ارنک ریویرا، 15 ساله



Angle of Vision - Photo by Breannah Wazata, 16 ساله  
زاویه نگاه گلشن از سیم الله طرزانی، 16 ساله  
Class Up - Photo by Lemar Smith, 17 ساله  
انترنیک گلشن از جینی سمیت، 17 ساله



# STUDENT PARLIAMENT

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**Students practice democracy by electing their representatives who bring forth concerns to teachers & administrative staff**



# COLLABORATION



**Marefat garners support of its community through sustained dialogue, parent-teacher sessions, and community service**



# DEVELOPING AN ENGAGED CITIZENRY



**Students protest against the 2009 Shiite Family Law**

The 2009 Shiite Family Law restricted women's rights and included a clause requiring a wife to submit to her husband's advances.

## The Lede

Blogging the News With Robert Mackey

August 17, 2009, 12:39 PM

### Afghan Husbands Win Right to Starve Wives

By ROBERT MACKEY



Ahmad Masood/Reuters

Afghan women at an election rally this month in support of Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai.

BBC

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Page last updated at 17:27 GMT, Wednesday, 1 April 2009 18:27 UK



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### Afghan 'anti-women law' attacked

theguardian

News | US | World | Sports | Comment | Culture | Business | Environ

News > World news > Afghanistan

### 'Worse than the Taliban' - new law rolls back rights for Afghan women

Jon Boone in Kabul

The Guardian, Monday 30 March 2009

Article history



**“Liberty and Dignity of Human Beings is Inviolable”**



**Law: YES! Fanaticism: NO!**

# COUNTER REACTION

Proclaiming Marefaat as an anti-Islamic center, crowd calls for destruction of the school and execution of its staff



# STUDENTS RETURN TO SCHOOL WITH THEIR PARENTS



# WORDS FROM MAREFAT STUDENTS

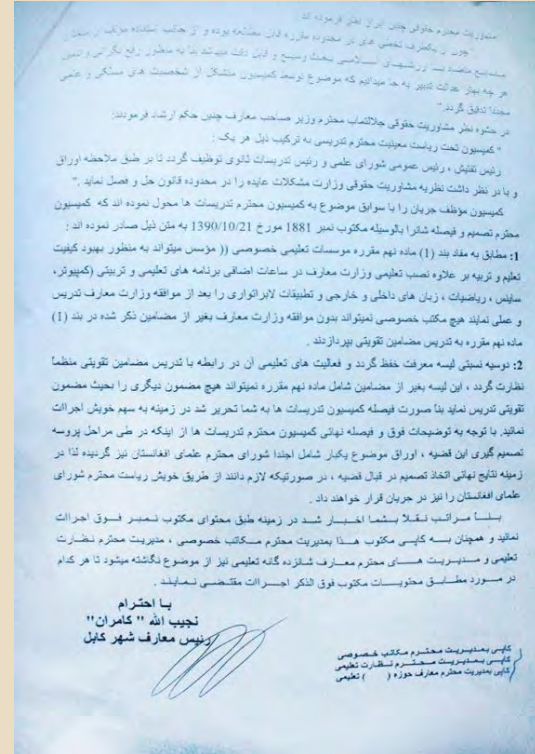
## II. NEW AFGHANISTAN NEW GENERATION



# THE CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD

## Clerics' Council Decree (2011):

**“Their books are against scientific and Islamic norms and should be confiscated, and the perpetrators deserve to be punished and tried in Court.”**



## Order from the Ministry of Education (2012):

**“All their educational activities should be supervised, they are not allowed to teach these subjects (civic education)”**



# III. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- ❖ **Marefat Board of Trustees and Faculty**
- ❖ **Baroness Frances D'Souza**
- ❖ **Clare Lockhart**
- ❖ **Ross Reid, NDI Country Director in Afghanistan**
- ❖ **Ambassador Ronald Neumann**
- ❖ **Michael Metrinko**
- ❖ **Rachel Miller**

# SPECIAL THANKS TO NED

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*Excerpt from the preface of my book*

## *Let Me Breathe!*

*A Glimpse Across Three Decades of Political Change in Afghanistan*

***“Millions of silenced people have this phrase in their eyes and hearts. This call from the common folk, the ones making use of the opportunities created since 2001, should not be ignored. They don’t support the Taliban simply because the Taliban are trigger happy. The people are content with the existing political process simply because it allows them the chance to breathe.”***