

The Future of Women in Afghanistan

Tuesday, October 12, 2021 | 4:00 – 5:30pm, Hawaii

Speaker Biographies



Anita BHATIA

Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director, UN Women, New York City, New York, USA [@abhatiaunwomen](#)

Anita Bhatia is assistant secretary-general and UN Women's deputy executive director for resource management, UN system coordination, sustainability, and partnerships. She has served in these roles since August 2019. Before joining UN Women, Ms. Bhatia had a distinguished career at the World Bank Group, serving in various senior leadership and management positions, both at headquarters and in the field. She brings extensive experience in the area of international development, strategy, resource mobilization, strategic partnerships and organizational change management. In various positions, Ms. Bhatia led teams to deliver significant resources for scaled-up impact, including at the country level, and to craft innovative partnerships to advance development agendas and has made significant contributions to the evolving discourse on development finance. She has led diverse teams as global head of knowledge management, head of business process improvement and head of change management. In addition to Latin America, Ms. Bhatia has worked in Africa, Europe, Central Asia and South and East Asia. She holds a BA in history from Calcutta University, an MA in political science from Yale University and a Juris Doctor in law from Georgetown University.



Samira HAMIDI

Regional Campaigner, South Asia Office, Amnesty International, Colombo, Sri Lanka
[@HuriaSamira](#)

Samira Hamidi is regional campaigner at Amnesty International's South Asia Regional Office, where her work focuses on human rights, the peace process, women's rights, and transitional justice issues in Afghanistan. Previously, she worked with the EU delegation in Afghanistan, the Norwegian Embassy, UN Women, CMI, the Folke Bernadette Academy, and as a freelance consultant at the Sweden Embassy. She has also served as program and advocacy director at the Empowerment Center for Women, country director at the Afghan Women's Network, gender coordinator at UNDP/Ministry of Interior, and deputy human resources director at the Ministry of Counter Narcotics. Ms. Hamidi has chaired the board of the Afghan Women's Network and the Human Rights Defenders Committee. She holds a Master of Advance Studies in mediation and peace process from ETH Zurich and a master's degree in international human rights law and practice from the University of York in the United Kingdom.



Farida NEKZAD

Director, Centre for Protection of Afghan Women Journalists

Farida Nekzad is director of the Center for the Protection of Afghan Women Journalists (CPAWJ). Established in March 2017, CPAWJ works in partnership with Reporters without Borders to empower women journalists in Afghanistan. Ms. Nekzad is also chair and commissioner at the Media Commission; editor-in-chief and director at Wakht News Agency, where she covers stories on human rights and women’s issues in Afghanistan; president of South Asia Women in Media; and executive board member of the Afghan Journalist Federation. Previously, she was founder and managing editor at Pajhwok Afghan News; vice president of the South Asia Media Commission; senior executive board member of AIJA; board member of the India Afghan Foundation; and media trainer at the Center for International Journalism, IWPR, and IMPACS. Her honors include the 2014 Press Freedom and Future of Media award from the Media Foundation of Sparkasse Leipzig; the Golden Victoria award for Press Freedom from VDZ; the 2008 Courage in Journalism Award from the International Women’s Media Foundation; and the 2008 International Press Freedom Award from the Committee to Protect Journalists. Ms. Nekzad holds degrees from Kabul University, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in New Delhi, and Mariam University in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Roya RAHMANI

Former Afghanistan Ambassador to the U.S.; Senior Advisor, South Asia Center, Atlantic Council; and Distinguished Fellow, Institute for Women, Peace and Security, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA [@RoyaRahmani](#)

Roya Rahmani is senior advisor at the Atlantic Council’s South Asia Center, a distinguished fellow at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and a senior fellow for international security at the New America Foundation. A former Afghan diplomat with nearly two decades of experience working with governments, nongovernmental organizations, and multilateral institutions, Ambassador Rahmani was the first woman to serve as Afghan ambassador to the United States, the first Afghan woman ambassador to Indonesia, and she served as the first director general for regional cooperation at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2007, Ambassador Rahmani received the Best Human Rights Activist Award from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. In 2017, Indonesia *Tatler* named her the “People’s Ambassador,” and in 2019, she was featured on *Time Magazine*’s “100 Next List” as a “fierce advocate of peace on Afghan terms.” She holds a bachelor’s degree in software engineering from McGill University and a master’s degree in public administration and international law from Columbia University.

Moderator:



Dilrukshi HANDUNNETTI, Executive Director, Center for Investigative Reporting Sri Lanka, Colombo, Sri Lanka [@DilrukshiH](#)

Dilrukshi Handunnetti is an international award-winning investigative journalist and foreign correspondent. She currently serves as executive director at the Colombo-based Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR), which she co-founded with two colleagues after resigning from her job as consultant editor at a national daily newspaper. Ms. Handunnetti also runs an information literacy program that promotes information integrity. The program, which offers trainings and an IFCN certificate to journalists and fact-checkers, is Sri Lanka's first initiative in partnership with IFCN and BOOM INDIA. A lawyer by training, Ms. Handunnetti has 25 years of experience in law and journalism. Her work has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Washington Post*, Al Jazeera, *The Humanitarian*, and many other international news outlets.