

Speaker: Huma Saeed

Presentation title: Afghanistan: An Anomaly in Times of “Normalization” or a Case of Inevitability of Transitional Justice?

According to Ruti Teitel (2003) transitional justice, once considered an exception, has become a norm in many post-authoritarian and post-conflict societies during the last decades. Afghanistan, however, falls out of this trend. Decades of violent conflict with consecutive transitions has left a society where 70% of the population consider themselves war victims (AIHRC 2005). Following the 2001 transition from the Taliban autocratic regime to democracy, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, together with the UN mission to Afghanistan and the Afghan government developed an action plan to address legacies of violent conflict. However, lack of political will by international and national actors impeded the implementation of the action plan, arguing the measures were disruptive of peace and security.

This presentation will analyze the factors that impeded the implementation of TJ during transition in 2001 while highlighting the innovative approaches spearheaded by civil society and victims' rights groups. It will also explore other venues, such as the role of the large Afghan diaspora in addressing justice demands of war victims. The presentation will argue that peace efforts will not be sustainable and meaningful if it does not include war victims and their demands for justice as an important component in the process.