

AFGHANISTAN — HON FATIMA KOHESTANI

Statement by Member for Landsdale

MS M.M. QUIRK (Landsdale) [12.51 pm]: Merely months ago we welcomed and celebrated a record number of women into Parliament. I reflect, by contrast, on the perilous position of a colleague and director of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, the duly elected Hon Fatima Kohestani, a 30-year-old Hazara and member for Ghor province in Afghanistan. She advised us this week that MPs in Afghanistan are being subjected to searches of their homes, requiring them to flee. Fatima has achieved bachelor degrees in law and political science and a master's degree in human rights and global humanities from the University of Leicester, where she taught gender studies. In Afghanistan, Fatima worked as a legal officer–trainer for the European Union Police Mission, as a human rights consultant for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and for the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund. As a member of GOPAC representing the South Asian region, she advocated strongly for all South Asian women parliamentarians. In all of these roles she has been an important agent for change.

We are all horrified and saddened by the television images from Afghanistan. Each of the fearful thousands escaping has an individual story like this. As a woman and a member of the long oppressed Hazaras, Fatima is vulnerable. I urge federal colleagues to use whatever means available to lobby for her safety and for all at-risk Afghani women, and for the Morrison government, in particular, the Minister for Foreign Affairs; Women, Marise Payne, to exercise compassion and common decency to permit Fatima's resettlement in Australia.