

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Women in Governmental Bodies in South Asia

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- ❖ The constitution of Bangladesh calls for quotas for women in government. Of the 350 seats in Parliament, 50 are reserved for women. Currently, 69 women hold seats in Parliament – about 20%. The first quota laws in the Bangladesh constitution were introduced in 1972. Seats are reserved for women in both urban and rural local governments.¹
- ❖ In 2009, Bangladesh introduced an order stipulating that any political party wishing to be registered must have in its constitution the goal of reserving at least 33% of seats for women, and must achieve this goal by the year 2020.¹
- ❖ In the Maldives, 5 of the 77 seats in the Maldivian National Parliament are held by women (6.5%).² The current Ministers of Education, Health and Gender, and Foreign Affairs are women.³
- ❖ In India's House of the People, or *Lok Sabha*, there are 545 seats, 59 of which are held by women (11%). There are no gender quotas for the House of the People. In local government bodies, women are guaranteed at least 33% of the seats. Within set quotas for certain castes and tribes, 33% of seats are reserved for women belonging to these groups. Some states of India have up to 50% of local government seats reserved for women.¹
- ❖ In Afghanistan there are 150 female judges.⁴ As of 2013, women hold 28% of seats in Parliament.⁵ There are reserved seats for women in the lower house (*Wolesi Jirga*) and the upper house (*Meshrano Jirga*).¹
- ❖ In the parliament of Sri Lanka, 13 out of 225 seats are held by women (6%). Efforts have been made to introduce a quota of 25% for reserved women's seats, but so far no quota regulations have been adopted.¹
- ❖ Pakistan has a bicameral government. The lower house, the National Assembly, has 60 of 342 seats reserved for women. Currently there are 67 seats held by women (20%). The upper house, the Senate, has 17 of 104 seats reserved for women (16%). This quota is currently met but not exceeded.¹
- ❖ Pakistan has reserved seats for women at the provincial level as accorded by the constitution. In 2001 there was a 33% quota for women at the local government level. This quota was lowered following new legislation.¹
- ❖ As a comparison, the amount of women in the United States House of Representatives is 18.3% and in the Senate, 20%.⁶ The U.S. does not have quotas for women in national government.

¹ <http://www.quotaproject.org>

² <http://www.unwomensouthasia.org/un-women-in-south-asia-2/un-women-in-maldives/>

³ <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=16>

⁴ <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-c1-afghanistan-women-20140204-m-story.html#page=1>

⁵ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>

⁶ <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>