



Afghanistan Human Rights Center

**Report on the
Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan
In 1404**

Contents

Introduction	3
About Afghanistan Human Rights Center (AHRC)	6
Methodology	7
Summary of the Report:.....	8
Chapter 1: General Human Rights Situation.....	12
Chapter 2: Women’s Rights.....	21
Chapter 3: Civil and Political Rights	35
Chapter 4: Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights	53
Chapter 5: Torture, Inhumane, and Degrading Treatment	62
Chapter 6: Stoning, Flogging, and Death Penalty.....	68
Chapter 7: Child Rights.....	70
Chapter 8: Rights of People with Disabilities and elderlies.....	75
Chapter 9: Accountability, Transitional Justice, and International Accountability Mechanisms.....	78
Chapter 10: Road Map, Civil Society, and Human Rights Defenders	82
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	84

ABBREVIATIONS

AHRC	Afghanistan Human Rights Center
AHRC	Afghanistan Human Rights Center
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANDS	Afghan National Directorate of Security
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Child Rights Convention
GoIRA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICC	International Criminal Court
ISKP	Islamic State of Khorasan Province
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organizations
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Introduction

The Afghanistan Human Rights Center (AHRC) has prepared this report to assess and analyze the human rights situation in Afghanistan in the solar 1404 (March 21, 2025 to March 20, 2026). The report examines the human rights situation with due regard to the principles and standards set forth in the international human rights conventions to which Afghanistan has previously ratified. In addition, it analyzes and evaluates the human rights situation in the country in light of the new political, social, economic, and cultural conditions that have emerged since August 2021. Furthermore, the current human rights situation in Afghanistan is discussed with reference to the broader human rights context, particularly during the recent years of the Republic period.

This report seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the situation of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights in the country. In addition to examining the laws, directives, policies, and programs of the Taliban that affect human rights, it also addresses the challenges, causes of human rights violations, and their consequences. By presenting a clear analysis of the current human rights situation, this report aims to offer practical recommendations to the current authorities, the international community, and national and international organizations through specific proposals.

The background of human rights in Afghanistan, particularly over the past four decades, has been marked by significant ups and downs. Following the defeat of the Taliban regime in 2001 and the establishment of the Interim and Transitional Administrations in Afghanistan, democratic and civil institutions were created and began operating.

The new Constitution of Afghanistan was adopted in January 2004 by representatives of the people through the Loya Jirga. The Constitution guaranteed many fundamental rights, including equality between women and men; freedom of expression and belief; freedom of assembly and protest; the right to education, health, and work; freedom of movement; respect for human dignity; and freedom from torture. Pursuant to the Constitution, the first presidential election was held in October 2004. Subsequently, the National Assembly (Parliament) was established through nationwide elections in September 2005. Furthermore, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission was established in June 2002 to monitor the observance of human rights and to promote and protect human rights. With the adoption of the Constitution in 2004, Article 58 provided it with a strong legal foundation.

During the Republic period, which lasted approximately 17 years, significant progress was also made in the field of legislation. Many laws were enacted and implemented. The vast majority of these laws were either passed or reviewed in accordance with the recommendations of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and in line with the international human rights conventions to which Afghanistan had acceded. The Penal Code was adopted in 2018. Almost all provisions of this Penal Code were drafted and enacted based on Afghanistan's international obligations in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Significant progress was also made in various areas of human rights. Independent civil mechanisms were established to monitor and protect human rights. Alongside this, freedom of expression and

access to information improved with the expansion of independent newspapers, radio stations, and television channels. Despite numerous challenges, civil society organizations and independent media were partially effective in raising public awareness, overseeing the performance of government institutions, and enhancing transparency and accountability.

Women's participation in political, social, and economic spheres was on the rise. Afghan women were able to secure up to 27 percent of parliamentary seats, and a number of women served in the cabinets of various governments during the Republic period. Additionally, at the beginning of the Republic period, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was established to support women's rights and played a relatively effective role throughout the Republic era. According to World Bank data, the female labor force participation rate in the first half of 2021 was 15 percent, compared to 21 percent in 2017¹.

Access to basic health services increased year by year during the Republic period. According to reports from international organizations, by early 2021, more than 70 percent of Afghanistan's population had access to primary health services within a maximum of two hours' travel². Child and maternal mortality rates also decreased annually. Life expectancy at birth increased to 59.9 years in 2021³.

Access to the right to education also improved year by year during the Republic period. Although a significant percentage of school-age children still did not have access to educational services—partly due to insecurity created by the Taliban—the Republic government made efforts to expand educational access. According to data from the National Statistic and Information Authority, in 1398 Hijri Shamsi (2019–2020 Gregorian), 61 percent of boys and 39 percent of girls had access to public schools⁴. Additionally, in the later years of the Republic period, the number of private schools and private higher education institutions increased, further improving access to education and higher education.

Afghanistan has ratified the majority of international human rights conventions. The country has acceded to the following international conventions:

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1983)
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1983)
3. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1983)
4. International Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987)

¹ World Bank, more details on this link: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=AF>

² OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan: Afghanistan 2018-2021, More details on this link: https://afghanistan.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/AFG_HRP_June_2020_0.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ World Health Organization, Available on: <https://data.who.int/countries/004>

⁴ National Statistic and Information Authority, Year 1399, at 62, Published in Hamal, 1400

5. International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1994)
6. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (2003)
7. Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2002 and 2003)
8. International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012)

In addition, Afghanistan ratified the Rome Statute in 2003, thereby accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and committing to cooperate with the Court in accordance with its provisions.

The Government of Afghanistan, at various stages, submitted multiple reports to the relevant committees regarding its obligations under international human rights conventions. In addition, four Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reports were submitted to the United Nations. Government institutions made efforts to implement the recommendations arising from this mechanism. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, along with some civil society organizations, also submitted shadow reports to the relevant United Nations mechanisms.

Overall, it can be said that during the Republic period, despite challenges such as corruption, insecurity, weak governance, and limited rule of law, significant efforts were made by various institutions—particularly independent bodies and civil society organizations—to improve the human rights situation. Although serious human rights violations were reported, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, violations of women’s rights, restrictions on freedom of expression, limited access to justice, and other rights and freedoms, oversight mechanisms existed to ensure accountability and transparency and to follow up on these cases. For example, cases of torture in detention centers and prisons showed a significant decrease in the later years of the Republic period compared to earlier years.

However, with the Taliban’s takeover on 15 August 2021, one of the darkest chapters in contemporary Afghan history began. The political, economic, educational, health, and judicial systems collapsed, creating conditions for widespread and systematic human rights violations in Afghanistan. Democratic and civil institutions, which had played a crucial role in raising awareness, ensuring accountability, and promoting transparency, were dissolved, and severe restrictions were imposed on independent media.

With the Taliban’s rise to power, systematic repression and discrimination against women and vulnerable groups began. The first and foremost victims of the regime change are Afghan women. They face the most systemic, institutionalized, isolation and discrimination based on gender, a situation that can only be described as “gender apartheid.” Arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings of former government officials, armed forces personnel, civil society activists, and human rights defenders have continued despite the declaration of general amnesty. Forced displacement of non-Pashtun communities and the confiscation of property by the Taliban and their affiliates are being carried out at an alarming scale.

In light of the current situation and the historical context of human rights in Afghanistan, this report has been prepared and published. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the principal challenges in the field of human rights within the country. The report seeks to examine the underlying causes and contributing factors of human rights violations, as well as their consequences on the social, economic, cultural, and political life of the population. The present report begins with an assessment of the overall human rights situation and subsequently addresses key thematic areas, including the rights of women, civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, torture, public executions, children's rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, and accountability and governance. Finally, the report proposes a roadmap for the future development and protection of human rights in Afghanistan.

About Afghanistan Human Rights Center (AHRC)

The Afghanistan Human Rights Center (AHRC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, registered and operating from New Haven, Connecticut, focused on monitoring, promoting, and protecting human rights in Afghanistan. The AHRC was established in 2022 by renowned human rights activists who have been forced into exile but bring with them over twenty years of experience in human rights work. The organization's primary aim is to monitor the human rights situation and advocate for the protection of the rights of Afghans by leveraging a vast local network of individuals who are capable and committed to defending human rights within Afghanistan. Drawing on the expertise and institutional knowledge gained from their previous roles at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), where the current leadership and staff were formerly engaged, the AHRC positions itself as a continuation of Afghanistan's national human rights mechanism.

The AHRC's programs and infrastructure are built on a solid foundation of experience and expertise, which enables it to effectively monitor, document, and advocate for human rights, even under the most challenging circumstances. With adequate resources and support, the AHRC is well-positioned to fill the critical gap that currently exists in the monitoring, protection, and promotion of human rights in Afghanistan. The AHRC team in their previous term had produced over 300 thematic and national human rights reports that were widely utilized by various stakeholders in Afghanistan, showcasing their capability and expertise in human rights documentation and advocacy.

The AHRC's human rights database, which was developed based on the past three years of systematic documentation and analysis of human rights violations and abuses, serves as a comprehensive repository for human rights information. This well-established database continues to function as the primary storage and reference point for human rights documentation, ensuring that information is preserved and accessible for advocacy and accountability purposes.

Methodology

This report examines and analyzes the human rights situation in Afghanistan during the solar year 1404 (21 March 2025 to 20 March 2026). The difference between the Gregorian and Solar Hijri calendars has been considered in this report, and the Solar Hijri dates of events, largely drawn from Dari-language sources, have been converted into their corresponding Gregorian dates.

This report is based on a range of primary and secondary sources, including the AHRC database, field monitoring, interviews and eyewitness accounts, reports issued by international organizations, and independent media sources. These materials were used to assess and analyze the overall human rights situation in Afghanistan. Information derived from these sources was largely consistent and provided a coherent basis for the analysis presented in this report.

In 2024, the AHRC developed and launched a centralized database to systematically record human rights-related information. The database is updated on a daily basis and serves as a principal evidentiary source for this report. The statistical data and quantitative findings presented herein are primarily drawn from the AHRC database. In instances where discrepancies arose between the database and other sources, the AHRC database was considered authoritative unless otherwise specified.

To ensure a comprehensive assessment of the human rights situation, the report also draws upon documentation produced by international organizations, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, as well as reports from Afghan civil society organizations operating in exile. These sources were used as secondary materials and are referenced accordingly. Information derived from these reports has been incorporated with due regard for accuracy and proper attribution.

Additional sources include reports published by independent international media outlets and Afghan media organizations operating outside the country. Such materials were used with caution and were, wherever possible, cross-verified against other available sources to assess their reliability.

Field monitoring and interviews constitute another key source of information. The AHRC maintains local monitors in selected provinces who continuously document developments relating to human rights and submit periodic reports to the central office through secure communication channels. Local monitors operate under significant security constraints and face serious risks in carrying out their work. In many cases, they are unable to freely contact victims or witnesses or to collect documentary evidence. Communication is often established through trusted personal networks to mitigate security risks.

A significant methodological challenge has been the ability to contact victims and witnesses of human rights violations. Given the de facto authorities' prohibition on cooperation with media and civil society organizations based abroad, many individuals are reluctant to participate in interviews due to fear of reprisals. As a result, the number of interviews conducted for this report is limited. Interviews were conducted with victims and witnesses in the provinces of Badakhshan, Kunduz,

Takhar, Baghlan, Kabul, and Herat. Due to security constraints, interviews could not be conducted in several other provinces.

Interviews carried out by local monitors and AHRC staff based outside Afghanistan were conducted using secure communication platforms, including WhatsApp and Signal. Prior to each interview, participants were informed of the purpose of the documentation process and were assured that their identities would remain confidential. Personal identifying information has not been disclosed, and pseudonyms are used throughout this report to protect interviewees.

All information included in this report was subjected to careful review, cross-checking, and verification. Particular caution was exercised to minimize the risk of disseminating inaccurate or misleading information. In cases where precise data were unavailable or sources provided conflicting accounts, the authors relied on information assessed as most credible and consistent with the broader contextual circumstances.

In preparing this report, the AHRC adhered to applicable human rights documentation standards and ethical principles. Throughout data collection, documentation, and interviewing processes, the principle of “do no harm” was strictly observed. Interview techniques were designed to avoid traumatization, and questions deemed potentially distressing or sensitive, particularly those relating to gender or sexual matters were handled with heightened care or omitted where appropriate.

Summary of the Report:

The findings of this report indicate that the human rights situation in Afghanistan is gravely deteriorated. The majority of the population’s rights and freedoms, particularly those of women, children, and ethnic and religious minorities are being violated in a widespread, systematic, and organized manner by the de facto authorities. Girls and women are deprived of most of their fundamental rights and basic freedoms, and discrimination against women is being enforced in its most severe forms.

Detainees, particularly former security personnel, employees of the previous government, civil society activists, women’s rights advocates, journalists, and individuals associated with armed groups opposing the Taliban are subjected to ill-treatment and torture. Detention facilities operated by Taliban intelligence, especially Directorate 40, have become primary sites of torture. Some individuals have died as a result of severe torture. There are also reports indicating that some women’s rights activists, in addition to being tortured in Taliban detention facilities, have been subjected to sexual harassment and abuse.

Journalists and media outlets are facing severe censorship and repression, and freedom of expression is being widely violated. The ruling authorities have imposed numerous verbal and written directives on domestic media, all of which have been issued with the aim of restricting, censoring, and intimidating the press. 17 journalists and media sector

employees were detained by the Taliban authorities in 2025. Some of these journalists were released after a short period, while others have been sentenced to short- and medium-term imprisonment and are currently serving their sentences in prison. Since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, at least 165 journalists and media workers have been detained by the Taliban.

In 2025, at least 20 Afghan journalists were forced to return to Afghanistan from Pakistan. Dozens of other journalists are living in hiding due to fear of forced deportation. Currently, around 200 Afghan journalists, along with their families, remain in Pakistan. If returned to Afghanistan, they risk being identified by the Taliban and subjected to detention and torture. According to Reporters Without Borders, 43% of media outlets have disappeared, and more than two-thirds of the approximately 12,000 journalists active in 2021 have left the profession. Eight out of every ten women journalists have been forced to abandon their work. The small number of journalists still working under Taliban control face numerous restrictions, including lack of access to sources, bans on traveling without a mahram (male guardian), prohibition from appearing on camera in state media, workplace segregation, mandatory face covering, various forms of harassment, and extremely low or even unpaid salaries.

Access to justice has become severely limited for the majority of the population, particularly for women. The country's justice system, which had been based on modern legal principles, has regressed and now faces a bleak future. In the absence of a constitution and other modern laws, the justice system is administered through written and verbal decrees, as well as the discretionary practices of the de facto authorities.

In January 2026, the Taliban leader approved and promulgated a "Criminal Procedure Code for Courts". This document reflects a dangerous shift and redefinition of the criminal justice system, institutionalizing discriminatory classifications and reviving inhumane punishments. Its provisions indicate a deliberate and systematic transformation in criminal procedures, undermining the principles of equality, legality, and fair trial. The current justice system is characterized by disorder and arbitrariness. Sitting judges are Taliban-affiliated clerics, none of whom possess formal academic legal education.

In addition, the enactment and enforcement of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has significantly restricted many of the population's most basic freedoms, affecting multiple aspects of daily life. This law has severely curtailed economic, social, political, and cultural rights. It has been instituted and implemented as a primary instrument for consolidating Taliban control, repression, monopolization, and domination over the people of Afghanistan. During the solar year 1404, in addition to the dozens of decrees

issued and enforced in previous years that restricted fundamental rights and freedoms, more than 25 additional decrees limiting human rights were promulgated and brought into effect.

During the year 1404, Taliban courts issued hundreds of flogging sentences and discretionary punishments, resulting in 1,087 individuals being publicly flogged. These corporal punishments were carried out in most provinces of the country, with the overwhelming majority of victims being men. Women were often flogged on charges such as extramarital relations and “running away” from home.

In 2025, five individuals were executed on charges of intentional murder. On April 11, four men were publicly executed in the provinces of Badghis, Nimroz, and Farah. Since August 2021, a total of 12 individuals have been publicly executed by the Taliban. The death penalty has been carried out in public in the provinces of Farah, Laghman, Ghazni, Jawzjan, Badghis, and Nimroz, in the presence of hundreds of spectators, including children.

According to AHRC’s database, a total of 1,284 civilian casualties (310 killed and 974 injured) were recorded in the solar year 1404. More than 90 percent of these casualties resulted from border clashes between Taliban forces and Pakistani forces, as well as airstrikes conducted by Pakistani forces in various cities across Afghanistan. The primary burden of these conflicts is borne by Afghan civilians, with dozens of civilians killed or injured in each confrontation. Analysis of casualty data indicates that the majority of victims are women and children.

The majority of children in Afghanistan face widespread discrimination and deprivation. Key challenges confronting Afghan children include poverty, hunger, lack of access to quality education, inadequate healthcare services, sexual abuse, physical violence both at home and outside, forced and underage marriage, insecurity, trafficking, and recruitment into armed forces.

More than half of the country’s population, approximately 24.4 million people require humanitarian assistance, of whom 12.9 million are children. The deteriorating conditions have left 8.7 million individuals in a state of emergency-level food insecurity. According to United Nations statistics, 45 percent of child deaths in Afghanistan are attributable to malnutrition. Currently, the prevalence of acute malnutrition exceeds emergency thresholds in 27 out of 34 provinces, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

The quantity and quality of education in Afghanistan have sharply declined. Reductions in international aid, the absence of a responsive government, and the Taliban’s disregard for modern education have contributed to this deterioration. Restrictions on the education of girls and women, uncertainty regarding changes to the curriculum, insufficient investment

and infrastructure, weak oversight of the education system, lack of adequate learning materials, a severe shortage of teachers—especially female teachers—and recurring humanitarian crises such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts have placed the education sector under increasing pressure, endangering the future of an entire generation. The de facto authorities have aligned educational objectives with their extremist and violent ideology.

Access to healthcare services in Afghanistan has also declined. Since January 2025, nearly three million people have lacked access to medical care, and by early 2026, an additional two to three million people may lose access to healthcare. In 2025, 364 health facilities were closed, and 220 more are at risk of closure due to reductions in international aid.

The Taliban have imposed restrictions on women’s employment, including in the health sector. Additionally, due to a climate of fear, a significant number of doctors and healthcare workers have left Afghanistan and sought refuge in other countries. These factors have resulted in a healthcare sector facing severe shortages of staff and funding. Women have been disproportionately affected by these developments, with the imposed restrictions further limiting their access to essential health services.

According to estimates by the World Food Programme, at present 9.5 million people in Afghanistan are facing food insecurity, and approximately 4.6 million Afghan mothers and children are suffering from malnutrition. Accurate and up-to-date statistics on unemployment in Afghanistan are not available. However, a 2025 report by the World Bank Group states that one in every four young people is unemployed. It must be noted that the actual unemployment rate is likely significantly higher.

Changes in governance, the lack of private sector development, capital flight, and the absence of foreign investment due to uncertainty about stability, as well as the return of several million Afghan migrants from neighboring countries placing pressure on the labor market, are among the principal causes of rising unemployment. Recent droughts and natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, have claimed the lives of thousands and left many more survivors in conditions of severe vulnerability.

In 2025, the Taliban authorities continued to enforce many of the prohibitions and restrictions imposed on cultural and artistic activities. They prevented the celebration of Nowruz, one of the ancient festivals of the Afghan people. Singing and music have been banned, and singers and musicians have either abandoned their professions or gone into exile. In December 2025, the Taliban demolished the Ariana Cinema. Restrictions have also been imposed on the composition of poetry. Over the past four years, the Taliban have systematically and extensively removed Persian words and expressions in certain educational institutions, government offices, and public spaces.

Following the Taliban’s takeover, persons with disabilities in Afghanistan have become poorer and more vulnerable. They face numerous challenges that restrict their rights and freedoms.

Discrimination, lack of rehabilitation services, and limitations in education, access to public spaces, and healthcare are among the most serious challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Women with disabilities experience compounded discrimination.

Chapter 1: General Human Rights Situation

Following the Doha Peace Agreement and a series of military offensives, the Taliban assumed control over the majority of Afghanistan's provinces and entered Kabul on 15 August 2021. On 30 August 2021, international military forces completed their withdrawal from the country. On 6 September 2021, Taliban forces entered Panjshir province and subsequently declared control over the entirety of Afghanistan's territory. The Taliban re-established the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," the same designation used during their previous period of rule (1996–2001). The Emirate is headed by Hibatullah Akhundzada, who holds the title of Amir al-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful). He exercises ultimate authority over political, administrative, economic, military, judicial, legislative, and religious affairs.

Upon re-establishing the Islamic Emirate, the Taliban suspended the 2004 Constitution and the broader legal framework adopted during the Republic period. The 2004 Constitution had guaranteed a range of fundamental rights and freedoms, including the principle of equality between women and men. Taliban authorities have rejected the Republic-era constitutional framework, citing its alleged incompatibility with their interpretation of Islamic Sharia.

In late September 2021, Abdul Hakim Sharaei, then serving as Acting Minister of Justice, stated that the Taliban would provisionally apply the 1964 Constitution promulgated under King Zahir Shah, provided that any provisions deemed inconsistent with Islamic Sharia were removed. However, subsequent decrees, directives, and regulations issued by the Taliban leadership have not formally referenced the 1964 Constitution, nor has a clear constitutional framework been publicly articulated.

On 20 July 2025, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujaheed stated in a media interview that a constitution was unnecessary because Islamic Sharia provides a comprehensive legal framework⁵. On 10 August 2025, he further asserted that there was no legal vacuum in the country and that a constitution would be drafted only if deemed necessary in the future⁶. In practice, Afghanistan is currently governed without a formally adopted or publicly promulgated constitution.

Taliban authorities issue policies and directives on a continual basis through decrees, public statements, written regulations, and verbal orders issued by the Supreme Leader and other officials. Through these instruments, numerous rights and freedoms—particularly those of women—have been significantly curtailed. These restrictions affect, inter alia, the rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, education, work, personal security, and access to

⁵ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General, "The situation of Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", Pag 3, A/80/366-S/2025/554

⁶ Ibid

healthcare. Taliban authorities have also reinstated the implementation of hudud and qisas punishments. Collectively, these measures indicate a reassertion of governance practices similar to those implemented during the 1990s.

Khalida (pseudonym), a girl from Herat city, stated in an interview with the AHRC:

“We do not have physical or psychological security. Since the Taliban restricted women’s freedoms, I have tried not to leave my home in order to avoid being harassed or mistreated by them. A few weeks ago, while I was on my way to the market, I was forced out of the vehicle by the Taliban. Although I was wearing a chador and a face mask, they made me get out of the car and told me that my hijab was not appropriate. I was very frightened that they might beat or detain me. I immediately returned home. Since then, my parents, in order to preserve the family’s honor and reputation, no longer allow me to go to the market. I know that if a girl is detained by the Taliban—even for a few hours—under the pretext of improper hijab or any other excuse, she will lose her reputation at home and in society. For this reason, I do not feel safe.”

The majority of restrictive decrees disproportionately target women and girls. Through formal decrees and informal directives, women have been largely excluded from public life and subjected to systematic discrimination. Women are required to be accompanied by a male guardian (mahram) in many circumstances and face severe limitations on their freedom of movement. They have been denied access to education beyond the sixth grade, barred from most forms of employment, prohibited from participating in sports, and restricted from entering parks and other public recreational spaces. Women have also been prevented from exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and protest. Under the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, a woman’s voice in public may be deemed “awrah” (a term used under certain interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence to denote something that must be concealed), further restricting their participation in public life.

Numerous laws enacted during the Republic period have been suspended, repealed, or left in an undefined legal status. Taliban authorities have announced that prior legislation would be reviewed for compliance with Islamic Sharia and Afghan traditions. According to official statements, many Republic-era laws are considered inconsistent with the Taliban’s interpretation of Sharia.

Taliban officials maintain that governance is conducted in accordance with Islamic Sharia and that any law deemed contrary to Sharia is null and void. However, in many instances, repealed laws have not been replaced with new, codified legislation. At the same time, certain Republic-era laws—particularly in the areas of trade, economics, and telecommunications—continue to be applied in practice.

As a result, Afghanistan’s current legal framework lacks clarity, coherence, and predictability. Governance frequently occurs through decrees and verbal directives rather than through transparent legislative processes. In several areas, it remains unclear which legal provisions are applicable or enforceable, contributing to significant legal uncertainty.

One of the most significant legislative measures taken by the Taliban is the adoption of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which was approved on 21 August 2024 by the Taliban leader. The law consists of four sections, five chapters, and 35 articles. It declares mandatory hijab and dress requirements for women, emphasizing that women and girls must cover their entire bodies. The law also imposes restrictions on freedom of movement, personal relationships, freedom of expression, and access to information, as well as on religious beliefs and practices, cultural events and celebrations, and it prohibits music. In addition, the law criminalizes same-sex relations and the creation of “conditions or means” that could facilitate such relationships.

This law consolidates and formalizes a series of previously issued decrees and directives that impose discriminatory and restrictive measures, particularly affecting women and girls. Its adoption has institutionalized extensive state control over both public and private life. The implementation of the law has resulted in severe restrictions on individual and collective rights and freedoms and has had significant social, cultural, economic, and psychological consequences. The law was met with strong criticism from Afghan human rights defenders and civil society actors, as well as from international human rights organizations and members of the international community.

Since August 2021, the Taliban have dismantled or dissolved several governmental and independent oversight institutions, including the National Assembly (Parliament), the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Election Commission, and the Ministries of Parliamentary Affairs and Peace. In their place, the Taliban strengthened and expanded the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. The former premises of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs were reassigned to this Ministry, symbolizing the institutional shift in state policy regarding women’s rights.

On 7 September 2021, the Taliban announced the formation of an interim cabinet and appointed officials to key national and provincial positions. All appointees were men, predominantly of Pashtun ethnicity, and all were affiliated with the Taliban. A significant number of senior appointees were listed under sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. On 15 August 2025, marking the fourth anniversary of their return to power, the Taliban leadership dissolved the interim cabinet and declared it a permanent government structure. Although Taliban authorities have described their administration as inclusive, it lacks meaningful ethnic, gender, religious, political, and geographic representation.

Since the Taliban’s takeover in August 2021, Afghanistan has experienced significant international isolation. The Taliban authorities have not obtained broad international recognition as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. With the exception of recognition extended by Russia on 3 July 2025, no other United Nations Member State has formally recognized the Taliban government. While some states, including several regional countries, have permitted Taliban-appointed representatives to operate Afghan diplomatic missions, such arrangements do not constitute formal recognition. Afghanistan’s seat at the United Nations has not been transferred to the Taliban authorities.

The Taliban have consistently expressed opposition to the contemporary international human rights framework, characterizing certain rights and freedoms enshrined in international treaties as incompatible with their interpretation of Islamic principles and Afghan values. Although some Taliban officials have publicly stated that, in their view, many international human rights norms are consistent with Islamic Sharia and that they remain committed to Afghanistan's international obligations⁷, policies implemented since August 2021 have, in practice, conflicted with Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law.

Afghanistan remains bound by the international human rights treaties to which it is a party, irrespective of the question of formal diplomatic recognition of the current authorities. Under international law, a change in government does not extinguish a State's treaty obligations.

Since August 2021, Afghanistan's judicial system has undergone profound structural and personnel changes. Female judges and prosecutors have been removed from their positions and barred from serving. Many judges appointed during the Republic period were dismissed and replaced by individuals affiliated with the Taliban. The Attorney General Office has also been converted, within the current judicial system, into the Directorate for Implementation of Decrees.

Senior judicial and legal positions, including the Chief Justice and Minister of Justice, are held by individuals with religious education but without formal academic training in national or international law. In addition to formal courts at provincial and district levels, certain senior provincial officials exercise judicial authority. There are also credible reports that some Taliban commanders adjudicate criminal matters—including allegations of theft, adultery, and rape—and, in some instances, impose punishments without adherence to established judicial procedures.

Under the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, morality police (muhtasibs) are granted extensive discretionary powers. In practice, muhtasibs have detained and punished individuals without observance of procedural safeguards. The law authorizes them to impose discretionary measures, including warnings, threats, corporal punishment, or detention for up to three days. Such administrative detentions, carried out without independent judicial oversight, raise serious concerns regarding arbitrariness and due process. The law further permits muhtasibs to impose punishments they deem "appropriate,"⁸ effectively granting broad personal discretion in determining sanctions.

In November 2021, the Taliban placed the Independent Bar Association under the authority of the Ministry of Justice. Licensing authority for defense attorneys was transferred from the Bar Association to the Ministry. Women were prohibited from obtaining or renewing licenses to practice

⁷ United Nations, "Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan", Report of the Special Rapporture on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Page 3,A/HRC/51/6, Available on: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/51/6>

⁸ Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, Article 24 (7), Approved in 2025

law. By June 2022, approximately 2,409 male lawyers reportedly held licenses to practice, compared to approximately 4,000 licensed lawyers—including 270 women—during the Republic period⁹.

Although defense attorneys are formally permitted to represent clients, reports indicate that, in practice, the role of defense counsel is frequently disregarded. Judges and prosecutors have, in some instances, treated legal representation as unnecessary, and there are reports of lawyers being excluded from proceedings under the stated rationale of expediting cases¹⁰.

Since assuming power, the Taliban have issued and enforced numerous decrees, orders, and directives—both written and verbal—many of which overlap, lack clarity, or are internally inconsistent. The absence of a transparent legislative process and the reliance on executive decrees have undermined principles of legality, equality before the law, and legal certainty.

This situation is compounded by the absence of a consistently published and publicly accessible official gazette. As a result, it is difficult to maintain a comprehensive and authoritative record of applicable legal instruments, to determine their normative hierarchy, or to assess their validity within the Taliban’s asserted legal framework.

Within the justice sector alone, a substantial number of decrees and instructions—reportedly affecting courts, prosecutorial authorities, and access to legal representation—have reshaped adjudicatory institutions. These measures have contributed to restrictions on access to justice and have raised serious concerns regarding due process, equality before the law, and the right to a fair trial.

Domestic and international human rights actors have repeatedly raised concerns regarding Taliban decrees and policies that appear inconsistent with international human rights standards. Despite public criticism and diplomatic engagement, the Taliban leadership has not demonstrated willingness to revise core policies, particularly those affecting women and girls. While some Taliban officials have reportedly expressed differing views—especially concerning girls’ education—there is no indication that such internal disagreements have led to policy change.

Taliban authorities justify restrictive and discriminatory measures by reference to Islamic Sharia and Afghan cultural traditions. However, a number of Islamic scholars have publicly contested the Taliban’s interpretation, particularly regarding women’s rights and access to education. For example, Mohammed Al-Issa, Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, stated at a conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Islamabad that denying girls access to education is inconsistent with Islamic principles¹¹.

⁹ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General, “The situation of Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security”, Pag 3, A/80/366-S/2025/554

¹⁰ United Nations, “Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan”, Report of the Special Rapporture on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Page 14, A/HRC/51/6, Available on: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/51/6>

¹¹ Amu TV, “Muslim World League chief says declaring girl’s education forbidden is ‘greater sin’”, Jan 12, 2025, Available on: <https://amu.tv/150346/>

Religious scholars who have publicly criticized Taliban policies have reportedly faced intimidation and arrest. On 28 January 2025, three scholars—Abdul Qadir Qanit, Mahmood Hasan, and Abdul Aziz Shuja—publicly called for inclusive governance and the protection of women’s rights during a gathering in Kabul. Following the event, they were arrested by Taliban intelligence authorities and reportedly detained for several days before being released¹².

Peaceful protests against Taliban policies have been met with repression. Women in Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, and other urban centers have organized demonstrations opposing restrictions on their rights. Security forces have dispersed such protests, detained participants, and, in some cases, reportedly used force. Some women’s rights activists were reportedly detained after being taken from their homes and held for extended periods. Journalists covering protests have also been arrested and, in certain cases, subjected to ill-treatment.

Independent oversight institutions have been dissolved, and no domestic independent human rights protection bodies are currently operating within Afghanistan. Private media outlets face censorship and significant restrictions, while foreign media lack consistent and unhindered access to information. Many civil society organizations have ceased operations, and a substantial number of human rights defenders have left the country due to security risks.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) remains the only independent international presence with a human rights monitoring mandate inside the country. UNAMA’s Human Rights Section continues to document and report on developments. While its presence contributes to international monitoring, restrictions imposed by Taliban authorities—including prohibitions on Afghan women working for UN entities—have adversely affected operational capacity and access.

In April 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Council appointed Richard Bennett as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. The Special Rapporteur conducted multiple visits to Afghanistan and submitted reports to the United Nations system. In August 2024, Taliban authorities declared that he would no longer be permitted to enter the country, effectively denying him direct access¹³. Although remote monitoring remains possible, the absence of in-country access limits the effectiveness of mandate implementation.

On 23 January 2025, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) requested arrest warrants in relation to alleged gender-based crimes against humanity. On 8 July 2025, the ICC’s Pre-Trial Chamber issued arrest warrants for Hibatullah Akhundzada, Supreme Leader of the Taliban, and Abdul Hakim Haqqani, Chief Justice. The Chamber found reasonable grounds to believe that they bear responsibility for crimes against humanity, including persecution on gender grounds.

¹² Amu TV, “*wakoneshha ba bazdasht se aalem din: Taliban tahummol sedahay mokhalef ra nadarand*”, Available on: <https://amu.tv/fa/154315/>

¹³ United Nations, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, “UN Special Rapporteur says committed to people of Afghanistan despite Taliban barring entry”, Aug 21, 2024, Available on: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/08/un-special-rapporteur-says-committed-people-afghanistan-despite>

The issuance of arrest warrants represents a significant development in efforts toward accountability for international crimes committed in Afghanistan. While the practical enforcement of such warrants presents substantial challenges, the investigation and judicial findings contribute to documentation, recognition of victims' experiences, and the broader pursuit of justice under international law. The warrants also carry diplomatic implications for states engaging with Taliban authorities.

On 6 October 2025, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution establishing an independent investigative mechanism for Afghanistan and extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. The mechanism is mandated to collect, preserve, and analyze evidence of human rights violations and international crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. Its establishment constitutes an important institutional step toward accountability.

Despite the absence of formal recognition by most States, some governments have engaged with Taliban authorities at diplomatic and consular levels. Russia formally recognized the Taliban authorities on 3 July 2025. Other States, including Qatar, United Arab Emirates, China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Norway, and Germany, have transferred operational control of certain Afghan diplomatic missions or consular premises to Taliban-appointed representatives, although such arrangements do not necessarily constitute formal recognition.

The broader international response to developments in Afghanistan has been marked by a combination of non-recognition, sanctions, humanitarian engagement, and selective diplomatic contact. Concerns have been raised that steps toward normalization of relations, absent measurable human rights improvements, risk undermining accountability efforts and may weaken international leverage to promote compliance with human rights obligations.

The positions of United Nations Member States regarding engagement with Afghanistan remain diverse and, in some cases, contradictory. Certain States, including China and Russia, have called for the release of Afghan central bank assets frozen by the United States, arguing that these funds belong to the Afghan people and should be made available to address humanitarian needs. Other States, including the United States and several European countries, have opposed the unconditional release of these assets, citing concerns related to governance, accountability, and the potential misuse of funds.

Even if frozen assets were to be released, there is no assurance that they would be effectively directed toward alleviating hunger or reducing poverty, particularly in the absence of transparent and accountable financial mechanisms. At the same time, international humanitarian organizations have consistently warned of rising levels of food insecurity, poverty, and vulnerability among the Afghan population.

Since August 2021, the United States has been the largest single contributor to humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan, reportedly providing more than USD 3.83 billion in humanitarian and

development aid by April 2025¹⁴. However, aspects of this assistance have been subject to scrutiny. The U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported that Taliban authorities had benefited indirectly from certain aid flows, including through taxation and administrative charges amounting to at least USD 10.9 million¹⁵. Following these findings, and citing concerns regarding diversion or misuse of aid, the United States reduced or terminated a number of assistance programs. On 5 April 2025, 16 USAID-funded programs in Afghanistan—excluding two programs focused on women’s education—with an estimated value of over USD 765 million, were reportedly cancelled¹⁶.

In April 2023, pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2679, the Secretary-General appointed Feridun Sinirlioğlu as Special Coordinator for Afghanistan to conduct an independent assessment and propose recommendations for a coherent international approach. Following an eight-month review process, the Special Coordinator submitted an assessment to the United Nations. The report recommended that any consideration of recognition of the Taliban authorities be conditioned upon compliance with Afghanistan’s international obligations, including human rights commitments. It also emphasized the need for international consensus and the initiation of an inclusive national dialogue aimed at establishing representative governance and promoting sustainable peace and development.

The assessment generated mixed reactions. Some Afghan civil society actors and political stakeholders expressed concern that aspects of the proposed roadmap could contribute to the normalization of relations with the Taliban without securing concrete human rights guarantees.

So far, three meetings have been convened in Doha, Qatar, under the auspices of the United Nations to facilitate dialogue on Afghanistan. These meetings addressed issues including the humanitarian situation, women’s rights, inclusive governance, counter-terrorism, and narcotics control.

The first meeting, held in April 2023, brought together representatives of various governments and international organizations. Neither Taliban representatives nor representatives of Afghan civil society were invited to participate.

The second meeting, held in February 2024 and attended by the United Nations Secretary-General, included the participation of certain Afghan civil society representatives, including women’s rights advocates. Taliban representatives were invited but declined to attend, reportedly due to disagreements over conditions for participation, including objections to the appointment of a United Nations Special Representative and the inclusion of other Afghan representatives.

¹⁴ United Nations, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, “UN Special Rapporteur says committed to people of Afghanistan despite Taliban barring entry”, Aug 21, 2024, Available on: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/08/un-special-rapporteur-says-committed-people-afghanistan-despite>

¹⁵ Ibid, Page 7

¹⁶ Ibid, Page 8

At the third meeting, held in July 2024, Taliban representatives participated in the main session, while Afghan civil society representatives were not included in the primary discussions. Consultations with civil society took place separately before and after the meeting. The exclusion of civil society actors from the main session drew criticism from various stakeholders.

To date, engagement initiatives, including the Doha process, have not resulted in measurable improvements in governance, inclusivity, or human rights protections. International approaches toward Afghanistan remain fragmented, and no unified strategy has emerged among Member States.

Despite sustained international concern regarding the human rights situation, Taliban authorities have not reversed key restrictive policies and, in some areas, have further consolidated them. At the same time, international engagement with Afghanistan has fluctuated, and competing geopolitical, security, and humanitarian priorities have shaped state responses. The absence of a coordinated and principled international approach has limited the effectiveness of external pressure and contributed to uncertainty regarding future policy directions.

Afghanistan remains one of the least developed countries in the world, with longstanding structural challenges that predate the Taliban's return to power. Human rights violations in the country are rooted not only in current state policies but also in complex social, economic, cultural, and political factors. Widespread poverty, low literacy rates, limited public awareness of rights, weak rule-of-law institutions, entrenched discriminatory social practices, and corruption have historically undermined the realization of human rights.

Since August 2021, these structural vulnerabilities have been compounded by additional pressures. Severe drought, floods, and earthquakes; the large-scale return and forced expulsion of Afghan migrants from neighboring countries; rising unemployment; reduced international development assistance; and governance deficiencies have intensified socio-economic hardship. These overlapping crises have heightened the vulnerability of large segments of the population and have had both direct and indirect consequences for the enjoyment of economic, social, civil, and political rights.

Prior to August 2021, notable—though uneven—progress had been made in expanding access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare services, and freedom of expression, as well as in strengthening institutional mechanisms for the protection of human rights. Governmental and non-governmental initiatives were underway to promote legal reform, public awareness, and institutional accountability.

Since the Taliban's return to power, the human rights environment has deteriorated significantly. Numerous restrictions imposed through decrees and administrative practices have curtailed civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Reports indicate patterns of intimidation and coercion directed at individuals who seek to exercise fundamental freedoms. As a result, the population faces a convergence of political repression, economic hardship, humanitarian crisis, and environmental shocks.

In this context, the cumulative impact of restrictive governance policies, structural poverty, natural disasters, and reduced international engagement presents serious challenges to the protection and fulfillment of human rights in Afghanistan. Without sustained and coordinated efforts to address these interconnected crises, the human rights situation is likely to remain precarious.

Chapter 2: Women's Rights

The enforcement of all laws, decrees, and written and verbal directives issued over the past four years continued, and in the year 2025 new laws and decrees were also issued and implemented. Since their return to power in August 2021, Taliban authorities have issued numerous decrees and written and verbal directives restricting women's rights and freedoms. The cumulative effect of these measures has been the near-total exclusion of women from public life and the systematic denial of a broad range of fundamental rights. The scale and consistency of these policies indicate a pattern of gender-based persecution.

Under current policies, women are deprived of access to employment in most sectors, secondary and higher education, the ability to travel without a male guardian (mahram), participation in sports, and access to parks, public baths, and other recreational spaces. Women have also been prohibited from driving in many areas. Strict dress codes, including mandatory hijab requirements as defined by the authorities, have been imposed. Taliban authorities have further declared that a woman's voice in public may constitute "awrah" (a concept in certain interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence referring to intimate parts that must be concealed), thereby restricting women's presence and participation in public spaces.

Women's beauty salons have been closed nationwide. Reports indicate restrictions on access to contraceptives and family planning services. In some areas, authorities have ordered that windows facing neighboring homes be blocked to prevent women from being seen from outside. Collectively, these measures have significantly restricted women's autonomy, mobility, privacy, and access to essential services.

These policies raise serious concerns under Afghanistan's obligations pursuant to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among other international instruments. The systematic and widespread nature of gender-based restrictions has prompted increasing discussion among legal scholars and human rights advocates regarding their characterization under international criminal law, including as persecution on gender grounds and other potential crimes against humanity.

Prohibition of Women's Work

Article 11 of CEDAW obliges States Parties to eliminate discrimination against women in employment and to ensure equal rights in the workplace, including equal remuneration, freedom to choose a profession, job security, access to training, social security, safe working conditions, and

protection against discrimination on the basis of marriage or maternity¹⁷. Article 14 further requires States to address the specific challenges faced by rural women and to ensure their full participation in economic and social life¹⁸.

During the Republic period, Afghanistan's labor framework formally prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender. Although implementation challenges persisted, women participated in both public and private sectors. Estimates indicated that approximately 220,000 women were employed across sectors, including civil administration, education, healthcare, and, to a lesser extent, the defense and security sectors. Women also held cabinet-level positions. Under the 2004 legal framework, 25 percent of seats in the National Assembly were reserved for women. In the final parliamentary term, women held 69 out of 249 seats (over 27 percent).

Following the change in authorities in August 2021, women's participation in the workforce was drastically curtailed. With limited exceptions—primarily in health and certain levels of education—women employed in public institutions were instructed to remain at home. Although a small number of women continue to work in specific areas, including hospitals, some primary schools, airports, passport offices, and women's detention facilities, most professional and civil service roles previously held by women have been eliminated.

Women working in the informal sector—including handicrafts, tailoring, agriculture, livestock, and small businesses—have also been adversely affected. Restrictions on women's mobility and market access have undermined income-generating activities, particularly for widows, women-headed households, and rural women. In several instances, authorities have shut down women-operated tailoring shops and small enterprises. These measures have significantly reduced women's financial independence and increased household vulnerability.

A decree issued on 5 April 2023 by the Taliban leader formally prohibited women from working outside the home. While the prohibition had already been implemented in practice in many government offices, the decree further consolidated restrictions. As of 2025, women remain excluded from employment in most sectors.

On 25 June 2023, pursuant to an oral directive attributed to the Taliban leadership, women's beauty salons were closed nationwide. Authorities deemed such businesses inconsistent with their interpretation of Islamic principles. Reports indicate that some salons were forcibly shut down. Female teachers were also prohibited from teaching boys, including at the primary level in certain areas.

Throughout 2025, reports emerged of women being detained for operating beauty services privately from their homes following the nationwide ban. On 23 February 2025, officers from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Sar-e Pol province reportedly conducted house-to-

¹⁷ UN General Assembly, International Covenant the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Article 11, Dec 18, 1979

¹⁸ Ibid, Article 14

house searches without judicial warrants to confiscate beauty products and equipment¹⁹. The precise number of affected individuals remains unknown.

On 7 September 2025, media reports indicated that Taliban authorities prevented Afghan female staff members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) from entering UN offices in Kabul²⁰. UNAMA subsequently confirmed that female national staff had been denied access to their workplaces and described the action as a serious impediment to the implementation of its mandate. Female staff were reportedly placed on leave following the incident. Taliban personnel were reported to be stationed at the entrances of UN offices in Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif to enforce the restriction²¹. As of the preparation of this report, Afghan women employed by UNAMA had not been permitted to resume their duties. Prior to this measure, female Afghan UN personnel had reportedly received anonymous threats²².

On 11 November 2025, Taliban authorities closed women-operated shops in Nili, the provincial capital of Daikundi. According to reports, approximately 300 women lost their livelihoods as a result. Authorities stated that the closures were due to women conducting business in the presence of men. Women were reportedly instructed to relocate their businesses to a park on the outskirts of the city and to purchase wooden stalls at significant personal expense. When women sought to protest the decision at the provincial governor's office, they were reportedly unable to secure a meeting with the governor. A subsequent meeting with the deputy governor was described by participants as dismissive and threatening, with women allegedly warned to comply with municipal directives or cease operations²³.

Restrictions on Women's Movement and Dress

Since late 2021, Taliban authorities have introduced and progressively enforced restrictions on women's freedom of movement and dress. These measures have been implemented through decrees, guidelines, and administrative directives issued primarily by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and enforced by its provincial departments.

On 26 December 2021, the Ministry issued travel guidelines prohibiting drivers from transporting women traveling distances exceeding 78 kilometers unless accompanied by a male guardian (mahram). Drivers were also instructed not to transport women who were not wearing what authorities defined as "Islamic dress."

¹⁹ UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: January-March 2025, Page 2

²⁰ Afghanistan International, "*Taliban Maane word karmandan zan melal mutahed ba dafter UNAMA shod*", Sep 8, 2025, More details available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202509088182>

²¹ UNAMA, "Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: July – September 2025", Page 2, Available on: <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights-monitoring-and-reporting-0>

²² UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: April-June 2025 Update, Page 3

²³ Afghanistan International, "*Taliban dahha kesb or kaar zanan ra dar Daikundi basta ast*", Oct 14, 2025, More details available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202511145070>

On 27 March 2022, the Ministry directed owners of recreational parks and entertainment venues in Kabul to allocate separate days or time slots for men and women. Around the same period, ticketing offices were reportedly instructed not to issue airline tickets to women traveling without a mahram.

In November 2021, media outlets were instructed not to broadcast television dramas featuring women, and female journalists were required to adhere to prescribed dress codes. On 8 September 2021, women's participation in sports was prohibited on the grounds that sports activities were deemed inconsistent with the authorities' interpretation of Islamic dress requirements.

In January 2022, Taliban authorities launched a campaign entitled "Observing Islamic Dress," which included the installation of billboards in urban centers and along highways, public messaging campaigns, and instructions to mosque imams to address dress requirements in sermons. In May 2022, the issuance of driving licenses to women was suspended, and driving schools were ordered to cease providing instruction to female students. Women were also barred from entering sports centers and public parks.

Throughout 2025, the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and its provincial departments continued to enforce dress and mobility restrictions under the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and related directives. Reports from multiple provinces indicate that morality police prevented women from traveling without a mahram or from appearing in public without prescribed dress. In certain cases, women who were deemed non-compliant were reportedly detained or subjected to physical mistreatment.

In January 2025, morality police reportedly barred women from entering the Pashdan dam facility in Karkh District, Herat province, stating that access was restricted to men. Later that month, authorities in Ghazni province instructed local government offices to deny entry to women who were not accompanied by a mahram or who were deemed not to be wearing appropriate Islamic dress.

On 18 January 2025, border police and morality officers reportedly prohibited women from entering the Afghan-Tajik border market, citing concerns about interaction between women and men²⁴.

In May 2025, authorities in Kandahar province issued a directive requiring female health workers to be accompanied by a male mahram when traveling to work. The mahram was required to carry a specific identification card issued by the Provincial Public Health Directorate. In February 2025, morality police reportedly instructed clinic personnel in Kandahar to deny entry to female staff and patients not accompanied by a mahram.

Between 16 and 19 July 2025, morality police, accompanied by security personnel, reportedly detained numerous girls in several areas of Kabul, including Dasht-e-Barchi and Shahr-e Naw, on allegations of violating hijab requirements. According to information published by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), more than 60 girls were detained. Most were held for

²⁴ UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: January-March 2025 Update, Page 2, Available on: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_update_on_human_rights_in_afghanistan_january-march_2025.pdf

periods ranging from several hours to one night and were released after male relatives provided guarantees.

In September 2025, morality police in the Jereil area of Herat reportedly established checkpoints to monitor compliance with hijab regulations and detained women not wearing a chador. In a context where social norms are highly conservative, such detentions can have significant social repercussions for women and their families, including reputational harm and stigmatization.

On 5 November 2025, the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Herat province announced that women entering shops were required to wear a burqa or an Arabian-style chador with face covering. Women not wearing a burqa were reportedly denied entry to government offices.

Independent media sources reported that women without a burqa were prevented from entering public institutions in Herat, including the Department of Education, the Civil Registration Office, courts, and the regional hospital²⁵. On the same date, reports indicated that women, including female medical personnel, were denied access to workplaces for not wearing a burqa and that some were physically assaulted. Women seeking to visit detained relatives were reportedly denied access to prison facilities due to dress requirements²⁶.

The following day, taxi drivers in Herat were reportedly instructed not to transport women without a burqa, even if accompanied by a male guardian²⁷. On 9 November 2025, the provincial governor of Herat issued an administrative directive stating that female teachers would not be permitted to enter schools without wearing a chador (burqa)²⁸.

Women's Education

On 17 September 2021, girls' education beyond grade six in schools was banned, one month after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. Prior to that, on 12 September 2021, the authorities had announced that girls and women could attend universities, provided that their classes were segregated from male students. Subsequently, the Taliban Ministry of Higher Education prohibited girls from selecting certain fields in the Kankor exam (university entrance exam), including

²⁵ Etilaat E Roz daily, "*Taliban dar Herat worod zanan bidon burqa ba froshgah ha ra mamno kardand*", Nov 6, 2025, More details available on: <https://www.etilaatroz.com/244820/entry-of-women-without-burqa/>

²⁶ Afghanistan International, "*manabe migoyand Taliban poshidan burqa ra dar amaken omomi Herat ejbari mikonad*", Nov 6, 2025, More details available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202511055245>

²⁷ Etilaat E Roz daily, "*Taliban dar Herat ranendagan ra az sawar kardan zanan bidon burqa mana kardand*", Nov 7, 2025, More details available on: <https://www.etilaatroz.com/244905/taliban-new-restrictions-in-herat/>

²⁸ Afghanistan International, "*Taliban dar Herat ba muleman zan dustor dad bidon chaderi ba maktab narawand*", Nov 9, 2025, More details available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202511099142>

agriculture, veterinary science, oil and gas, mining exploration, and geology. About a year later, participation of girls and women in the Kankor exam was completely banned. On 20 December 2022, the education of women and girls at universities was fully prohibited. Finally, on 22 December 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Education issued an official letter banning education for girls beyond grade six in private schools and training courses.

In 2025, these restrictions on girls' education continued, and the authorities intensified their efforts to enforce the ban, taking action against those who disobeyed. According to information provided by the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), by the end of 2025, over 2.2 million adolescent girls will be deprived of their right to education²⁹. This number is expected to increase further with the return of more than 2 million Afghan refugees from neighboring countries.



Letter of Ministry of Education

At present, girls are only allowed to attend religious schools, most of which are controlled by the Taliban. Although there is a formal age restriction for girls' education beyond sixth grade in public schools, no age limits are applied for girls' enrollment in these religious schools. In these religious school, girls are encouraged to be subordinate to men and are portrayed as childbearing instrument who must always remain in the service of their husbands and children. However, modern academic subjects are completely absent. Instead, religious teachings, including topics such as jihad and other lessons that can foster extremist mindsets, are emphasized, which is highly concerning for the country's future.

The number of religious schools has also increased significantly in recent years. According to the AHRC, by 2024, their number had exceeded 22,000 religious schools³⁰.

²⁹ UNICEF Afghanistan, "Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on the denial of education to adolescent girls in Afghanistan for 4 years" Sep 17, 2025, Available on: <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/press-releases/statement-unicef-executive-director-catherine-russell-denial-education-adolescent>

³⁰ Afghanistan Human Rights Center, Report on Access of Women to Education under the Taliban, Page 21, Jan 2025

By December 2024, girls and women were only allowed to study in medical institutes. As a result, a large number of out-of-school girls enrolled in these institutes. Girls who had graduated from schools or had been barred from continuing university education pursued their studies in these medical institutes, which are considered semi-higher education institutions.

However, on 2 December 2024, the Taliban leader issued a decree banning this sole remaining educational opportunity. Following this announcement, thousands of women and girls who were studying in these institutes were forced to stay at home, effectively closing their only avenue of hope. According to media reports citing the Ministry of Public Health, approximately 35,000 girls were enrolled across 10 public institutes and 150 private institutes in programs such as nursing, dentistry, midwifery, and laboratory sciences.

According to AHRC, there are three medical institutes in Badakhshan province, including Ghaznfar Institute (public), Shifa Private Institute, and Pamir Private Institute. At Shifa Institute, 900 women were enrolled, and at Pamir Institute, 400 women were studying. Additionally, 24 female instructors were teaching at these two private institutes, but all of them are now forced to stay at home.

Nasrin (a pseudonym) is a young woman whose dreams were shattered one by one after the Taliban returned to power. She comes from Khwahan district in Badakhshan, one of the most remote and difficult-to-access districts of the province. Talented and capable, Nasrin gained admission to the Economic School through the national Kankor exam with the highest score. However, in her second year of study, universities were closed to female students, forcing her to stay at home. Nasrin's family could not accept this grave injustice. They sought another way to secure their daughter's education by enrolling her in a private institute. Due to poverty, they even sold their land to cover her educational expenses.

Now, this opportunity has also been taken from Nasrin, and her hopes have vanished. She says: "There is no way left for me anymore. If suicide was not a big sin, I would end my painful life and burn myself in the public area."

Populated cities such as Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif likely had more public and private medical institutes than other cities, and many women and girls were enrolled in these institutions. Following the decree, medical science institutes such as Mora Institute and Ghaznfar Institute in Kabul were closed to women and girls. At the private Mora Institute alone, around 1,500 female students had been studying in various medical fields.

Shaima Ahmadi (pseudonym), a 24-year-old resident of Kabul, told a media outlet: "Public universities were closed to us. We had one small source of hope—we went to a private institute. With great hardship, we managed to pay the tuition fees. Sometimes we even walked long distances just to attend classes. But what is our crime? Is our only crime being a girl?"³¹

³¹ Azadi Radio, "*porsech muhaselat dukhtar dar baksh olum tebbi az Taliban: chera aakherinomidman ra ham qat kardid*", More details available on: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/33225315.html>

The closure of medical institutes and the deprivation of women's access to education, particularly in midwifery, have serious consequences for women's access to reproductive healthcare services. On the one hand, women are often required or compelled to seek treatment only from female doctors and health workers. On the other hand, restricting women's education in the health sector reduces the number of trained female medical professionals. This imbalance is likely to result in increased maternal and child mortality rates, especially in rural and underserved areas where access to healthcare is already limited.

On 19 April 2025, education directorate in Kabul reportedly received instructions from the Taliban authorities to transfer textbooks from girls' secondary schools to boys' schools. According to independent media reports, textbooks for grades 7 through 12 were removed from girls' school libraries and relocated to boys' schools³². In addition, subjects covering civic education and democracy have been removed from the curriculum, and in their place subjects aligned with the Taliban preferences, such as "jihad" have been introduced.

The Taliban have not only limited the ban on girls' education to within the country. They have also imposed restrictions on girls seeking to study abroad. For example, on 22 August 2023, 70 female students who had been awarded scholarships to study at universities in the United Arab Emirates were stopped at Kabul International Airport and prevented from traveling. This occurred despite the fact that 12 of these students were accompanied by a male guardian (mahram)³³.

Women's and girls' access to the right to education has declined unprecedentedly following the restrictions imposed by the Taliban. Hundreds of thousands of eligible girls have been deprived of education in schools, universities, and training centers.

According to official statistics of the former Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in 2020, 28% of university students and 39% of students in public general education schools were girls³⁴. However, based on information from UNAMA, by 2024, women's and girls' access to educational services had dropped dramatically from 39% to just 3%³⁵.

According to the Afghanistan Education Situation Report 2025 published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), more than 2.13 million primary school-age children had dropped out of school by 2024. Moreover, even among those who are attending school, many receive only limited learning. Based on

³² Hasht e Subh daily, "enteqaal ketabha az maktab hay dukhtarana be pesarana: Taliban aamozesh dukhtarana ba taarikh miseparand", Apr 29, 2025, More details available on: <https://8am.media/fa/transferring-books-from-girls-schools-to-boys-schools-taliban-consign-girls-education-to-history/>

³³ BBC Persian, "Taliban mane raftan 70 danishjoy dukhtar ba Dubai shodand; danishjoyan dar asiaye miana: negaran bazgasht ba Kabul hastim", More details available on: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cnkgz924ldno>

³⁴ National Statistic and Information Authority, Year 1399, Pages 27 & 58, Published in Hamal, 1400

³⁵ UNAMA, Summary report of country-wide women's consultation-April 2024, Page 7, Available on: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/situation_of_afghan_women_april_english.pdf

the assessment of these two organizations, the quality of education in Afghanistan has declined to an unprecedented level, with 90 percent of ten-year-old children unable to read a simple text³⁶.

Consequence of the Ban on Girls's Education:

Depriving girls of the right to education beyond grade six and confining them to their homes has had serious and far-reaching consequences for women and for Afghan society as a whole. The restriction has led to increased social isolation and depression among women, a rise in forced and child marriages, involuntary migration, growing mental health problems, and even suicide attempts.

In addition, denying girls access to education contributes to rising poverty, widening gender inequality, declining literacy rates, and a decrease in both the quality and quantity of educational services. Ultimately, these impacts slow down the process of sustainable development in Afghanistan and negatively affect the country's long-term social and economic future.

Even if the doors of schools and universities were reopened to girls and women today, the harmful consequences of the past four years of deprivation would persist for many years and would not be easy to remedy. Girls who graduated from high school four years ago could by now have completed their university education and entered the job market. Likewise, girls who had completed grade six at that time would now be studying at the high school level.

This means that not only have the past four years of educational opportunities been lost, but subsequent opportunities for higher education and professional advancement have also been irreparably damaged. The impact of this interruption is therefore not temporary; it represents a long-term and, in many respects, irreversible setback.

Since human rights are a set of interconnected and indivisible rights and freedoms, the violation of one right inevitably leads to the violation of others. The right to education, which is one of the most fundamental human rights, is particularly crucial: its denial triggers a cascade of other human rights violations. If a person is denied access to education, they cannot participate effectively in society or engage meaningfully in economic, social, political, and cultural activities. Consequently, being deprived of the right to education automatically results in the deprivation of the right to work and employment.

Depriving women and girls of education leads to increased gender inequality, higher illiteracy rates, and intensified poverty in society. If this deprivation continues over a long period, women are excluded from all levels of social life and lose access to their full range of rights and freedoms. Lack of access to education directly affects the right to health, reducing access to healthcare services. Insufficient knowledge about birth spacing and maternal-child health puts the wellbeing of mothers and children at serious risk. Education deprivation also directly impacts household economic

³⁶ UNICEF, "Afghanistan's Education System Facing Deepening Crisis for Both Girls and Boys, Warn UNICEF and UNESCO", Oct 8, 2025, Available on: <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/press-releases/afghanistans-education-system-facing-deepening-crisis-both-girls-and-boys-warn>

conditions, ultimately increasing poverty and hunger. This denial slows the process of sustainable development, and the harmful consequences of such deprivation are likely to persist for generations.

UNICEF predicts that if the deprivation of girls' education beyond grade six continues until 2030, approximately 4 million girls will be denied the opportunity to continue secondary education, and consequently, they will also be excluded from any chance of pursuing higher education. This situation will have profound and long-term implications for the future of the country. UNESCO has further warned that the ban on girls' education could result in potential losses of up to 9.6 billion dollars by 2066, which amounts to roughly two-thirds of the country's current gross domestic product³⁷.

Depriving girls of the right to education has had devastating effects on their mental health. According to the report "Access of Women to the Right to Education" prepared by the AHRC, 91 percent of the respondents stated that they have suffered from severe psychological disorders and depression. Additionally, 25 percent reported having repeatedly contemplated suicide, and some even attempted it, although, according to their own accounts, they were not successful³⁸.

After the Taliban banned education for girls above the sixth grade, cases of forced and child marriages increased. According to the report "Access of Women to Education," ten interviewees directly witnessed 34 cases of forced or child marriages involving students in their communities. These marriages occurred after schools and universities were closed to girls³⁹. Some families stated that, out of fear that Taliban fighters would forcibly marry off their daughters, they were compelled to arrange these marriages themselves.

One of the main factors contributing to the increase in maternal and child mortality is the marriage of underage girls. Afghanistan was among the countries with the highest rates of maternal and child deaths. During the period of the Republic, these rates were reduced by almost half; however, with the Taliban coming to power and the reduction of humanitarian aid, maternal and child mortality rates have risen again.

There are multiple reports indicating that Taliban fighters have pressured and threatened families to force their daughters into marriage. Most of these cases are not reported due to fear of the Taliban, the absence of independent media, and the lack of protective mechanisms such as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, civil society organizations, and a specialized prosecution office. However, some cases that involved suicide or public outcry have been covered by the media.

³⁷ UNICEF, "Afghanistan's Education System Facing Deepening Crisis for Both Girls and Boys, Warn UNICEF and UNESCO", Oct 8, 2025, Available on: <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/press-releases/afghanistans-education-system-facing-deepening-crisis-both-girls-and-boys-warn>

³⁸ Afghanistan Human Rights Center, Report on Access of Women to Education under the Taliban, Page 12, Jan 2025

³⁹ Ibid, Page 11

For example, on 27 April 2025, a young girl named Abida, a resident of Darzab village, Nili district, Taiwara, Ghor province, committed suicide to escape forced marriage with a Taliban fighter. This incident occurred when Taliban members tried to forcibly take the girl with them. According to independent media reports, Haji Mohammad Rahmani, a Taliban member in Taiwara district, intended to forcibly marry Abida to her brother against her and her family's consent, using threats and weapons⁴⁰.

The prohibition of girls' education, in addition to its other consequences, has also affected the enrollment numbers in primary schools, resulting in a decrease in the number of female students. Parents, seeing no bright future for their daughters and recognizing that they are denied the right to education beyond the sixth grade, often prevent them from attending school. Additionally, due to feelings of insecurity and concerns for their daughters' safety, families choose not to send them to school⁴¹.



Abida, victim of forced marriage

Legal Analysis:

Afghanistan has ratified the majority of international human rights conventions and is therefore obligated to implement the provisions of these treaties. Regardless of how and by whom the country is controlled or whether the current authorities are recognized, Afghanistan remains bound by all international human rights instruments to which it has become a party. This obligation requires the state to ensure compliance with these conventions through legislation, the development of policies and programs, and the enforcement of their provisions. In addition to enacting laws and policies, states—including Afghanistan—are obliged to take all necessary measures, including establishing mechanisms to enhance accountability and access to justice, to protect and uphold human rights.

Many international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women—which Afghanistan has acceded to—emphasize the equality of rights between women and men and call for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

⁴⁰ Afghanistan International, “*Taliban naqshe afraad khod dar khodsozi Abeda ra enkar kard*”, May 1, 2025, More details available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202505010657>

⁴¹ Afghanistan Human Rights Center, Report on Access of Women to Education under the Taliban, Page 13, Jan 2025

Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women states: “States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and agree to pursue, without delay, a policy of eliminating discrimination against women, and to this end undertake to address the following matters:

- a) To incorporate the principle of equality between men and women in its constitution or other appropriate domestic legislation, if not yet done, and to ensure the practical realization of this principle through the enactment of enforceable laws and other suitable means.
- b) To adopt legislative and other measures, including the provision of appropriate sanctions, to prevent acts of discrimination against women.
- c) To ensure legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to guarantee effective protection of women against any discrimination through competent national courts and other institutions.
- d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions act in accordance with this obligation.
- e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization, or enterprise.
- f) To adopt all necessary measures, including legislative measures, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices which constitute discrimination against women.
- g) To repeal all penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women under domestic law⁴².

According to Article 3 of this Convention, States Parties undertake that “in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres, they shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women and, as a consequence, guarantee them the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men⁴³.” Similarly, the other articles of this Convention emphasize the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and require States Parties to adopt the necessary measures to implement its provisions.

The de facto authorities in Afghanistan have not only failed to implement these obligations, but, in direct violation of the provisions of these Conventions, have issued and enforced dozens of decrees, orders, and written and oral instructions aimed at suppressing women and imposing discrimination against them. The Taliban have employed force and violence in the implementation of these orders. Individuals who have disobeyed these orders have been subjected to arrest, torture, killings, and sexual abuse. Even advocates for women’s rights have been detained and tortured.

⁴² UN General Assembly, International Covenant the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Article 2, Dec 18, 1979

⁴³ Ibid, Article 3

In addition to the international human rights conventions that emphasize women's enjoyment of their rights and freedoms, the Rome Statute, which serves as the basis for the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), criminalizes the most serious international crimes. Afghanistan signed the Rome Statute in May 2003 and accepted the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

Article 7 of the Rome Statute defines crimes against humanity as follows:

"1. For the purposes of this Statute, 'crime against humanity' means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack:

- (a) Murder;
- (b) Extermination;
- (c) Enslavement;
- (d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population;
- (e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;
- (f) Torture;
- (g) Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;
- (h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as referred to in paragraph 3, or other grounds universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court; ...⁴⁴"

Pursuant to Article 7, paragraph 1, subparagraph (h) of the Rome Statute, the conduct of the Taliban against the women of Afghanistan constitutes an act of crimes against humanity. In light of the provisions of this article of the Rome Statute, and considering the policies of the Taliban—including the prohibition of education for girls beyond the sixth grade, the ban on women's employment, restrictions on women's freedom of movement, limitations on women's dress, suppression of women's protests, and the enforcement of these prohibitions and restrictions through acts such as arbitrary detention, murder, torture, enforced disappearance, sexual harassment including rape and other forms of sexual violence, and the persecution of women's rights defenders—these acts fall within the scope of crimes against humanity.

Since the persecution of Afghan women is organized, systematic, and widespread, and is planned and executed by the de facto authorities (even if not formally recognized), targeting a specific population on the basis of their sex (being women), and given that the Taliban's extremely cruel and discriminatory policies against Afghan women have resulted in the widespread deprivation of victims' rights to freedom of movement, education, work, freedom of expression, privacy and family

⁴⁴ Rome Statute, Article 7, 1989

life, the right to peaceful assembly and protest, and human dignity for millions of women residing in Afghanistan, these acts constitute crimes against humanity.

On 8 July 2025, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Hibatullah Akhundzada, the leader of the Taliban, and Abdul Hakim Haqqani, the Chief Justice of the Taliban, pursuant to Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute. The Pre-Trial Chamber of the ICC stated in its decision that “there are reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Hibatullah Akhundzada and Mr. Abdul Hakim Haqqani have committed by ordering, including or soliciting the crime against humanity of persecution under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute, on gender grounds against girls, women and other persons non-confronting with the Taliban’s policy on gender, gender identity or expression; and on political grounds against persons perceived as allies of girls and women...”⁴⁵

Considering the situation of women in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, the concept closely corresponds, within the current framework of international law, to “persecution” as recognized in Article 7 of the Rome Statute as a crime against humanity. The International Criminal Court (ICC), in the arrest warrants it issued for the Taliban leader and Chief Justice, explicitly referred to the term “gender-based persecution.”

Although Article 7, paragraph 1, subparagraph (h) of the Rome Statute criminalizes the persecution of a specific population on the basis of gender and classifies it as a crime against humanity—thus providing a legal basis to hold the Afghan authorities accountable for the persecution of women in Afghanistan—the term “persecution” does not fully capture the current situation of women under Taliban rule. Some experts and human rights activists, taking into account the systematic and comprehensive repression of women in Afghanistan, have suggested that only the term “gender apartheid” accurately describes this situation. This form of state-sanctioned, widespread, and systematic oppression has no precedent anywhere in the world and is entirely unprecedented.

From the perspective of the AHRC, the scope, severity, and systematic nature of the Taliban’s cruel and discriminatory policies against Afghan women cannot be fully encompassed under the crime of “gender-based persecution” as defined in Article 7 of the Rome Statute. Therefore, the only terminology that accurately corresponds to the situation of women in Afghanistan is “gender apartheid.” Amnesty International also holds the view that the intent and scope of the crime of “gender-based persecution” differ fundamentally in many respects from “gender apartheid.” While specific groups may be targeted in both types of crimes, the concept of “persecution” alone cannot fully capture the breadth and extent of systematic domination, nor the institutionalized and ideological nature of violations that may be perpetrated under an apartheid regime⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ International Criminal Court, Situation in Afghanistan: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber II issues arrest warrants for Hibatullah Akhundzada and Abdul Hakim Haqqani, July 8, 2025, Available on: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-afghanistan-icc-pre-trial-chamber-ii-issues-arrest-warrants-haibatullah-akhundzada>

⁴⁶ Amnesty International, Global: apartheid must be recognized as a crime under international law, June 17, 2024, Available on: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/06/gender-apartheid-must-be-recognized-international-law/>

Therefore, some states and human rights advocates argue that there is a legal gap in international law when it comes to addressing situations similar to that of Afghan women. They call for the introduction of a new term, “gender apartheid,” as an international crime, and assert that this term should be formally recognized.

Since there is still no specific international treaty on crimes against humanity, United Nations member states have been drafting a proposed treaty to prevent and punish crimes against humanity since 2019. A preparatory committee is scheduled to hold a session in January 2026 to review and make amendments to this proposed treaty. Afghan human rights activists, along with certain countries and international human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have used this opportunity to propose that “gender apartheid” be incorporated into the treaty on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity, in order to fill this legal gap and better protect the rights and lives of women and girls⁴⁷. To date, 12 countries have pledged support for including “gender apartheid” in the proposed treaty.

The absence of a specific treaty on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity has lessened the perceived importance and urgency of such crimes and has reduced public awareness as well as the sensitivity of states to them⁴⁸. According to a Human Rights Watch statement, the lack of such a treaty means that there is no specialized institution dedicated to interpreting or monitoring its implementation, and legal avenues for holding states accountable for violations remain limited.

Chapter 3: Civil and Political Rights

Afghanistan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and is obligated to respect and implement the provisions of this Covenant. The Covenant requires all States Parties to ensure and guarantee all rights and freedoms enshrined therein without discrimination and to take legislative, administrative, and judicial measures to realize and strengthen these rights.

With the fall of the Afghan government and the Taliban’s takeover, the people of Afghanistan, particularly women, have been deprived of many of their civil and political rights and freedoms. Rights to personal liberty and security, freedom of movement, protection from torture and cruel or degrading punishment, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of assembly and peaceful protest, the right to marry and found a family, access to fair courts, and other civil and political rights have been systematically and extensively restricted.

In the Taliban cabinet and in key positions within government offices at the central, provincial, and district levels, no women are included. The majority of cabinet members are men, mostly Pashtuns affiliated with the Taliban. The participation of other ethnic groups in the Taliban administration is very limited, and for this reason, Afghan politicians, the United Nations, and members of the international community have consistently criticized the lack of inclusivity in the Taliban government.

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, “Gender Apartheid Should Be an International Crime”, July 14, 2025, Available on: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/14/gender-apartheid-should-be-an-international-crime>

The people of Afghanistan demand fair participation of all ethnic groups in determining their own future.

Political activity for all people, including women and men, has been banned. On 17 August 2023, the Taliban also declared political parties illegal. The Taliban Minister of Justice told reporters in Kabul that parties have no basis in Sharia and that their activities do not serve the interests of the people⁴⁹. As a result, political parties that played an opposition role during the Republic era no longer exist. Only the Islamic Party, which largely aligns with Taliban policies, remains in Afghanistan, but even this party cannot operate freely due to the restrictions imposed.

Democratic institutions that played a role in promoting political participation have been abolished by the Taliban. The National Assembly (Parliament), the Election Commission, the Electoral Complaints Commission, and other independent bodies that were instrumental in strengthening democracy, transparency, and accountability have been dissolved by the Taliban. In addition, freedom of expression, assembly, and protest has been completely prohibited.

The Taliban, based on their strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia, oppose a state system founded on the will of the people. For this reason, they have never discussed holding elections or transferring power through electoral processes. Leadership of the country rests with an individual known as the Amir al-Mu'minin, and their system is an Islamic Emirate. The Taliban claim that the Amir al-Mu'minin, the leader of the Taliban, was selected by a grand assembly of clerics previously held in Kandahar; however, no precise information about the details of this assembly or how Mullah Hibatullah was chosen is available. Furthermore, it is unclear for how long the current leader was appointed, and there is no mechanism or law governing the transfer of power. According to the ruling authorities, adherence to the orders and directives of their leader is mandatory, and no one has the right to object or disobey.

After the Taliban came to power, they annulled the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan but did not adopt a new constitution or follow any other constitutional framework. The 2004 Constitution recognized civil and political rights, the principles of fair trials, and general legal principles. Under that constitution, the Penal Code and the Interim Criminal Procedure Code were applied. Later, in 2014, a new Criminal Procedure Code was enacted, followed by the 2018 Penal Code. The constitution, the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and other related laws safeguarded fundamental legal principles, including the legality of crimes and punishments, the right to be informed of charges, equality before the law, the personal nature of criminal liability, the presumption of innocence, the right to remain silent, respect for human dignity, protection from arbitrary arrest and detention, immunity from torture and ill-treatment, prohibition of forced confessions, the right to defense and legal counsel, the presentation of evidence, witnesses, and documents, the right to challenge judicial seizure procedures, and the protection of prosecutorial and court processes.

⁴⁹ Azadi Radio, "*hokomat Taliban faalyat ahzab siyasi dar Afghanistan ra mamno elan kard*", Asad 26, 1402, More details available on: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/32551262.html>

Extrajudicial Killings and Arbitrary Detentions:

From the very moment the Taliban began capturing provinces and cities across Afghanistan, they carried out extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests. After taking control of Kabul, the Taliban announced a general amnesty. However, contrary to this declaration, Taliban fighters engaged in retaliatory actions, continuing arbitrary detentions, torture, and killings of former members of Afghanistan's defense and security forces, civil servants, journalists, and civil and human rights activists. For example, the UNAMA Human Rights Section recorded, between 15 August 2021 and 15 June 2022, 160 cases of extrajudicial killings (including 10 women) and 179 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention of former Afghan defense and security personnel and former government officials⁵⁰. According to the AHRC, since August 2021, 57 prosecutors have also been killed.

In 2025, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests by the Taliban continued, with numerous cases documented by the AHRC. In addition to former members of the defense and security forces and civil servants, members of the National Resistance Front, the Freedom Front, and other armed groups opposing the Taliban, as well as ordinary individuals—including ethnic and religious minorities, particularly followers of the Ismaili faith—have been extrajudicially killed or arbitrarily arrested and tortured by the Taliban. The Taliban are forcing followers of the Ismaili sect, a branch of Shia, through coercion and threats, to convert to Sunni.

The majority of these extrajudicial killings are targeted and mysterious. Some are carried out directly by the Taliban, but in other cases, the incidents occur under mysterious circumstances, with no group—including the Taliban—claiming responsibility. Instead, responsibility is often attributed to unknown individuals or explained as a result of personal hostility. Investigating and documenting these targeted and extrajudicial killings is extremely difficult because the Taliban do not provide accurate information about such cases. Furthermore, there are no independent and free media operating within the country, and international media have limited access to information. In addition, witnesses and family members of victims often do not share information out of fear of potential Taliban retaliation. Therefore, documenting extrajudicial killings is very challenging.

According to the database of the AHRC and other sources, in 2025, 40 cases of extrajudicial killings were recorded; however, due to the difficulty of documenting such cases, the actual number is likely higher. The majority of these victims were killed by Taliban fighters, while in some cases, the Taliban neither claimed responsibility nor provided explanations, and at times issued contradictory statements attributing the incidents to personal disputes. Individuals from Panjshir province and the Andarab district of Baghlan province have been systematically targeted for arrest, torture, and in some cases, extrajudicial killing, based on their ethnicity and place of residence.

The majority of those killed extrajudicially were members of the former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. It has been reported that some victims were killed on the alleged grounds of affiliation with the National Resistance Front or the Freedom Front. Since the Taliban sometimes kill ordinary individuals whose membership in anti-Taliban armed groups has not been established, it is

⁵⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 June – 15 August 2022, Page 13

very difficult to provide accurate information regarding the number of victims associated with opposition groups. In some cases, Taliban fighters have killed civilians at checkpoints for failing to comply with stop orders or following verbal disputes. These incidents indicate that Taliban forces lack professional training and, without regard for human rights principles and values, recklessly destroy human life.

The following two cases are presented as examples: one involves the arrest, torture, and killing of a child who had no affiliation with any opposition group, and the other concerns the killing of an unidentified individual.

Mehdi, a 16-year-old ninth-grade student from the village of Pato, Jaghori District, Ghazni Province, was brutally killed by the Taliban on 10 April 2025, and his friend, 15-year-old Ali Sina, was injured. Evidence shows that both children had been detained by the Taliban in Sang-e-Masha the day before Mehdi's killing for unknown reasons. Both were subjected to severe torture. Mehdi's body showed multiple fractures in his arms and legs. In images released by the Taliban, his right arm is broken at the upper arm, with torn muscles. His clothes were also torn. Several bullets struck his legs, and one bullet passed beside his right eye and exited near his left eye. The signs of torture on Mehdi's body were evident, showing that he had been severely tortured before his death. Taliban officials in this district, through contradictory statements and staged scenes, claimed that Mehdi and Ali Sina had carried out an armed attack on the district center of Sang-e-Masha, and that Mehdi was killed during their escape while Ali Sina was arrested after being wounded. According to verified information held by the AHRC regarding this case, the Taliban's claim that these two children, aged 15 and 16, carried out a nighttime armed attack on the district center is far from the truth.

On 22 August 2025, the Taliban killed a man in Herat city, hanged his bloody body from the back of a Ranger vehicle, and dragged it through the city center. Afterwards, they displayed the corpse in public at an intersection by suspending it from the barrel of an old military tank. The reason for the killing remains unknown; however, such extrajudicial execution and public display of the body terrified the population and provoked widespread reactions against the Taliban's actions.

In 2025, the AHRC recorded more than 70 cases of arbitrary detention carried out by the Taliban. This figure only covers members of the former military and government employees, journalists, and human rights activists who were detained without legal justification. The vast majority of these detentions occurred without court orders, prosecutorial approval, or any other legal authority. Most of the detainees were subjected to beatings, humiliation, and verbal abuse. Victims of arbitrary detention include human rights activists, journalists, education activists, former military personnel and government employees, individuals associated with armed opposition groups, and other civilians. In some cases, the Taliban detained individuals but denied knowledge of their detention for extended periods. Certain detentions resembled kidnappings, and in some instances, detainees forcibly disappeared, leaving their fate unknown.

Family members of former military personnel are also not safe and have been subjected to threats, detention, and torture by the Taliban. Contrary to legal and human rights principles, the Taliban

target, detain, and torture the relatives of former military and government employees as a means to entrap the former personnel or to exact revenge against them.

For example, on 19 August 2025, six members of a former military officer's family were killed in their home by unknown assailants during the night. According to information published by local sources, the victims were members of the family of "Esfandyar Talwar," a soldier in the former government's Special Anti-Terrorism Unit. Mr. Talwar himself was abroad at the time of the incident. In this event, the father, wife, three daughters, and one son of the former military officer were killed. The Taliban did not claim responsibility for this incident.

On 16 November 2025, the Taliban arrested three sons of General Matiullah, the former provincial police commander in Urozgan province under the previous government. The three individuals, named Wahidullah, Wares, and Navidullah, were taken from their home in the city of Trinkot, the capital of Urozgan Province. Their current whereabouts remain unknown.

Former Afghan military personnel are not safe even in neighboring countries. For example, on 24 December 2025, General Ekramuddin Saree, a former senior commander in the previous government, was killed in Tehran, Iran. He had served as a senior police commander and had moved to Iran after August 2021. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. Previously, in September 2025, Maruf Gholami, a political and military figure close to Ismail Khan, was killed in Mashhad, Iran.

Those former members of the Afghan security forces who reside in neighboring countries such as Iran and Pakistan are at risk of forced deportation, and some of them were forcibly returned to Afghanistan during 2024 and 2025, where they face threats of arbitrary detention, torture, and killing. Host countries, without regard to the danger of persecution by the Taliban, forcibly expel them.

For example, on 20 November 2025, five former security personnel were arrested by the Taliban in Parwan Province. All five belonged to a single family from Panjshir Province: Sher Mullah, Gulbuddin, Alim, Jan Mohammad, and Suleiman, who had served as soldiers and officers in the previous government. They had moved to Iran after August 2021, but due to increased pressures on the refugee population there, they were compelled to return to Afghanistan⁵¹.

On 25 December 2025, the ruling authorities publicly executed a former soldier who had recently returned from Iran in Khamyāl District, Jowzjan Province. The individual, named Jura Qul, was reportedly shot by Tayeb, also known as "Sadaqat," the commander of the 4th Border Battalion of the Taliban, in the Koliyan market. Jura Qul was originally from Balcheragh District, Faryab Province⁵².

⁵¹ Afghanistan International, "*panj nairoy amniati sabiq Afghanistan pas az ekhraj az Iran bazdashat shodand*", Dec 2025, More details available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202512047192>

⁵² Hashte Subh daily, "*Taliban yak Nezami peshin taza ekhraj shoda az Iran ra dar mahzar aam dar Faryab tirbaran kardand*", Dec 26, 2025, More details available on: <https://8am.media/fa/taliban-publicly-execute-former-soldier-recently-deported-from-iran-in-faryab/>

On 19 December 2025, Azimullah, a resident of Ābshār District, Panjshir Province, was arrested by the Taliban in Kabul after returning from Iran⁵³. His fate remains unknown.

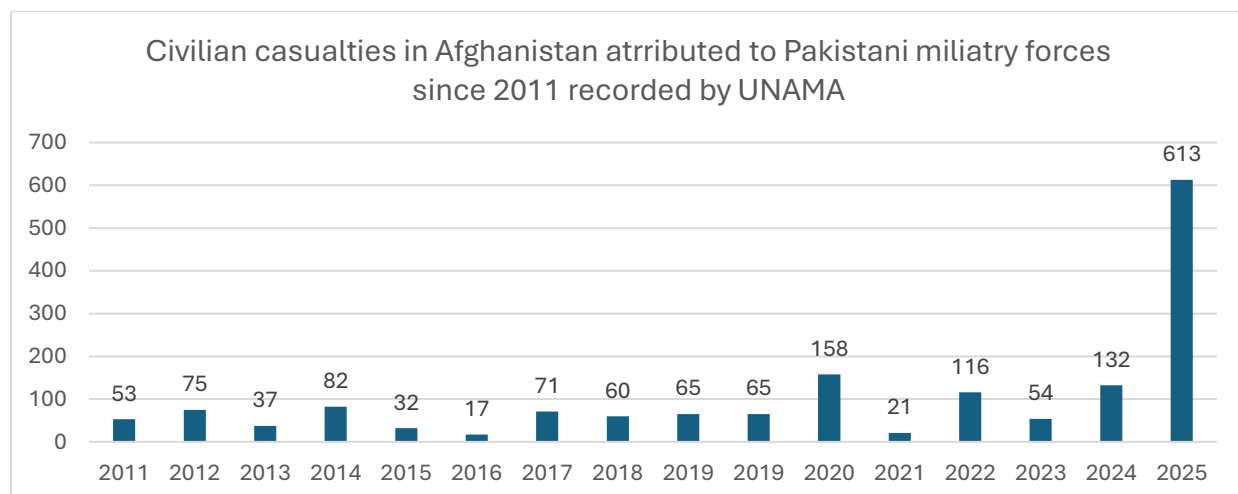
Civilian Casualties:

Civilian casualties in Afghanistan have decreased since August 2021 compared to previous years. The principal reason for this reduction is the Taliban themselves, as prior to August 2021 they were the primary and most significant perpetrators of civilian casualties. They were engaged in armed conflict against the former government and international forces and, in the course of that conflict, employed tactics such as suicide attacks, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, roadside bombings, armed assaults, and complex coordinated attacks, all of which resulted in substantial civilian casualties.

However, after assuming power, the armed conflict largely subsided. Therefore, portraying the reduction in civilian casualties as an achievement of the Taliban is fundamentally misleading, as the decline is principally attributable to the cessation of large-scale hostilities rather than to any demonstrated commitment to the protection of civilians.

According to information from the AHRC, in 2025, more than 1,280 civilian casualties (310 killed and 974 injured) were recorded. Over 90 percent of these civilian casualties resulted from border clashes between Taliban forces and Pakistani forces, as well as airstrikes carried out by Pakistani forces in various cities across Afghanistan.

Throughout 2025, Taliban forces and Pakistani soldiers engaged in multiple confrontations in various border areas across the provinces of Kandahar, Nuristan, Khost, Kunar, Paktika, and Nangarhar, during which both light and heavy weapons were used. Pakistani forces also conducted aerial bombardments in several phases targeting different provinces of Afghanistan, including Kabul, Kandahar, Paktia, and Nangarhar, resulting in a significant number of civilian deaths and injuries.



⁵³ Ibid, “Taliban yak Nezami peshin ra dar Kabul bazdashat kardand”, Dec 27, 2025

Border-cross clashes between Afghanistan and Pakistan have persisted intermittently and sporadically for more than 15 years; however, in 2025, these clashes intensified significantly compared to previous years. As a result of these confrontations, hundreds of civilians have been killed and injured. In 2025 border-cross clashes between Taliban forces and Pakistani forces increased sharply, resulting in the highest number of casualties. Civilian casualties during these border confrontations were caused by mortar fire, airstrikes, and exchanges of small-arms fire between the two sides.

The most recent Pakistani airstrike in the city of Kabul occurred on March 16, 2026, at approximately 9:00 PM, targeting a drug rehabilitation center, and resulted in hundreds of casualties. The Taliban claimed that at least 400 civilians were killed and more than 250 others were injured in the attack⁵⁴; however, the Reuters news agency, citing a United Nations official in Afghanistan, reported that 143 people were killed⁵⁵. Verification of the figures provided by the Taliban remains difficult due to the lack of access for independent media.

During the border-cross clashes between Pakistani forces and the Taliban, which took place from 10 October to 17 October, a total of 500 civilian casualties were recorded in Afghanistan, including 47 killed and 456 injured. These clashes occurred on 11 October in the border areas of Paktia and Kunar provinces; on 12 October in the border areas of Helmand province; on 15 October in the border areas of Kandahar, Khost, and Paktika provinces, as well as involving airstrikes in the city of Kabul. Another clash occurred on 17 October in the border areas of Paktika, which also resulted in civilian casualties.

The primary burden of these conflicts is borne by the civilian population of Afghanistan, with dozens of civilians killed and injured in each confrontation. Analysis of civilian casualty statistics indicates that the majority of victims are children and women. This situation demonstrates that the parties to the conflict—particularly Pakistani forces—have violated international humanitarian law. Under the principles of international humanitarian law, parties to a conflict are obligated to protect civilians, and civilian facilities such as hospitals must not be targeted.

Another contributing factor to civilian casualties, though representing a smaller proportion, includes explosions of improvised devices planted in vehicles, attacks by anti-Taliban forces, and suicide attacks carried out by Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP). It should be noted that responsibility for some of these attacks has not been claimed by any group.

In 2025, ISKP carried out two suicide attacks in the cities of Kabul and Kunduz, targeting members of the Taliban. On 13 February, an individual detonated explosives he was carrying inside the Ministry

⁵⁴ BBC Persian, “Hamalat taza Pakistan ba Afghanistan: negarani az kushta shodan sadha nafar dar yak markaz darmani tark etyad dar Kabul”, March 17, 2026, More details available on: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c1d6v6v77rzo>

⁵⁵ Reuters, UN agency puts death toll at 143 in Kabul rehab center bombing by Pakistan, March 18, 2026, More details available on: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-agency-puts-death-toll-143-kabul-rehab-centre-bombing-by-pakistan-2026-03-18/>

of Urban Development and Housing in Kabul, resulting in the deaths of three men and injuries to ten others. ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack.

Similarly, on 11 February, a suicide attacker detonated explosives inside Kabul Bank, killing four Taliban members and injuring 15 others. The explosion occurred while Taliban personnel had reportedly gathered at the bank to collect their salaries. ISKP also claimed responsibility for this attack. In February, a Chinese national was killed by unidentified individuals in Takhar Province; ISKP later claimed responsibility for that killing as well.

Armed groups opposing the Taliban, such as the National Resistance Front and the Afghanistan Freedom Front, also carried out a number of sporadic attacks in Kabul and several other provinces during 2025, which resulted in civilian casualties. It should be noted that obtaining precise figures regarding casualties from these attacks remains difficult. On 18 January, a hand grenade attack targeting a Taliban security checkpoint killed one man and injured 18 others, including a woman and a child. The Afghanistan Freedom Front claimed responsibility for the attack.

Responsibility for certain attacks has not been claimed by any group. For instance, on 15 January, an improvised explosive device detonated in front of a Taliban police vehicle in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, resulting in the death of one civilian and injuries to 19 others. Most of the victims were fruit and vegetable vendors who were working at the time of the explosion. No group claimed responsibility for this attack⁵⁶.

Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Assembly:

Freedom of expression is one of the fundamental human rights. States are obligated to respect and ensure these rights under international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Freedom of expression and media freedom are regarded as essential pillars of democracy and an open society. They play a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability, and the administration of justice within a country.

Following August 2021, when the Taliban seized power, freedom of expression in Afghanistan underwent a profound transformation. Freedom of expression and media freedom—considered among the most significant achievements of the Republic era—have experienced an unprecedented regression under Taliban rule.

The Taliban annulled the 2004 Constitution, which had guaranteed freedom of expression and other fundamental rights and liberties. Although Taliban authorities stated in February 2022 that the Mass Media Law adopted in 2009 (amended in 2015) remained applicable, the Ministry of Justice announced on 12 April 2024 that the laws of the former government were repealed. Consequently, there appears to be no clear and enforceable legal framework currently governing the media.

⁵⁶ UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan Update Jan-March 2025, Page 4

Notwithstanding this legal ambiguity, the de facto authorities have issued more than 15 directives and guidelines restricting freedom of expression and media freedom in Afghanistan. One of the most significant restrictive measures is the 11-point guidance issued on 19 September 2021 by the Government Media and Information Center (GMIC) of the de facto administration.

Media 11-Point Guidance

- 1) Topics at odds with Islam and Sharia must not be published.
- 2) Media activities insulting national and prominent figures must be strictly avoided.
- 3) Affront to nationally recognized values and personal privacy in media activities must be strictly avoided.
- 4) Media and reporters must not distort news contents.
- 5) Journalists should consider journalistic principles in their writing.
- 6) The media should consider balance in their publications.
- 7) Be careful in publishing topics of which authenticity is unknown or complete information is not available.
- 8) Be careful in publishing topics that have a negative impact on public opinion or could weaken people's morale.
- 9) The media should maintain their neutrality in publishing news and publish whatever is true.
- 10) The Government Media and Information Centre of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as a supportive organization, tries to provide facilities to media in preparing news and reports. Any journalist who wants to prepare a detailed report must coordinate with Government Media and Information Centre of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
- 11) Government Media and Information Centre of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has prepared a specific form for the convenience of journalists, which helps them to provide necessary reports.

The Media Complaints and Violation Commission, which had been established during the Republic period, was merged into the Ministry of Information and Culture in December 2022. The Media Violations Assessment Commission, which had been responsible for addressing complaints and media violations during the Republic period, held a meeting on August 12, 2023. However, following this meeting, the members of the commission were changed. In addition to four media representatives, six members from Taliban-related institutions, including the General Directorate of Intelligence, were added to the commission. The role and influence of the Media Violations Assessment Commission remain unclear. Under the Taliban administration, in addition to the Ministry of Information and Culture, two other institutions — including the General Directorate of Intelligence and the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice — are also involved in media-related affairs. The Taliban's intelligence directorate carries out arrests, while the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice primarily monitors and intervenes in the enforcement of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice by media outlets.

According to information from Reporters Without Borders, 43% of media outlets have disappeared, and more than two-thirds of the 12,000 journalists who were active in 2021 have left the profession.

Eight out of every ten female journalists have been forced to abandon their work. The small number of journalists who continue to work under Taliban control face numerous restrictions, including lack of access to sources, bans on traveling without a mahram (male guardian), prohibition from appearing on camera in state media, workplace segregation, mandatory face covering, various forms of harassment, extremely low salaries, or even no pay at all⁵⁷.

Following the Taliban's takeover, Afghanistan's ranking in the Press Freedom Index declined sharply. According to the Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders, Afghanistan ranked 175th out of 180 countries in 2025 in terms of media freedom, whereas in 2018 it had been ranked 118th⁵⁸. In addition, on November 18, 2022, Afghanistan's membership in the Media Freedom Coalition was revoked because the country failed to uphold the global pledge on media freedom that had been signed by the former Republic government in 2020⁵⁹.

After August 2021, Afghanistan's media outlets were also financially weakened. The deterioration of the economic situation, the reduction or suspension of funding from donor agencies, and the ban on broadcasting music and certain entertainment programs led to a decline in radio listeners and television viewers. As a result, advertising revenues for these media outlets also decreased. On the other hand, the public's easy access via the internet and satellite to radio and television programs operating from outside the country further reduced the audience of domestic radio and television stations. In addition, many experienced and specialized journalists and media workers left the country after August 2021, leaving domestic media outlets facing a shortage of skilled reporters. The imposition of severe restrictions by the Taliban on radios, TVs, and print media has also created serious challenges for independent and free media.

Those Afghan journalists who left the country after August 2021 and are currently residing in Iran and Pakistan are at risk of forced deportation. Host governments, without due consideration of the risk of harassment and persecution they may face from the Taliban, have deported them. In 2025, at least 20 Afghan journalists were forced to return to Afghanistan from Pakistan. Dozens of other journalists are living in hiding out of fear of forced deportation⁶⁰. At present, approximately 200 Afghan journalists, along with their families, are living in Pakistan and are awaiting resettlement in refugee-receiving countries⁶¹. If returned to Afghanistan, they are likely to be identified by the Taliban and may face arrest, torture, or even extrajudicial killing.

The de facto authorities have issued numerous verbal and written decrees and directives to domestic media outlets, all of which have been aimed at imposing restrictions, censorship, and intimidation. These decrees and directives include bans on broadcasting music; bans on images of living beings;

⁵⁷ Reporters without Borders, Afghanistan, More information on: <https://rsf.org/en/country/afghanistan>

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ UNAMA, Media Freedom in Afghanistan, Nov 2024, Page 7, Available on:

https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_report_on_media_freedom_in_afghanistan.pdf

⁶⁰ Reporters without Border, "Pakistan: exiled Afghan journalists sent back to Taliban nightmare while the world looks away", Dec 3, 2025, Available on: <https://rsf.org/en/pakistan-exiled-afghan-journalists-sent-back-taliban-nightmare-while-world-looks-away>

⁶¹ Ibid

requirements for female journalists to observe Islamic hijab; prohibitions on broadcasting films deemed contrary to Sharia and Afghan values; bans on women appearing in films; bans on films and videos in which men expose parts of their bodies; enforcement of workplace segregation for journalists; prohibition of male and female presenters appearing together on television; bans on criticizing officials of the ruling administration; mandatory use of the term “Islamic Emirate” instead of “Taliban”; and bans on broadcasting political programs.

In 2025, in addition to the previously imposed restrictions on the media, the Taliban authorities further intensified their oversight and control over media outlets. On June 29, the Ministry of Information and Culture shared a new directive with media representatives regulating political content. According to this directive, political talk shows, which had been suspended in February, were allowed to resume; however, political analysts are required to comply with Sharia law and to possess identification cards issued by the Ministry of Information and Culture. Furthermore, a committee has been established under the supervision of the Ministry of Information and Culture to monitor all political content broadcast in these programs.

On June 22, the Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada endorsed the “Law on Poetry” law, and it was subsequently published in the Official Gazette. Under this law, composing poetry about girls and boys is prohibited. It also bans criticism of the decrees, directives, rulings, and decisions of Hibatullah Akhundzada⁶². The law states that poets must refrain from describing boys and girls or inviting relationships with them, and poetry must be free from romantic love, improper desires, and inappropriate emotions⁶³. The law has been drafted and published in a preface, three chapters, two sections, and 13 articles.

On May 14, the spokesperson of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice stated to the media that using media platforms for intellectual deviation, insult and humiliation, ethnic prejudice, or actions contrary to religious values constitutes a criminal offense under the law. He further emphasized that no individual or entity is permitted to engage in illegal activities on social media platforms.

In 2025, one journalist was killed and another was injured. Abdul Ghafoor Abid, a journalist for the Afghanistan National Television, was killed on October 12 during clashes between Taliban and Pakistani forces in the border area of Khost Province. Another individual, Tawab Arman, the media outlet’s broadcast manager, was injured. Media reports indicated that both journalists were shot by Pakistani forces⁶⁴. Further details regarding the incident remain unclear.

According to information from the AHRC, in 2025, 17 journalists and media employees were detained by Taliban authorities. Some of these journalists were released after a short period, while others were

⁶² Ministry of Justice, Official Gazette, Law on Poetry, Article 4, Jun 22, 2025

⁶³ Ibid, Article 5

⁶⁴ Hasht E Subh daily, “*yak khabarnegar radio wa television melli zir control Taliban tawassot nairohay Pakistani dar Khost koshta shod*”, Mizan 23, 1404, Available on: <https://8am.media/fa/a-reporter-for-a-national-radio-and-television-station-under-taliban-control-was-killed-by-pakistani-forces-in-khost/>

sentenced to short- and medium-term imprisonment and are currently in prison. According to Reporters Without Borders, six journalists and two media employees are currently (in 2025) in detention⁶⁵. Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, at least 165 journalists and media workers have been arrested by the Taliban⁶⁶.

Mujeeb Alkozai (pseudonym), a former journalist, was detained and subjected to torture by the Taliban's intelligence authorities in Kabul in early 2025. In an interview with the AHRC, he stated:

"I was working for a local media outlet. Taliban intelligence agents arrested me at my home for preparing a report on women's rights. On the way, inside the vehicle, they beat me, insulted me, and used abusive language. I spent twenty-four hours in police detention facility. During interrogation, they tortured me with punches and kicks, and at times with an electric cable. My clothes were torn as a result of the beatings. In the end, they forced me to sign a written pledge not to engage in activities contrary to Taliban policies. Two years earlier, I had also been detained twice for short periods for covering women's protests."

The Taliban use the detention of journalists and the broadcasting of their forced confessions on social media to instill fear among media outlets and journalists and to silence independent media. This is part of the Taliban's policy toward freedom of expression and media freedom, and by implementing such policy, they attempt to justify their arbitrary arrests.

In 2025, the Taliban released forced confessions of three journalists. "Abuzar Saarem Sare Puli," director of the TAWANA News Agency and head of the Federation of Media Organizations of Afghanistan; "Shakib Nazari," a journalist for Japan's NTV; and "Mahdi Ansari," a journalist for the Afghan News Agency, were compelled to make confessions while in Taliban custody. Videos of the forced confessions of Sare Puli and Nazari were circulated on social media on July 30 and August 21, 2025, respectively. Both journalists had been arrested by Taliban intelligence forces on July 24, 2025.

Mahdi Ansari, a journalist for the Afghan News Agency, disappeared on October 5, 2024, while returning home from his office in the Pul-e Khushk area of Kabul. His family searched for him for three days until the Taliban acknowledged that Ansari had been detained by their intelligence forces. Ansari was sentenced by the Kabul Primary Court to one and a half years in prison on charges of propaganda against the Taliban regime and collaboration with exile media outlets.

In October 2025, a Facebook account named "Voice of Hindukush," affiliated with the Taliban intelligence directorate, published a video of Ansari's forced confession. The post explained that Ansari had been arrested and punished for "poisonous propaganda" against the regime and for collaborating with foreign media, including the "8 Sobh Newspaper" and "Afghanistan

⁶⁵ Reporters without Borders, More information on: <https://rsf.org/en/country/afghanistan>

⁶⁶ Reporters Without Borders, "Refusing visas and refuge consigns more Afghan journalists to Taliban trap", Available on: <https://rsf.org/en/refusing-visas-and-refuge-consigns-more-afghan-journalists-taliban-trap>

International⁶⁷.” In the video, Ansari confesses to having contacts with some foreign media and using fake social media accounts to promote propaganda against the Taliban regime. He also disavows his previous statements about Afghanistan’s poor conditions⁶⁸. It remains unclear under what circumstances the video was recorded. Mehdi Ansari was released from Taliban prison on 20 March 2026⁶⁹.

On February 4, 2025, intelligence and Ministry of Information and Culture personnel raided the offices of Radio Begum and Radio Jawanan, which were located in a shared building in Wazir Akbar Khan, Kabul. Two male staff members of these radios were detained: Islam Gul Tuta Khil, deputy of Radio Jawanan, and Ahmad Zia Aman Yar, a reporter for Radio Begum. In addition to interrogating the staff, the intelligence personnel confiscated equipment, including computers, hard drives, and documents belonging to the radio stations. The Taliban stated that the radios’ activities had been suspended due to multiple violations, including unauthorized production of content and programs for a television channel operating abroad. After three weeks, on February 22, the Ministry of Information and Culture issued a license to reopen these radio stations. The journalists, Islam Gul Tuta Khil and Ahmad Zia Aman Yar, who had been sentenced to six months in prison, were released in August 2025⁷⁰.

Since the Taliban’s takeover, numerous media outlets have been shut down for various reasons, including Taliban-imposed restrictions and prohibitions, reduced financial support, and the deteriorating economic situation. Some of these media outlets were temporarily closed, while others were shut down permanently. In 2024 alone, 12 media outlets were blocked. According to information from the AHRC, in 2025, the broadcasts of eight private and state-owned media outlets were suspended.

In April 2025, the Taliban’s Ministry of Information and Culture announced the suspension of the operating license for “Rah-e-Farda Radio and Television” in Kabul. Authorities stated that this action followed complaints from the media outlet’s staff about not receiving their salaries. According to Taliban officials, the outlet’s management had been summoned regarding the complaint but ignored it⁷¹. After a two-month suspension, Rah-e-Farda Radio and Television resumed its broadcasts.

Taliban authorities in various provinces, in order to implement Article 17 of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, banned the broadcast of images of living beings. As a result, the

⁶⁷ Reporter without Borders, “In Afghanistan, new Taliban tactic to humiliate journalists: force confession broadcast online”, Available on: <https://rsf.org/en/afghanistan-new-taliban-tactic-humiliate-journalists-forced-confessions-broadcast-online>

⁶⁸ Afghanistan International, “*Taliban vidioye etraaf ejbaari Mahdi Ansari khabarnegar zendani ra montasher kard*”, Mizan 10, 1404, Available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202510021959>

⁶⁹ Etilaat E Roz, “markaz khabarnegaran: Mahdi Ansari pas az yak o nim saal az زندان Taliban aazad shod”, March 20, 2026

⁷⁰ Afghanistan Journalist Center, “*chahar khabarnegar wa faal rasanayee dar Kabul az زندان aazad shodand*”, Asad 9, 1404, Available on: <https://afjc.media/our-work/press-release/two-journalists-from-jawanan-and-begum-radio-stations,-and-two-media-activists,-released-from-prison-in-kabu>

⁷¹ Afghanistan Journalist Center, “*jawaz kaar radio wa television rahe farda taaliq shod*”, Sawr 9, 1404

broadcasts of some local television stations, including provincial branches of Afghanistan National Television in Herat, Paktia, Balkh, and Takhar, as well as two other private television channels in Herat, were suspended. This ban on images of living beings has so far been enforced in 23 provinces across the country.

On August 6, Taliban intelligence personnel in Daikundi Province raided the offices of Radio Naseem in Nili city, the provincial capital, and arrested the station's director and two reporters, causing the station's operations to halt. Intelligence officers detained Saifullah Rezai, a reporter for Radio Naseem, and Qudratullah Mosavi, a reporter for Radio Sada-ye Qaryah, who had gone to Nili to cover a press conference. Subsequently, Soltan Ali Jawadi, the station director, and Mojtaba Qasemi, a reporter for Radio Naseem, were also arrested, and their computers were confiscated by intelligence personnel⁷². The Taliban stated that these arrests were carried out because the radios had broadcast UN reports on the activities of ISKP and armed groups opposing the Taliban. The journalists were released after several hours of interrogation. It is worth noting that Soltan Ali Jawadi, Saifullah Rezai, and Mojtaba Qasemi had also been detained two years earlier and spent about five months in prison.

On August 26, during a press conference in Kabul, a female journalist attempted to ask a question to Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesperson, but her microphone was deliberately turned off⁷³. The press conference was being broadcast live on Afghanistan National Radio and Television. A month prior to this incident, the voice of another female journalist was intentionally cut while she was asking a question to Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban's Foreign Minister. Previously, in some provinces, Taliban authorities had also prevented female journalists from attending press conferences.

On October 15, 2025, by order of the Taliban authorities, the broadcasts of the private "Shamshad Radio and Television" in Kabul were suspended. It was reported that the Taliban accused Shamshad of failing to adequately support the Taliban's position against Pakistan during the recent conflict between the two sides.

Restrictions have also been imposed on media outlets operating from abroad (commonly known as exile media). Legally, these media outlets cannot obtain licenses to operate in Afghanistan. As a result, their journalists work secretly within the country.

In May 2024, the Taliban authorities banned any cooperation with "Afghanistan International," which is based in London⁷⁴. The Taliban instructed analysts and journalists to refrain from participating in talks on this channel or engaging in any form of collaboration with Afghanistan International. Earlier, in December 2022, broadcasts of Radio Azadi and Voice of America (VOA) on FM waves were cut off

⁷² Afghanistan Journalist Center, "*karmandan radio Nasim dar Daikundi bazdasht wa en rasana baar digar basta shod*", Asad 16, 1404, Available on: <https://afjc.media/news/afghanistan/center-area-news/daikondi/gdi-detains-four-journalists-in-daikundi-and-shuts-down-nasim-radio-station>

⁷³ Hasht E Suhb daily, "*Taliban baar digar saday khabarnegar zan ra hangam matrah kardan sowl qat kardand*", More details available on: <https://8am.media/fa/taliban-once-again-cut-off-female-reporters-voice-while-asking-a-question>

⁷⁴ BBC Persian, "*hokamat Taliban har naw hamkari ba Afghanistan International ra mamno kard*", May 9, 2024, Available on: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/crgyxx350rpo>

due to alleged violations of journalistic principles according to the Taliban. Abdul Haq Hamad, head of the Ministry of Information and Culture's Press Department, tweeted that the FM broadcasts of these two radio stations had been suspended in 13 cities⁷⁵.

The Taliban have also imposed restrictions on foreign journalists. Foreign reporters are required to share the topic of their reports with the Taliban authorities for review and approval before producing any coverage. In addition, they must comply with media guidelines issued by the Taliban and are prohibited from reporting on subjects such as the activities of groups like ISKP, al-Qaeda, and other armed organizations. They are warned that violations may result in future visa denials. Moreover, during their travels within Afghanistan, foreign journalists are closely monitored by the Taliban under the pretext of security protection⁷⁶.

Access to information is also subject to significant restrictions. Although in recent years access to information has gradually improved through the appointment of spokespersons in ministries and provincial offices, as well as the issuance of identification cards to media personnel, access remains very limited on certain specific topics. The Taliban authorities are particularly sensitive about issues such as security incidents, protests against the Taliban, access to education, the rights of women, and other controversial matters, and they do not provide information on these topics to the media.

Freedom of religion and the freedom to practice religious rituals of religious minorities have consistently been violated by the ruling authorities. Shi'a Hazaras face discrimination both on the basis of their ethnicity and their religion. Following the Taliban's return to power, Shi'a Muslims in Afghanistan have been unable to freely practice their religious rituals.

In July 2024, the de facto authorities obtained a written commitment (in ten articles) from members of the Shi'a Ulema Council, requiring that Muharram mourning ceremonies be held only for three days, from the 7th to the 10th of Muharram. The document also stipulates that Shi'a Muslims are not permitted to invite Sunni citizens to these ceremonies. Furthermore, it states that mourning ceremonies must be held exclusively in enclosed spaces (inside mosques and Hussainiyas) and that the use of loudspeakers is prohibited⁷⁷. These restrictions, along with others, were also enforced during 2025.

The Taliban force followers of the Ismaili sect, which is a branch of Shi'a Islam, to convert to Sunni Islam through coercion and threats. In February 2025, a Taliban commander named Juma Khan Fateh, in Nusay District of Badakhshan Province, gathered more than 50 Ismaili followers and threatened them to abandon the Ismaili faith and join Sunni Islam, warning that otherwise they would be killed. According to information from monitors of the AHRC, in 2025, at least 203 individuals in the

⁷⁵ Azadi Radio, "*nasharat radio azadi wa saday America az mawj fm az soy Taliban qat shod*", More information on: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/32156849.html>

⁷⁶ UNAMA, Media Freedom in Afghanistan, Page 16, Nov 2024

⁷⁷ Amu TV, "Taliban marasem azadary muharram ra tanha ba se roz mahdod sakhta and", July 10, 2024, More details available on: <https://amu.tv/fa/109423/>

districts of Shighnan, Ishkashim, Khwahan, Nusay, and Maymay were threatened by Taliban commanders to convert to Sunni Islam.

Access to Justice:

During the Republic period, access to justice was supported by strong and fair legal frameworks. The Constitution and other laws of the country, along with criminal procedures and legal processes followed by law enforcement agencies, the attorney general's office, and courts, required that access to justice be facilitated and justice be ensured. Despite some challenges, such as corruption within judicial and legal institutions and limited institutional capacity, significant efforts were made to strengthen the rule of law and improve the provision of justice.

During the Republic period, in addition to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and provincial offices, special prosecutors' offices for combating violence against women within the structure of the Attorney General's Office, as well as family response units within the Criminal Investigation Departments of the Afghan National Police, and defense lawyers played a prominent role. These institutions were key government actors in addressing violence against women. After the Taliban takeover, these institutions either ceased to exist or were repurposed according to the Taliban's judicial system, which is primarily based on their interpretation from Sharia law.

Independent oversight bodies, such as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AHRC), also played an effective role in facilitating access to justice. Victims of human rights violations would approach the Commission's provincial and regional offices to register their complaints. The Commission would refer these complaints to the competent judicial and other relevant authorities and monitor their proceedings to ensure that cases were addressed fairly and in accordance with the law.

During the Republic period, the Criminal Procedure Law in 2014, the Law Against Torture in 2016, the Law on the Elimination of all Violence Against Women, and the Shia personal Status law in 2009 and the new Penal Code in 2017 were adopted. These instruments, while imperfect in practice, particularly in the context of political instability, insecurity, corruption, and capacity constraints, nonetheless contributed to improved legal coherence, a more predictable exercise of judicial power, and a more rights-oriented criminal policy.

On 4 January 2026, the leader of the Taliban approved and promulgated the Penal Procedures Regulation of the Courts, consisting of three sections, ten chapters, and 119 articles. It represents a dangerous repositioning, restructuring, and redefinition of criminal justice, affecting the substantive definition of crimes and offenses, the methods by which guilt is determined, the equal standing of persons before the law, and the legality, proportionality and range of punishments the system treats as lawful. The ordinance institutionalizes hierarchy and authorizes restrictions that foreseeably result in serious human rights violations. It is incompatible with the rule of law and constitutes a manifest breach of Afghanistan's binding obligations under international human rights law. In practical terms, it signals a return to legal darkness and a profound setback to a century of progress in codification and the incremental modernization of justice in Afghanistan.

Its provisions institutionalize discriminatory social classifications, revive inhumane punishment, expand capital and corporal punishments, and introduce censorship-type offenses. It also defines accused as a person not charged after proper investigation and proceedings of crime, but anyone who is testified against by one just and or two confidential witnesses before a judge for crimes mentioned in this code. This reflects a deliberate shift in both procedure and penal philosophy, with direct consequences for equality, legality, and fair trial guarantees.

Furthermore, it promotes torture and lacks provisions protecting the rights of persons accused of crimes, including the right to access a defense lawyer, clear trial procedures, witness protection, the role of victims in prosecution, and other safeguards related to criminal proceedings. It also fails to elaborate on procedures for investigation, the admissibility of evidence, and due process during trials. The code is imbalanced and disproportionate in its prescribed penalties. For example, the crime of severe violence against a woman—if she can demonstrate a broken bone, injury, or bruise—is punishable by a maximum of 15 days' imprisonment (Article 32). In contrast, casting an “evil eye” is punishable by one year of imprisonment at home (Article 67), while organizing or participating in quail fighting is punishable by five months of imprisonment.

Previously, in August 2024, the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice was approved by the Taliban leader. This law has significantly restricted many individual and collective rights and freedoms, and its enforcement has affected numerous aspects of daily life in Afghanistan. Women's rights and freedoms have been restricted to a greater extent than those of men under this law. The law has been enacted as a primary instrument for consolidating Taliban authority, suppressing dissent, monopolizing power, and exercising control over the people of Afghanistan.

After the Taliban's takeover, the judicial and legal institutions were completely changed by the ruling authorities, representing a serious regression in access to justice. Judges of the Supreme Court from the previous government were sidelined, and in their place, clerics—most of whom lack formal modern legal education and are predominantly Taliban members—were appointed to these positions. Consequently, the current judicial system lacks independence. It operates based on a strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia (Hanafi jurisprudence) as dictated by Taliban authorities.

With the Taliban's control of Afghanistan, women were entirely excluded from the country's judicial and legal institutions. Women who had served as judges, prosecutors, police officers, or defense attorneys during the Republic period were forced to leave their positions. Similarly, many legally trained and experienced professionals abandoned their roles, with some fleeing abroad to avoid Taliban retaliation—resettling in neighboring countries or living secretly within Afghanistan.

In the field of access to justice, women have suffered more than men. The Constitution and other laws, including the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which had been enacted during the Republic period, were annulled by the ruling authorities. This law, which had been endorsed by the President and criminalized 22 forms of violence against women, had played a significant role in facilitating women's access to justice.

Under the Taliban administration, cases of violence against women fall under the jurisdiction of four institutions: the police, the courts, the justice directorates, and the prosecution offices. However, the specific roles and responsibilities of these institutions remain unclear. The lack of clearly defined responsibilities and the transfer of cases between these agencies have reduced the effectiveness and accountability of the system. In some instances, cases of violence against women are also handled by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. Certain cases are referred to traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation by local elders. Since the current judicial system is based on Sharia law and women have no participation in it, justice is often not in favor of female complainants and victims.

By the end of 2023, special prosecutors' offices for combating violence against women were active in 22 provinces. However, in five provinces, no female prosecutors were present⁷⁸. In provinces where female prosecutors were assigned, they did not play an active role in handling cases of violence against women. By the same time, family problem-solving units existed in 21 provinces. In 18 of these provinces, at least one female police officer was assigned to these units. In the remaining eight provinces, female police officers were not allowed to be present in the offices of these units unless summoned by their superiors. In two provinces, police officers in these units did not handle gender-based violence complaints against women at all; this responsibility was delegated to their male colleagues⁷⁹. It is possible that this situation may have changed by now (late 2025).

After the Taliban takeover, women's support centers, commonly known as safe houses or shelters, were also closed. Before the Taliban came to power, 23 women's support centers across 22 provinces were operated by national NGOs. These centers had been established to protect victims of gender-based violence. With the Taliban's rise to power, all of these centers were shut down, and currently there are no support centers or safe shelters for women anywhere in the country⁸⁰. The last safe house, run by prominent women's rights activist Mahbuba Seraj, was closed by the authorities in December 2025. Ms. Seraj told the media that the Taliban forcibly shut the facility, which was housing 33 women and children⁸¹.

The lack of access to justice, for both men and women, has harmful consequences for Afghan society. In the absence of a fair and impartial judicial system, people become frustrated and disillusioned, leading to increased dissatisfaction. Stability and security are closely linked to justice. Without justice, sustainable peace cannot be achieved. When access to justice is denied, cycles of violence, revenge, conflict, and insecurity continue, leaving Afghanistan increasingly vulnerable to insecurity and war.

⁷⁸ UNAMA, Divergence of Practice: The Handling of Complaints of Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls in Afghanistan's de facto Authorities, Dec 2023, Page 19, Full report is available on: [The Handling of Complaints of GBVAWG English 141223](#)

⁷⁹ Ibid, Page 12 & 19

⁸⁰ Ibid, Page 17

⁸¹ Afghanistan International, "Taliban khana amne Mahboba Seraj r aba zoor bast", Qaws 19, 1404, More information on: <https://www.afintl.com/202512108607>

Women have been completely excluded from all judicial and legal institutions in the country and are no longer allowed to work in these offices. The Taliban’s judicial and legal institutions handle cases related to women in a fully discriminatory manner. At the same time, support mechanisms that previously protected women’s rights—such as specialized women’s prosecution offices, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, and civil society organizations—no longer exist.

A significant regression in access to justice, brought about through the issuance of decrees, the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and the Penal Procedures of the courts, has darkened the prospects for justice and the rule of law. The restriction of access to justice and the serious violation of human rights including the right to freedom of expression—through the censorship of information in the media, as well as the suppression, intimidation, arrest, torture, and killing of journalists currently carried out by the Taliban—will have grave political, social, and economic consequences. On one hand, these actions constitute the most serious human rights violations. On the other hand, they have placed the people of Afghanistan in extreme political, social, and cultural isolation. If the ruling authorities do not end their oppressive, monopolistic, and regressive policies, the current crisis in Afghanistan will deepen further.

Chapter 4: Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Afghanistan is a member of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As a state party to this convention, Afghanistan is obligated to respect all its provisions, regardless of who governs the country or how it is administered. Afghanistan must uphold the economic, social, and cultural rights of its people by adopting legal and administrative measures, planning and implementing programs, and actively promoting these rights.

The right to education, the right to work, access to health services, and the right to participate in cultural activities are among the main rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. During the Republic period, based on the 2004 Constitution and other laws, numerous plans and programs were adopted and implemented to uphold and strengthen these economic, social, and cultural rights. Key achievements of the Republic period include expanded access to education and health services, increased employment opportunities, and improvements in the economic conditions of the people.

After the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the situation of economic, social, and cultural rights has deteriorated, and many achievements of the Republic period in these areas have been lost. Access to education, especially for girls and women, has sharply declined. Access to health services has also decreased, and the economic situation of the Afghan population has worsened due to rising unemployment and poverty.

According to estimates by the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), 9.5 million people in Afghanistan are currently facing food insecurity, and around 4.6 million Afghan mothers and children

suffer from malnutrition⁸². Afghanistan's international isolation, resulting from Taliban policies, has led to a severe reduction in international aid. At the same time, the mass expulsion of Afghan migrants and refugees from Iran and Pakistan has exacerbated unemployment and poverty. Recent droughts and natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, have caused thousands of deaths and left many more survivors extremely vulnerable.

Over the past four years, the Taliban have forcibly and unfairly seized lands and homes in several provinces, displacing thousands of families who were the domestic and rightful owners. These properties have often been handed over to individuals affiliated with the Taliban. All cases of property confiscation and forced displacement have involved the use of armed forces and threats. In some instances, when legal claims were filed by the domestic owners or tribes against Taliban-affiliated individuals, decisions by Taliban officials were made unfairly in favor of complainants connected to the Taliban.

Forced displacement and property confiscation, whether collectively or individually, have been reported in Panjsher, Takhar, Sar-e Pol, Logar, Helmand, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Khost, Ghazni, Bamyān, Maidan Wardak, Daikundi, Balkh, Jawzjan, and Urozgan provinces, and this process is ongoing.

In 2025, the confiscation of people's property by Taliban authorities continued. According to the AHRC and independent media reports, in October 2025, the Taliban Ministry of Justice declared that at least 843 jeribs of land in the Nawabad neighborhood of Ghazni city belonged to the state and confiscated it. This neighborhood, located in District 6 of Ghazni, had previously been purchased by private individuals who had paid for their properties.

On July 28, 2025, the Taliban, along with Kuchis, attacked the village of Rashak located in Panjab district Bamyān Province, forcibly evicting the homeowners and locking the gates of 25 houses, threatening that no one was allowed to enter these homes.

In September of the same year, some residents of Sholgara District in Balkh Province complained to independent media that the Taliban first seized privately owned agricultural lands in the village of Qadim, claiming them as state land, and later distributed these lands to individuals affiliated with their group for housing construction, even though the owners possessed customary ownership documents.

Forced displacement and the confiscation of property by the Taliban and their affiliates are highly concerning and constitute serious human rights violations. Since returning to power, individuals and groups associated with the Taliban have laid claim to people's lands and properties, and the Taliban, disregarding justice and fair legal proceedings, have consistently supported their associates by issuing unfair decisions aimed at confiscating property and enforcing forced displacement.

⁸² World Food Program, Afghanistan, More information is available on: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan>

On 15 September 2025, by order of the Taliban leader, fiber-optic internet services in Afghanistan were shut down. According to Taliban officials, the internet was cut off in order to “prevent moral corruption.” The shutdown first began in Balkh Province, where fiber-optic internet access was disconnected, and in the following days fiber-optic internet was gradually cut off in other provinces as well. At the same time, access to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat was also restricted.

On 29 September, media outlets reported that after several weeks of internet disruption, telecommunications services were also suspended across the country. The NetBlocks reported that Afghanistan had experienced a complete communications blackout⁸³. The shutdown disrupted the operations of banks, public institutions, and several government offices, while flights from airports were also suspended. This measure by the ruling authorities provoked widespread criticism and concern at both national and international levels. Traders and business owners warned that if the internet ban continued, their businesses would suffer serious damage. Ultimately, telecommunications networks were restored after 48 hours, and internet services were reactivated after four weeks, on 1 October.

Unemployment in Afghanistan has increased following the Taliban’s takeover in August 2021. According to an assessment by the International Labour Organization (ILO), after the change in administration in August 2021, the number of job losses in Afghanistan exceeded half a million in the third quarter and could reach approximately 900,000 by mid-2022, representing a 14 percent decline in employment. This decline is attributed to workers being pushed out of the labor market as a result of the change in administration and the ensuing economic crisis, as well as restrictions on women’s participation in the workforce⁸⁴.

Accurate and up-to-date statistics on unemployment in Afghanistan are not available. However, the 2025 report from the World Bank Group indicates that one in every four young people is unemployed⁸⁵. It should be noted that the actual unemployment rate is likely much higher. The primary factors contributing to rising unemployment include the change in administration, underdevelopment of the private sector, capital flight, lack of foreign investment due to uncertainty over stability, and the return of several million Afghan migrants from neighboring countries, which has placed additional pressure on the labor market.

Although inflation in Afghanistan is not high compared to other countries in the region, the decline in household incomes due to unemployment and the economic crisis has made it difficult for the majority of people to afford enough food. Moreover, over the past four years, particularly in 2025, the

⁸³ Netblocks, More details available on: <https://mastodon.social/@netblocks/115288230006300457>

⁸⁴ International Labour Organization, ILO estimates underscores Afghanistan employment crisis, More details available on: <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-estimates-underscore-afghanistan-employment-crisis>

⁸⁵ World Bank Group, Afghan Economy Expands Amid Persistent Challenges, More details available on: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/12/10/afghan-economy-expands-amid-persistent-challenges#:~:text=Nearly%20one%20in%20four%20young,and%20achieving%20resilient%2C%20inclusive%20growth.>

large-scale return of Afghan migrants from Iran and Pakistan has led to an increase in housing rents in major cities of Afghanistan. According to assessments by the AHRC, rents in major cities, especially in Herat and Kabul have risen by one and a half times, and in some areas of these cities, rents have even doubled.

“Amina” (pseudonym), a middle-aged woman from Takhar Province, stated in an interview with the AHRC:

“I worked in the government, but after the Taliban came to power, I was dismissed from my position and told not to return to work. This has had very negative financial and psychological effects on my life and on my family. My husband was also an employee of a government office, and he too was dismissed from his job. Currently, my husband works as a taxi driver with a rented car and can barely cover our living expenses.”

Repeated droughts have rendered agriculture in Afghanistan, which employs the majority of the population, highly vulnerable. Floods and other natural disasters, such as earthquakes, have also had adverse effects on the livelihoods of the people. All of these factors have contributed to an increase in poverty and hunger in recent years. Consequently, Afghanistan remains heavily dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Access to Education:

Equal and non-discriminatory access of all girls and boys to quality education is among the primary standards of the right to education. Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all individuals are entitled to equal access to educational facilities and opportunities without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, language, or other status. The purpose of education should be the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms⁸⁶.

After the Taliban takeover in 2021, both the quantity and quality of education in Afghanistan have sharply declined. The reduction of international assistance, the absence of an accountable government, and the Taliban’s disregard for modern education have all contributed to this deterioration. According to a joint report by UNESCO and UNICEF, nearly half of schools lack access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and heating systems, and more than 1,000 schools remain closed due to damage caused by past conflicts or natural disasters⁸⁷.

Restrictions imposed on the education of girls and women, uncertainty regarding changes to the curriculum, lack of investment and adequate infrastructure, weak oversight of the education system,

⁸⁶ UN General Assembly, Universal Human Rights Declaration, Article 26

⁸⁷ UNICEF, “Afghanistan’s Education System Facing Deepening Crisis for Both Girls and Boys, Warn UNICEF and UNESCO”, Oct 8, 2025, Available on: <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/press-releases/afghanistans-education-system-facing-deepening-crisis-both-girls-and-boys-warn>

insufficient learning materials, and a severe shortage of teachers—especially female teachers—have placed the education sector under growing strain. Recurrent humanitarian crises such as earthquakes, floods, and drought have further intensified these pressures, putting the future of an entire generation at risk. In addition, the expulsion of approximately 2.7 million Afghans from neighboring countries since 2023—60 percent of whom are children and adolescents—has created a serious crisis for the education system and poses a severe threat to Afghanistan’s long-term development⁸⁸.

The Taliban’s policies regarding educational services clearly indicate that they align educational objectives with their own extremist and militant ideology. They seek to reshape the education system, including the curriculum, in ways that advance their political and ideological goals.

According to information from the AHRC, over the past four years the Ministry of Education under Taliban control has allocated the majority of its budget not to improving the quality of school education, but to expanding religious and jihadist madrasas. The Ministry of Education reported that in 2023 alone, 21,257 religious schools—referred to as Islamic education centers—were established across the country, while only 316 schools (210 private and 106 public) were newly established nationwide during the same year⁸⁹.

The Taliban have also modified the school curriculum in line with their ideology. According to information from the AHRC, several key subjects that included concepts such as human rights, peace, democracy, and civic education have been removed from the curriculum by Taliban authorities. They have eliminated subjects such as social studies, civic education, life skills, vocational training, arts, and patriotism from the primary and lower secondary school curriculum. In some schools, they have even prohibited the teaching of science subjects⁹⁰.

In October 2025, the Taliban’s Ministry of Higher Education declared 679 academic books and educational materials banned in public and private universities across Afghanistan. According to an official letter issued by the ministry, the teaching of these books was prohibited following a review by a professional committee composed of religious scholars and professors of Sharia and Islamic culture. The list of banned books was sent to both public and private universities, which were instructed to replace them with alternative materials. Books authored by women were also prohibited. According to reports by independent media, the banned titles include Principles of Law, Foundations of Organizational Economics, Sustainable Development, Sociology of Organizations, Sociology of Art, Political Sociology, Anthropology, Twentieth-Century Political Thought, and hundreds of other academic books.

On January 14, 2025, the Taliban closed two English language training centers in the districts of Khidir and Sangtakht wa Bandar in Daikundi Province and arrested several of their teachers. According to

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Afghanistan Human Rights Center, Report on Access of Women to Education under the Taliban, Page 21, Jan 2025

⁹⁰ Ibid, Page 17

independent media reports, the director and six teachers—including four female instructors—of the “Ofoooq e Jadid” English Language Center in Khidir District were detained by Taliban intelligence forces. The female teachers were later released on bail. Taliban authorities also confiscated office equipment and computers from the center. At the same time, in Sangtakht wa Bandar District, three teachers of another “Ofoooq e Jadid” English Language Center were arrested, and the office was shut down. The officials of these educational centers had previously received warnings from the Taliban regarding the enrollment of girls above sixth grade. Following those warnings, only younger girls were attending classes. However, the Taliban stated that the reason for the arrests and closures was the teaching of English, the promotion of “infidel culture,” and failure to comply with the laws of the Emirate⁹¹.

On February 27, nine teachers from the “Ofoooq e Jadid” English Language Center were once again arrested by the Taliban. According to independent media reports, these teachers had been summoned to the primary court of the district center and were subsequently detained by the Taliban’s police command. Previously, when these teachers had been arrested, they were released after several days through the mediation of community elders and their families, upon providing guarantees⁹².

On January 26, 2025, the Taliban closed several branches of the “Ofoooq e Jadid” English Language Center in Bamyán city. Following raids by Taliban fighters on these centers, teachers fled out of fear of arrest⁹³. Prior to this, the Taliban had also shut down English language training centers in Ghor Province and closed 16 educational centers in Paktia Province.

In addition to banning girls’ education, the Taliban have imposed restrictions on university curricula and textbooks in both public and private institutions. Two directives issued on August 25 and 26, 2025, by the Taliban’s Ministry of Higher Education prohibited the teaching of 18 university subjects, as well as books

د هغو مضامينو لیست چې حذف شوي دي

ملاحظات	مضامين	شميره
	حقوق اساسی افغانستان	۱
	جنبش ها و جریان های سیاسی اسلامی	۲
	حکومت داری خوب	۳
	نظام های انتخاباتی	۴
	نظام سیاسی افغانستان	۵
	جامعه شناسی سیاسی افغانستان	۶
	جنډر و توسعه	۷
	حقوق بشر و دموکراسی	۸
	تحليل قانون اساسی افغانستان	۹
	جهانی شدن و توسعه	۱۰
	تاریخ ادیان	۱۱
	جامعه شناسی زنان	۱۲
	فلسفه اخلاق	۱۳
	آزار و اذیت جنسی	۱۴
	تنوع استخدام برابر جنډر	۱۵
	رهبری گروه های کوچک	۱۶
	ارتباطات جنډر	۱۷
	نقش زنان در ارتباطات عامه	۱۸



The list of removed subjects in Dari language

⁹¹ Etilaat E Roz daily, “Taliban dar Daikundi do markaz aamozeshi ra tatil wa ustadan aan ra bazdasht kardand”, Jan 13, 2025

⁹² Hasht E Subh daily, “edama syasat hay zed aamozesh; Taliban no aamozgar yak markaz aamozeshi ra dar Daikundi bazdahst kardand”, Feb 28, 2025, Available on: <https://8am.media/fa/anti-education-policies-continue-taliban-arrest-nine-teachers-from-an-educational-center-in-daikundi/>

⁹³ Hasht E Subh daily, “Taliban darwaza dahha senf aamozeshi ra dar Bamyán bastand”, Jan 27, 2025, Available on: <https://8am.media/fa/the-taliban-closed-the-gates-of-dozens-of-educational-institutions-in-bamyán/>

authored by Iranian writers, books printed in Iran, and books written by women. The list of removed subjects indicates that the Taliban have eliminated courses containing content related to women, human rights, and democracy. These banned subjects include Gender and Development, Sociology of Women, Sexual Harassment, Human Rights and Democracy, Constitutional Law of Afghanistan, and several other related courses.

Following this, on September 16, the Taliban's Ministry of Education issued a directive mandating the removal of 51 lessons from school textbooks. These lessons covered topics such as freedom, women's rights, human rights, mothers, the national flag, peace, and similar subjects. The directive stated that the removal of these lessons was approved by the Taliban Prime Minister's office, and that provincial education directors were required to eliminate these lessons from the school curriculum. This action was taken after reviewing the lessons for grades one through twelve. The Ministry of Education under the Taliban stated that these topics were considered contrary to the principles of Islam and the policies of the Taliban⁹⁴.

Access to Health Services:

According to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, everyone has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. State parties are obligated to take the necessary measures to realize this right, ensuring reductions in infant and maternal mortality, improving environmental health, and preventing and treating epidemics. Furthermore, member states are responsible for providing appropriate conditions to ensure access to health services for all people⁹⁵.

In recent years of the republic period, access to health services for the people of Afghanistan had increased. According to the Minister of Public Health of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2020, approximately 90 percent of the population had access to basic health services. He stated that there were 3,500 active health facilities across the country, and at least one midwife was serving in 90 percent of these centers⁹⁶. However, monitoring conducted by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission indicated that actual access to health services was somewhat lower than the figures reported by the Ministry of Public Health.

After the fall of the former government in August 2021, Afghanistan's health system underwent significant changes. The Taliban imposed restrictions on women's employment, including in the health sector. In addition, Afghanistan's international isolation led to a reduction in foreign aid, including support for health services. The climate of fear also caused many doctors and health workers to leave the country and seek refuge abroad. These factors collectively resulted in a severe

⁹⁴ Afghanistan International, "*Taliban 51 dars darbari aazadi zan wa hoqoq bashar ra az ketab hay darsi makatbe hazf kardand*", Oct 16, 2025, Available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202509261280>

⁹⁵ UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Article 13, Dec 16, 1966

⁹⁶ Deutsche Welle, "wezarat sehat Afghanistan: 90 darsad mardom ba khadamat sehi dastrasi darand", Dalw 1, 1398

shortage of medical personnel and funding for the health sector. Women have been the most affected, as the restrictions imposed on them have further limited their access to health services.

In March 2025, Edwin Ceniza Salvador, the World Health Organization (WHO) representative, announced that 167 health centers had been closed due to lack of financial support, depriving 1.6 million people across 25 provinces of essential health services. Subsequently, the United States reduced its global aid by suspending the activities of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which further impacted Afghanistan's health sector.

The WHO representative in Afghanistan expressed concern to the media, stating that one in ten people in Afghanistan could lose access to health care by the end of the year due to the cessation of U.S. aid. He reported that since January 2025, nearly three million Afghans have lacked access to health care, and an additional two to three million people may lose access by the end of 2025. He also noted that 364 health centers have been closed, and another 220 are at risk of closure due to reduced international aids⁹⁷.

Zahra (pseudonym), a resident of Herat city, stated in an interview with the AHRC, in response to a question about access to healthcare services:

“Restrictions have been imposed on access to healthcare services, particularly in public hospitals. Women are required to observe hijab and must be accompanied by a male guardian (mahram). The shortage of female doctors, restrictions on movement, the high cost of treatment, the poor quality of medicines, and the lack of medical facilities are among the most significant barriers for women in Herat.”

Women in Afghanistan face significantly greater barriers than men in accessing health services. The Taliban have imposed strict restrictions on women's freedom of movement, prohibiting them from traveling without a male guardian (mahram). Numerous reports indicate that women are not allowed to visit male doctors, while female doctors in some provinces are unable to work without a mahram accompanying them.

The shortage of female doctors and health workers was already a challenge during the republic era; however, under the restrictions imposed by the Taliban, the number of women working in the health sector has drastically declined compared to the republic period. This has created serious barriers for women seeking medical care. Additionally, prevailing social traditions in Afghanistan make it difficult for women to freely access health facilities.

Cultural Rights:

According to Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of their community and to enjoy the arts, especially scientific advancements and

⁹⁷ AFP, “More than 10% of Afghans could lose healthcare by year-end: WHO”, April 15, 2025, Available on: <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250415-more-than-10-of-afghans-could-lose-healthcare-by-year-end-who>

their benefits. Afghanistan, as a member of this covenant, has the responsibility to protect cultural rights and to take the necessary legal and administrative measures to promote and develop culture and the arts in the country.

In 2025, the Taliban authorities continued many of the restrictions and prohibitions they had imposed on cultural and artistic activities. Nowruz, considered one of the largest and most historic celebrations in Afghanistan and the region, was again observed quietly at home, as in previous years, due to Taliban restrictions. The Taliban closed the doors of cultural and religious sites, including the Rawza Shrine in Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh province, and the Sakhi Shrine in Kabul, preventing the hoisting of Nowruz flags at these locations. Under Paragraph 21 of Article 22 of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, approved by the Taliban leader, celebrating Nowruz, Yalda Night, and other cultural festivities is described as contrary to Islamic law and is prohibited.

After the Taliban's takeover, singing, playing musical instruments, and listening to music were banned, as had been the case during the first Taliban regime. During their initial rule, Afghanistan had become known as the "country without sound and images." Following the enactment of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in August 2024, enforcement of these prohibitions by the morality police continued into 2025. Due to these restrictions, the majority of singers and musicians have left the country. Only a small number remain in Afghanistan, and out of fear of prosecution, they have abandoned their artistic work and turned to other occupations.

On December 20, 2025, the Kabul municipality demolished Ariana Cinema, a famous and historic cinema, which sparked widespread reactions from cultural activists. The Kabul municipality spokesperson confirmed the demolition and stated that a shopping center would be built in its place to increase the municipality's revenue⁹⁸. Ariana Cinema was originally built in the 1960s but was destroyed during the wars. It was rebuilt and reopened in 2004. The ruling authorities had also demolished Behzad Cinema in 2022. Since August 2021, all cinemas in Afghanistan have ceased operations and remain closed.

Based on their strict interpretation of Sharia, the Taliban consider music to be an act of immorality and vice. The authorities in various provinces have confiscated and burned musical instruments, and in some cases arrested individuals who played them. In 2025, the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice burned musical instruments in several provinces,



⁹⁸ BBC Persian, "Takhrib Senima Ariana dar Kabul; Atiq Rahimi: wairan kardan senima saakhtan ayanda nist", Dec 20, 2025, Available on: <https://www.bbc.com/dari/articles/c78vyl183n8o>

including Maidan Wardak and Nangarhar. On December 28, 2025, the same administration burned 86 musical instruments in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province. In a statement, the department said the action was carried out to “reform society, prevent immoral acts, and enforce Sharia principles⁹⁹.” In September of the same year, 96 musical instruments were also burned in this province.

The ruling authorities discriminate against the Persian and Uzbek languages. In late December 2025, the Taliban removed the Uzbek language and the Persian word “دانشگاه” (“university”) from the signboard of Samangan University. This action sparked widespread criticism from speakers of Uzbek and Persian. Over the past four years, the Taliban have systematically and extensively removed Persian words and terms from educational institutions and even from street signs. Recently, images circulated on social media showing that the Taliban had removed some city signs in Kabul, replacing Persian words with Pashto. Even proper names have been translated into Pashto; for example, “Shahr-e Naw Kabul” was changed to “Nawi Shar” and “Bagh-e Dawood” to “Dawood Bon.” These discriminatory actions against the culture and literature of the majority of the Afghan population violate human rights values. If this policy of erasure and discrimination continues, Afghanistan’s cultural richness and linguistic diversity will face serious threats.

Political instability, lack of justice, deprivation of education, healthcare, freedom of expression and belief, restrictions on cultural activities, poverty, unemployment, widespread and systematic limitations on women, and the climate of fear and repression created by the Taliban have driven many Afghans to attempt migration to Western countries and neighboring states. Despite the fact that neighboring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan, have imposed strict restrictions on Afghan migrants and refugees and carry out mass expulsions, many continue to attempt migration.

Severe deprivation of civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights, has had damaging consequences for Afghan society, plunging Afghanistan into a deeper crisis. If these crises are not addressed, sooner or later the insecurity and instability in Afghanistan will also affect the majority of neighboring countries and even Western nations.

Chapter 5: Torture, Inhumane, and Degrading Treatment

Afghanistan is a party to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. According to Article 2 of the Convention, States Parties are obligated to take effective legislative, administrative, judicial, and other measures to prevent acts of torture within their territory. No exceptional circumstances, such as war or threat of war, internal political instability, or any other public emergency, may be invoked as justification for torture¹⁰⁰. Similarly, an order from a superior or any public authority cannot be used as a justification for committing torture.

⁹⁹ Hasht E Subh daily, “*Taliban dar Nengarhar aalat musiqi ra ba aatash kashidand*”, Jan 28, 2025, Available on: <https://8am.media/fa/taliban-set-musical-instruments-on-fire-in-nangarha>

¹⁰⁰ UN General Assembly, International Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Article 1, Jun 1987

Torture is defined as any intentional act by which severe physical or mental pain or suffering is inflicted on an individual for the purpose of obtaining information, a confession, or an admission from that person or a third party. It also includes the punishment of an individual for an act they or a third party have committed, or are suspected of having committed, when such pain or suffering is inflicted deliberately, whether by coercion, threat, inducement, consent, or acquiescence of a public official or any person acting in an official capacity, or with the encouragement or consent of such an official¹⁰¹.

Under the Convention Against Torture, other inhuman and degrading treatment, as well as acts prohibited under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Rome Statute, constitute a serious violation of human rights and may also be considered war crimes or crimes against humanity. According to international conventions, perpetrators of torture must be subject to legal prosecution and punished.

The 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan, as well as the Anti-Torture Law passed in March 2017, prohibit torture. The Anti-Torture Law recognizes and establishes necessary executive and judicial measures to prevent and combat torture, including independent monitoring of detention facilities, the right to compensation, legal prosecution of perpetrators of torture, and protection for victims, witnesses, and investigators.

The authorities of the ruling administration, in addition to abolishing the Constitution, have also declared the Anti-Torture Law null and void. Although the officials have not made any public statements regarding the repeal of this law, the website of the Ministry of Justice under Taliban control indicates that the law has indeed been annulled.

The authorities of the ruling administration, including spokespersons of various Taliban offices, consistently deny the existence of torture in detention facilities under their control. However, there is abundant evidence that detainees, particularly in intelligence-run detention centers and police detention centers, are subjected to widespread torture.

Since access to detention facilities under Taliban control is extremely limited, documenting cases of torture is very difficult. The AHRC does not have access to these facilities. Apart from the Human Rights Section of UNAMA and the International Committee of the Red Cross, no other organization, including media outlets, can monitor detention centers controlled by the Taliban. From January 1 to September 30, 2025, UNAMA's office recorded a total of 11 torture cases in these detention facilities.

According to information from the AHRC, Taliban police frequently beat, humiliate, and verbally abuse individuals during arrests. Even those who show no resistance are subjected to beatings. Taliban police use fists and kicks, strikes with rifle butts, sticks, electric batons, and hair pulling to assault and harass individuals during arrests. Physical beatings during arrests are almost universal, and there are very few cases in which a person is not beaten at the time of arrest.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, Article 2

According to reports, the Taliban use multiple methods to torture suspects and detainees. One independent media outlet published a report in the summer of 2025 listing 31 types of torture used in Taliban detention centers¹⁰². Although the AHRC cannot independently verify the details of this report, the majority of the torture methods mentioned are consistent with the findings of the AHRC.

According to assessments by the AHRC, the majority of those tortured in Taliban detention centers are former members of the security and defense forces, journalists, human rights activists—including women’s rights activists—and individuals accused of membership in or cooperation with armed groups opposing the Taliban, such as the National Resistance Front and the Front of Freedom.

“Abdul Wadood Peshghor,” a member of the National Resistance Front, was arrested by the Taliban over two years ago while traveling on the route from Panjshir to Kabul. He was held in the “Dashtak” prison in the Anaba district of Panjshir province. On January 14, 2025, his body was handed over to his family. Signs of severe torture were visible on his body, indicating that he had likely died as a result of torture. Abdul Wadood Peshghor was a close associate of Noor Agha Peshghor, one of the National Resistance Front commanders killed in Panjshir.

Abdul Rashid, a former employee of National Directorate of Security, was arrested by the Taliban in September 2025 and killed as a result of torture. He was from the village of Ghoumai Shakh Dara in the Nusay district of Badakhshan province. After the Taliban took power, he had fled to Iran. A few months before his arrest, he was forcibly expelled from Iran. According to independent media reports, Abdul Rashid took up labor work in a gold mine to make a living. To ensure his safety, he visited Jumma Fateh, the Taliban district chief in Nusay, several times to request a “pardon card,” but his requests were denied. On the night of September 22, he was arrested by individuals affiliated with Jumma Fateh and subsequently died as a result of torture¹⁰³.

In addition to arresting and torturing former security forces members, members of armed groups opposing the Taliban, journalists, and human rights activists, the authorities also target anyone who speaks out against Taliban policies, subjecting them to persecution and torture.

For example, in January 2025, three clerics, Mahmood Hassan, Abdul Qadir Qanat, and Abdul Aziz Shujaa were arrested by the Taliban. These clerics had criticized Taliban policies, called for the reopening of girls’ schools, and condemned the Taliban’s monopoly on power. After several days in detention, Mahmood Hassan’s brother told the media that his brother was subjected to severe torture and was in critical physical and mental condition. He appealed to human rights organizations to take action for his release¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰² Afghanistan International, “gozarsh tahqiqi; 31 naw shekanja dar bazdashtga hay Taliban” More details available on: https://content.afintl.com/taliban_tortures/index.html

¹⁰³ Hasht E Subh daily, “*Taliban dar Badakhshan yak Nezami peshin ra pas az shekanja ba qatl rasand*”, Sep 23, 2025, More details available on: <https://8am.media/fa/taliban-in-badakhshan-kill-a-former-soldier-after-killing/>

¹⁰⁴ Azadi Radio, “*khanawad Mahmood Hasan Rohani montaqid Taliban migoyad ke o ra dar zendan taht shekanja qara darad*”, Dalw 11, 1403, More details available on: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/33297609.html>

On January 18, Hamza Ulfat, a civil activist, died after being wounded by the Taliban. He had traveled from Iran to Daikundi province to visit his mother but was stopped by Taliban forces along the way. Fearing re-arrest, Hamza attempted to flee, and the Taliban opened fire, seriously injuring him. After hiding in the mountains for two days, he managed to reach his home secretly, but he ultimately died from severe blood loss.

Hamza Ulfat had previously been arrested on February 7, 2023, in western Kabul. The Taliban detained him for participating in women’s protests in Kabul and for assisting in the medical treatment of two wounded opponents of the Taliban. During his detention, he was severely tortured multiple times in Directorate 40 detention facility, in the Maidan Wardak detention center, and in Pul-e-Charkhi prison. During the torture, the Taliban broke his teeth.

After spending one year and six months in Pul-e-Charkhi prison in Kabul, he was released. He subsequently went to Daikundi and later to Iran, where he worked as a laborer for a period of time. He eventually returned to Afghanistan. According to his close friends, he was planning to leave again—this time for Pakistan—believing that from there he might be able to seek asylum in a Western country.

There are numerous reports of sexual abuse and even rape against women who were detained by the Taliban. Some women’s rights activists who were previously held in Taliban custody have stated after their release that they were subjected to sexual abuse in Taliban detention centers. A women’s rights activist, who is currently residing in Europe, claimed that Taliban members stripped her naked while she was held in a detention facility in Kabul¹⁰⁵.

Another example concerns the arrest of a 28-year-old woman who was a former member of the Afghan National Army and was detained by the Taliban in August 2021. In an interview with a media outlet, she alleged that for two consecutive nights she was subjected to brutal sexual assault while in Taliban custody in the 13rd district of Kabul city. She spent five nights in custody. She claimed that on the second and third night three or four Taliban members attacked and gang-raped her. She stated that the perpetrators shouted that she was a Hazara woman, an infidel, and a prostitute, and that they could do whatever they wanted to her¹⁰⁶. The survivor is currently residing in a neighboring country.

¹⁰⁵ BBC Persian, “*zan motarez Afghan afraad Taliban ra motaham kard ke dar zendan berahna ash kardand*”, Jun 11, 2024, More details available on: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cldyl94v3qro>

¹⁰⁶ Rukhshana Media, “*zan nezami peshin: Taliban dar zendan ba sorat grouhi ba man tajawoz kardand*”, Jawza 9, 1404, More details available on: <https://rukshana.com/former-female-soldier-taliban-gang-raped-me-in-prison/>



Picture of Hamza Ulfat published by Etilaat e Roz

The authorities of the ruling administration continue to deny the occurrence of torture and other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment in detention facilities. On September 1, the Taliban’s Department for Prison Affairs issued a report on its activities over the past year, claiming that all prisoners and journalists were assured that anyone witnessing acts of torture or corporal punishment in detention could report them. The report also highlighted initiatives to “improve” prison conditions, including the provision of religious, recreational, and vocational training for inmates¹⁰⁷.

According to information collected by the AHRC, acts of torture are widespread in detention facilities administered by the Taliban, including detention and interrogation centers, particularly those under the Taliban’s Intelligence Department. Former members of

the security and defense forces, members of armed groups opposing the Taliban, and individuals who express dissent against Taliban policies—whether through participation in protests or on social media—are arrested and subjected to various forms of torture.

Accurate and up-to-date information regarding the number of individuals held in prisons and detention centers is not available. Following the Taliban’s takeover in August 2021, the doors of all prisons were opened and thousands of prisoners and detainees were released. However, with the subsequent reorganization of the prison system, these detention facilities became one of the primary pillars of the Taliban’s apparatus of repression, quickly filling capacity.

On 21 June 2024, the Deputy Director of the Taliban Prison Administration stated in an interview with Ariana News that the prison population had reached 20,000, including 1,500 women and 60 foreign nationals¹⁰⁸. The number of women arrested during 2024 exceeded the figures recorded under the former Republic, indicating that the ruling authorities’ subject women to targeted and systematic harassment without legal justification. According to information leaked by an anonymous group, in 1402 solar (2023), the Taliban imprisoned 352 women and detained an additional 1,081 women.

¹⁰⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: July – October 2024 Update, 6

¹⁰⁸ Ariana News, IEA holds 60 foreigners in prisons, Jun 21, 2024, Available on: <https://www.ariananews.af/iea-holds-60-foreigners-in-prisons/>

Dozens of foreign nationals, including six women, were also held in detention¹⁰⁹. These details were published on 6 February 2025 following a breach of the Taliban’s database on TalibLeaks. The AHRC cannot independently verify these figures. The absence of independent access to detention facilities and the lack of transparency in reporting prevent the availability of precise and verifiable data on the conditions of these centers.

The above figures indicate a significant increase in the number of women detained and imprisoned, reflecting the alarming reality of systematic repression of women by the Taliban. According to the AHRC, the primary factor behind the rise in female detainees is the intensified crackdown on women, particularly through the strict enforcement of the “Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice” law. This law serves as an inhumane legal framework and a central instrument of the Taliban’s governance to suppress the citizens of Afghanistan, especially women.

Under the 2004 Constitution and the Criminal Procedure Code, the rights of accused, suspected, and victims were to be respected and upheld. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission advocated for the incorporation of international human rights conventions into national laws. As a result of this advocacy, the majority of international human rights standards were integrated into the country’s criminal laws, including the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and other legislation. However, the website of the Ministry of Justice under the Taliban administration indicates that these laws have been annulled.

On 25 July 2024, the head of the Taliban Intelligence stated at a gathering that the Intelligence Directorate carries out its duties based on a comprehensive and complete law derived from Islamic Sharia and Hanafi jurisprudence, which has been approved by religious scholars and specialists and ratified by the Taliban leader, and that its implementation is subject to strict oversight. He further stated that the staff of the Directorate of Intelligence are bound by Islamic Sharia and the law and will be investigated in case of violations¹¹⁰. The details of this law are unknown and have not yet been published on the website of the Ministry of Justice.

Information collected by the AHRC through interviews with individuals released from detention facilities indicates that the judicial and legal authorities of the ruling administration do not observe or respect many legal principles and procedures from the moment of arrest until trial. These include the right to remain silent, the presumption of innocence, the right to legal counsel, the right to appeal, the right to defend oneself before the court, and access to witnesses, documents, and other evidence.

Release from Taliban detention centers and prisons occurs under various conditions and through different means. Some individuals have been released through the mediation of local elders, the payment of large sums of money—which constitutes corruption and extortion—or by providing written or financial guarantees. In certain cases, the Taliban have demanded that detainees

¹⁰⁹ Afghanistan International, “*Asnade efsha shoda; Taliban nazdik fi 1400 zan afghan ra zendani wa bazdasht kardā ast*”, Feb 6, 2025, Available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202502055683>

¹¹⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: July – October 2024 Update, 6

surrender weapons in exchange for their release. Those without weapons have been required either to purchase arms or pay the cost of the weapons to secure their freedom. Some prisoners have been released on the occasion of national or religious events by decree of the Taliban leader. According to the most recent report of the Taliban's Prison Administration, published in October 2025, over the past four years, 19,998 prisoners have been granted amnesty or had their sentences reduced by order of the Taliban leader¹¹¹. Due to the absence of independent monitoring bodies within the country and the lack of a transparent information system, the AHRC cannot independently verify this information.

Chapter 6: Stoning, Flogging, and Death Penalty

Since regaining power, the Taliban, as during their previous rule, have resumed the implementation of Hudud and Qisas punishments. Hudud refers to penalties prescribed under Islamic Sharia, most of which are classified as "Haq Allah" (rights of God), with fixed punishments that have neither minimum nor maximum limits and cannot be mitigated or pardoned. Crimes categorized under Hudud include adultery, slander (false accusation of adultery), alcohol consumption, theft, armed robbery (Moharebeh), apostasy, and rebellion. Qisas (retributive punishment) and Diyat (blood money) are defined under Islamic Sharia as "Haq al-Abd" (rights of individuals), with Qisas punishments subject to pardon at the discretion of the victim or their legal heirs.

Since August 2021, the ruling authorities have sentenced and executed thousands of individuals to corporal punishment by flogging. These punishments have been carried out publicly, often in sports fields, in the presence of hundreds of spectators, with lashings ranging from 20 to 39 strokes. In certain cases, depending on the nature of the alleged offense, individuals were also sentenced to imprisonment ranging from six months to three years in addition to flogging. Those subjected to flogging were accused of offenses such as theft, murder, alcohol consumption, gambling, extramarital relations, fraud, smuggling, and drug use.

According to the database of the AHRC, Taliban courts issued hundreds of flogging sentences and discretionary punishments during the solar year 1404 (March 2025 to March 2026). As a result of these rulings, 1,087 individuals were flogged, often in public. These corporal punishments were carried out in most provinces of the country, and the overwhelming majority of the victims were men. Women were often flogged on charges of extramarital relations and "running away from home."

The vast majority of flogging sentences are executed publicly, often in the presence of hundreds or, in some instances, thousands of spectators, typically in sports stadiums. Prior to the punishment, the Taliban announce the events across the city and invite the public to witness the proceedings. No age restrictions are imposed on spectators, although children constitute a substantial portion of the audience.

¹¹¹ Anis National Daily, "dastaword hay mohem adara tanzim omor زندانها pas az hakamyat dobara emarat Islami" Oct 22, 2025, More details available on: <https://anisdaily.com/?p=71879>

While corporal punishments are mostly issued through judicial rulings, reports indicate that in some cases, flogging has been imposed by non-judicial Taliban authorities, including provincial and district governors, police, the intelligence directorate, and officials of the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

Mullah Hibatullah, the Taliban leader, expressed support for the punishment of stoning in March 2024. In an audio recording broadcast on national radio, he stated:

"Even if it is said that it violates women's rights, we will carry out stoning; tomorrow we will enforce the hadd punishment for adultery in public, we will stone women. We enforce the hudud of Allah in public."¹¹²

In May 2023, the Taliban Supreme Court informed the media that over 175 qisas (retributive) sentences, four sentences of walling-in of convicts, and 37 stoning sentences had been issued across Afghanistan and were awaiting the leadership's decision¹¹³. Since August 2021, the Taliban have executed 12 individuals publicly; however, precise information on the issuance and implementation of stoning or walling-in sentences remains unavailable.

According to AHRC sources, stoning sentences were not carried out in 2025; nonetheless, several individuals, including a woman in Daikundi, were sentenced to stoning by a primary court.

Capital punishment resumed after August 2021, as it had during the first period of Taliban rule. Since that time, 12 individuals have been publicly executed by the Taliban, according to the AHRC. Executions occurred in the provinces of Farah, Laghman, Ghazni, Jowzjan, Badghis, and Nimroz, in the presence of hundreds of spectators. In 2025, five individuals were executed for murder. On April 11, four men were executed publicly in Badghis, Nimroz, and Farah provinces.

The most recent execution took place on December 2, 2025, in Khost province. A person named Mangal was publicly executed for murder in the presence of thousands of spectators¹¹⁴. Prior to the execution, the Taliban invited the public to gather at the city's sports stadium. No measures were taken to restrict children from attending, and children were present when the crowd assembled.

Public execution constitutes cruel and inhuman punishment, in violation of international law. The Taliban employ such measures to instill fear and terror among the population. The presence of children at executions contravenes human rights principles and has severe psychological and emotional consequences. Given the absence of an independent judiciary and the lack of adherence to fair legal standards in Taliban courts, these punishments are fundamentally unjust.

The implementation of Hudud and Qisas punishments, including executions, has drawn widespread national and international condemnation. The United Nations strongly criticized the Taliban for

¹¹² BBC Persian, "*rahbar Taliban az sangsaar zanan wa shalaq zadan dar mala aam defa kard*", March 24, 2024

¹¹³ BBC Persian, "*dadgah aali Taliban baray dahha hokm idaam sangsaar wa awar kardan diwar montazer tayed rahbar ast*", May 4, 2023

¹¹⁴ Afghanistan International, "*80 hazar nafar baray tamashay idaam dar Khost raftand*", Dec 2, 2025

public executions and flogging, calling on the authorities to immediately halt such practices. Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, condemned public executions, stating: “Execution is a cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment. It is irreversible, often applied unjustly, and cannot serve as an effective deterrent to crime¹¹⁵.” International human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have also condemned public executions and flogging and urged the Taliban to cease these practices¹¹⁶.

Corporal punishment, in addition to constituting a clear violation of international human rights law, has profound physical and psychological consequences. Individuals subjected to flogging suffer severe injuries and emotional trauma. When carried out publicly, victims experience profound humiliation, and their social status is significantly damaged. In Afghanistan, victims do not have access to psychological care¹¹⁷. The reduction of international assistance due to the prevailing political situation has further restricted access to mental health services.

Individuals arrested and publicly flogged for extramarital sexual relations (zina), homosexuality, or running away from home face heightened risks of violence from their families and communities. In Afghanistan’s traditional society, women accused of moral crimes are often viewed as sources of shame, resulting in social isolation for both the victim and her family. In some cases, victims are compelled to leave their homes and villages.

Chapter 7: Child Rights

Afghanistan is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, as such, is obligated to implement the provisions of this Convention. Article 2 of the Convention requires all State Parties to take all necessary measures to protect children from all forms of discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth, or any other status of the child or their parents or legal guardians. According to Article 1 of the Convention, every human being under the age of 18 is considered a child.

The majority of children in Afghanistan face widespread discrimination and deprivation. Poverty, hunger, limited access to quality educational services, restricted access to health care, sexual abuse, physical violence both within and outside the home, forced and child marriage, insecurity, trafficking, and the use of children in armed forces are among the most significant challenges confronting Afghan children.

Following the Taliban’s seizure of power in August 2021, in addition to abrogating the Constitution, they repealed other laws related to children’s rights, including the Law on the Prohibition of

¹¹⁵ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Afghanistan must immediately stop public executions and corporal punishment: UN experts”, April 17, 2025, Available on: [Afghanistan must immediately stop public executions and corporal punishment: UN experts | OHCHR](#)

¹¹⁶ Amnesty International, “Afghanistan: Taliban must halt all execution and abolish death penalty”, Feb 23, 2024.

¹¹⁷ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and Death Penalty in Afghanistan, Page 14, May 2023, Available on: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/hr_brief_on_cpdp_03052023-_english_0.pdf

Harassment of Women and Children, the Juvenile Offenders Act, the Law on Combating Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, and the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Currently, no legal framework exists to punish perpetrators of crimes against children, nor is there any active mechanism or system to protect them. Over the past four years, the Taliban have failed to fulfill Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights instruments.

The situation of children has significantly deteriorated since the Taliban's takeover. Essential services are on the verge of collapse, while international assistance to Afghanistan has sharply declined. The United Nations reported that more than half of the country's population—24.4 million people—requires humanitarian aid, including 12.9 million children. The worsening conditions have placed 8.7 million people in a state of emergency-level food insecurity. According to UN statistics, malnutrition accounts for 45 percent of child deaths in Afghanistan. Severe malnutrition currently exceeds emergency thresholds in 27 out of 34 provinces and continues to worsen¹¹⁸.

On December 10, 2025, Tom Fletcher, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, addressed the United Nations Security Council, stating that approximately half of Afghanistan's population requires humanitarian assistance. He reported that 300 nutrition service centers had been closed, leaving 1.1 million children without life-saving nutrition, while 1.7 million children remain at risk of death if untreated. Furthermore, Afghanistan's healthcare system continues to collapse, with 422 health centers closed in 2025, depriving three million people of essential medical services¹¹⁹.

While Afghanistan remains internationally isolated due to Taliban policies and international aid has sharply declined, several provinces are simultaneously affected by natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, and droughts. In 2025, approximately 2.2 million Afghans returned from Iran and Pakistan, with around 60 percent being women and children. The collapse of disaster management institutions, coupled with ineffective leadership, has exacerbated existing crises and placed the majority of the population, particularly women and children, at severe risk.

A large number of Afghan children are engaged in labor across various age groups. Although precise statistics are unavailable, estimates suggest that between one and three million children are working. Rising poverty and food insecurity under Taliban rule have likely contributed to an increase in child labor compared to previous periods.

According to the United States Department of Labor's 2024 assessment, the prevalence of child labor in Afghanistan has increased since August 2021. This rise is attributed to the humanitarian crisis following the Taliban takeover and the disruption of child protection mechanisms¹²⁰. The Department's findings indicate that 24.5 percent of boys and 19.3 percent of girls work below the minimum legal working age. Children aged 15 to 17, representing 3.4 percent of the population,

¹¹⁸ UNICEF, Children in Afghanistan, Available on: <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/children-afghanistan>

¹¹⁹ United Nations, UN news, "Afghanistan's crisis deepens as human rights recede and aid funding falls", Dec 10, 2025, Available on: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/12/1166560>

¹²⁰ US Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, Child Labor and Force Labor Reports: Afghanistan, Available on: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/afghanistan>

frequently undertake hazardous work¹²¹. The lower incidence among girls is likely due to their greater involvement in unpaid domestic tasks, such as caring for younger siblings.

Afghan children are engaged in a variety of work, including vehicle repair, metalwork, brickmaking, tailoring, restaurants, street vending, bakery operations, retail, car washing, and carpet weaving, most of which constitute heavy labor. In rural areas, the overwhelming majority of children are employed in agriculture or livestock herding, forming an integral component of child labor within households.

Some children in urban areas are engaged in work that poses significant security risks. Activities such as begging, street vending, and washing cars on the roadside expose children, particularly girls, to trafficking, abduction, and sexual exploitation.

Recruitment and use of children by Taliban armed forces have been reported historically and in recent years. Since August 2021, the Taliban have continued to recruit children into their armed forces, with no laws or mechanisms enacted to prevent such recruitment¹²². Although precise figures on children serving in Taliban forces are unavailable, Afghan citizens frequently report observing large numbers of children in armed groups.

The United States Department of State's 2025 Annual Report notes that the Taliban and other groups have illegally recruited children for combat and support roles. Coercion and deception, including false promises, are employed to enlist children. Other terrorist organizations, including the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP), utilize children for planting and detonating explosives, transporting weapons, espionage, and guarding military installations. The report further notes that the National Resistance Front has similarly recruited children into its ranks¹²³.

Recruitment of children into armed forces violates international human rights standards. Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 8(b)(26) of the Rome Statute prohibit recruitment of children under the age of 15 and classify such acts as war crimes.

Bacha Bazi (dancing boys) and sexual exploitation constitute widespread and deeply concerning practices in Afghanistan. In some provinces, powerful and wealthy individuals exploit poverty and vulnerability to take in boys, typically aged 10 to 18, for sexual abuse. Perpetrators employ these boys as attendants, apprentices, workers, shop assistants, bakery or workshop staff, or hotel and restaurant employees, either in exchange for money or through coercion, threats, or deceit. Boys are forced to perform as dancers at private parties and wedding ceremonies, sometimes dressed in female clothing, and afterward are subjected to sexual abuse, including gang rape in some cases.

As a result of advocacy by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, sexual exploitation of children was criminalized in the Penal Code enacted in 2017, and perpetrators

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ U.S. Department of State, 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Afghanistan, Available on: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2025-trafficking-in-persons-report/afghanistan/>

became subject to legal penalties. Additionally, the Commission launched a national campaign to raise public awareness, contributing to a reduction in cases of child sexual exploitation during the Islamic Republic era.

Since August 2021, alongside the repeal of child protection laws, cases of Bacha Bazi have been reported among Taliban commanders. Bacha Bazi constitutes abuse, sexual mistreatment, and is recognized as a form of human trafficking. The United States Department of State's 2025 Annual Trafficking in Persons Report notes persistent patterns of Bacha Bazi among the Taliban¹²⁴.

Authorities of the ruling administration have subjected many individuals to corporal punishment for "moral crimes," including victims of Bacha Bazi. Boys who are exploited have also been punished, while Taliban-affiliated perpetrators remain unaccountable. For instance, in August 2023, a widely circulated video allegedly depicted Mullah Ahmad Akhund, head of the Kabul Electricity Department, engaging in sexual acts with his bodyguard. The Taliban military court acquitted him, declaring the video fake, despite widespread public attention¹²⁵.

Children constitute the majority of human trafficking victims in Afghanistan, with boys more frequently affected than girls. Factors such as rising poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, drought, forced returns, and restrictions on girls and women exacerbate vulnerability. Families often send children through human trafficking networks to Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, or Europe, sometimes exposing them to sexual exploitation during transit.

Members of ethnic and religious minorities, including Shi'a Hazaras, Ahmadi Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and Christians, face higher trafficking risks due to security threats from the Taliban and other groups, including ISKP. These minorities are often forced to hide or attempt to leave the country, increasing vulnerability to exploitation¹²⁶.

Afghan children are also victims of internal trafficking, which exceeds cross-border cases. Families burdened by debt may sell children to traffickers, who subject them to long-term labor. Young girls are sometimes married off in exchange for dowries. Children are also exploited in opium cultivation, harvesting, and drug production and trafficking.

Since August 2021, human trafficking incidents have increased. While the Taliban have occasionally prevented children from traveling without parents, no protective mechanisms exist. According to the United States Department of State, authorities fail to meet minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking and have made no meaningful efforts to do so¹²⁷.

Although the Taliban leader issued a 2025 decree directing ministries to combat human trafficking, investigate cases, and conduct public awareness activities, the decree omitted the recruitment of

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Afghanistan International, "dadgah nezami Taliban raves sherkat barq Kabul ra az etehaam hamkhabagi baa mahafez ash braat dad", Sunbula 27, 1402, More details available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202309184150>

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of State, 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Afghanistan

¹²⁷ Ibid

children into armed forces. Ministries have not taken effective measures to combat trafficking, and no investigations, prosecutions, or victim support programs have been reported.

The ruling authorities appear to interpret human trafficking solely as illegal migration. However, the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children” defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons through coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, or payment to achieve control over another, for the purpose of exploitation¹²⁸.

According to AHRC information, child marriage has increased since August 2021. The ban on educating girls beyond the sixth grade, insecurity, fear of Taliban fighters, and worsening economic conditions are key factors driving this rise. Families, due to poverty, food insecurity, or fear of Taliban reprisal, are compelled to marry off daughters.

Due to the absence of independent monitoring, precise data on forced and child marriage is unavailable. However, reports indicate an increase in such practices. One report cited ten interviewees who directly witnessed 34 cases of forced and child marriages among students¹²⁹. These figures are deeply alarming.

A young woman from Herat shared her experience with the AHRC:

"I am a teacher at a school. One day, while traveling with my colleagues by taxi, the morality police stopped us and asked why we did not have a male guardian. They forced us out, prevented us from continuing, and detained the driver. When we explained that the men in our families work and cannot accompany us, they said that because our men work, we women should not work either. They required us to provide written pledges that we would always be accompanied by a male guardian and fully observe the hijab."

The prohibition of education for girls beyond the sixth grade, reduced access to education, declining quality of schooling, and decreased international support place the future of Afghan children, particularly girls, at severe risk. Beyond education, factors such as human trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced and child marriage, child labor, poverty, hunger, forced returns, and natural disasters—including earthquakes, droughts, and floods—render Afghan children extremely vulnerable and threaten their future.

The ruling authorities have no strategy regarding the future of Afghan children or their role in the country’s development. Instead, the Taliban are systematically strengthening religious schools, allocating millions from the Ministry of Education’s budget to establish new institutions. Curricula have been altered to prioritize religious subjects endorsed by the Taliban, often at the expense of core

¹²⁸ United Nations, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transitional Organized Crime, Article 3

¹²⁹ Afghanistan Human Rights Center, Report on Access of Women to Education under the Taliban, Page 10, Jan 2025

academic education. Religious schools also teach subjects such as jihad, which frequently serve to indoctrinate children with extremist views. These policies not only endanger the future of Afghan children but also pose risks to regional security and stability, with implications beyond Afghanistan's borders.

Chapter 8: Rights of People with Disabilities and elderlies

Afghanistan is a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and has committed to the principles of equality, full participation, and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities. In addition, the 2004 Constitution and the Law on the Rights and Privileges of Persons with Disabilities, enacted during the Islamic Republic, served as key protective frameworks for this population.

Following the Taliban's takeover, these legal frameworks have faced significant ambiguity and challenges. The Constitution and many other laws have been repealed, and replacements have not been introduced. The ruling authorities have not adopted a clear or official position regarding compliance with international obligations, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Furthermore, there are no independent mechanisms to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities or to monitor the fulfillment of their demands.

Afghanistan has one of the highest numbers of persons with disabilities in the region. Decades of armed conflict, migration and displacement, drought, natural disasters, and weaknesses in the health and economic systems have contributed to a substantial increase in the population of persons with disabilities. According to estimates by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), approximately 1.5 million people live with severe disabilities. UNAMA further reports that nearly a quarter of Afghans (24.6%) experience mild disabilities, 40% experience moderate disabilities, and around 13.9% face severe forms of disability¹³⁰.

The causes of disability in Afghanistan are diverse, with armed conflict remaining the primary factor. Numerous individuals have been injured and disabled due to armed attacks, explosions, landmines, and unexploded remnants of war. Health-related factors, including weaknesses in the healthcare system, lack of preventive and specialized care, high-risk births, diseases such as polio, and child malnutrition, also contribute to disability. In addition, social and environmental factors—such as consanguineous marriages, widespread poverty, and limited awareness of prenatal care—contribute to congenital disabilities as well as mental and psychosocial disorders.

Although armed conflict has decreased since August 2021, the prevalence of disability among the Afghan population continues to rise. A report by The Rahyab Initiative indicates that explosions from mines and unexploded ordnance, the collapse of the healthcare system, reductions in international assistance, rising child malnutrition, poverty, and forced migration have increased preventable

¹³⁰ UN Afghanistan Statement on the Occasion of International Day of Person with Disabilities, Dec 3, 2025, Available on: <https://unama.unmissions.org/en/press-releases/un-afghanistan-statement-occasion-international-day-persons-disabilities>

disabilities. The report also notes that psychological pressures resulting from social crises and restrictions on women's rights and freedoms have contributed to a rise in mental health disorders and cognitive disabilities¹³¹.

Persons with disabilities in Afghanistan face numerous challenges that restrict their rights and freedoms. Discrimination, limited access to rehabilitation services, barriers to education, restricted access to public spaces, and inadequate healthcare remain among the most serious challenges. Women with disabilities experience compounded discrimination.

Low levels of public awareness contribute to discrimination against persons with disabilities, which exists both within families and in society at large. During the Islamic Republic, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and other civil society organizations advocated for the rights of persons with disabilities and conducted awareness-raising programs; however, these efforts were insufficient. Societal attitudes remain discriminatory and demeaning, with some individuals using derogatory and stigmatizing labels. Certain families regard disabled members as a source of shame and attempt to confine them within the home. Similarly, public officials often treat persons with disabilities in a discriminatory manner, failing to provide them with equal access to services and rights.

Following the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, international assistance to healthcare facilities has declined. As previously noted, 364 healthcare centers have closed, and an additional 220 centers are at risk due to reduced international aid. Several facilities had already been shut down in prior years, depriving millions of people of access to basic healthcare services. This situation poses significant challenges to the provision of rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities.

Currently, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) remains the largest provider of rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities in Afghanistan. ICRC rehabilitation centers have provided tens of thousands of individuals with services, including the fabrication and provision of prosthetic limbs, assistive devices, physiotherapy, and other supportive equipment. Assessments indicate, however, that the ICRC's capacity is limited to a few centers, which are unable to meet the full range of needs¹³².

Ghulam Sakhi, a person with a disability, said in an interview with the AHRC that he underwent a lower limb amputation and that his prosthetic leg broke after ten years of use. Two months ago, he visited the ICRC in Kabul to receive a new prosthetic leg. While the ICRC provided a prosthesis, Ghulam Sakhi reported that its quality was poor and caused discomfort. Upon returning to the ICRC, he was informed that budget constraints only allowed the provision of low-quality materials, and he had no alternative but to accept the device.

During the Islamic Republic, in addition to the ICRC, the Swedish Committee also provided services in Afghanistan, including physiotherapy, prosthetic fabrication, assistive devices, specialized

¹³¹ The Rahyab Initiative, Human Rights Situation of Person with Disabilities in Afghanistan (2021-2025): Health, Education, Employment, and Access to Justice, at 13 & 14

¹³² Ibid

training, and skills education for persons with disabilities. In March 2024, the Swedish Committee suspended its operations after the Taliban closed its offices in response to the burning of the Quran in Sweden. The Swedish Committee had worked in Afghanistan for more than four decades in health, education, and infrastructure. With its suspension, thousands of individuals, including persons with disabilities, lost access to their services.

Independent mechanisms, particularly human rights organizations, were dismantled following the Taliban's takeover. Organizations that had advocated for the rights of persons with disabilities were also dissolved. Currently, only a few informal organizations operate clandestinely in Kabul and other major cities to promote disability rights. Unions and associations of persons with disabilities that had been officially licensed during the Islamic Republic have had their licenses revoked by the ruling authorities.

Given the deterioration of Afghanistan's economic situation and the increase in poverty and unemployment following the Taliban's takeover, persons with disabilities have become more vulnerable than the general population. Ehsan Karimi, head of an informal organization advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities in Kabul, stated that persons with disabilities have become poorer than before. He noted that the number of beggars with disabilities on city streets has increased in recent years.

During the Islamic Republic, persons with disabilities received a monthly stipend of 5,000 Afghanis as a legal entitlement under the Law on the Rights and Privileges of Persons with Disabilities. Following the Taliban's takeover, this amount was reduced. The Law on the Rights and Privileges of Persons with Disabilities was repealed, and in February 2022, a new procedure was enacted that explicitly discriminates among persons with disabilities.

Under this procedure, persons with disabilities affiliated with the Taliban, referred to as "disabled Mujahideen," receive 5,000 to 15,000 Afghanis per month depending on the severity of their disability, while others receive no more than 8,000 Afghanis. Individuals disabled from birth, or due to illness or natural disasters, receive only 2,000 to 3,000 Afghanis monthly, depending on severity.

The term "salary" was removed from this procedure and replaced with "aid," which lacks legal obligation and is treated as discretionary. In 2025, the authorities were unable to pay several months of entitlements due to budget constraints. Reports from Kabul indicate that authorities do not intend to pay the winter allowance for three months because of ongoing financial shortfalls.

Numerous reports indicate that the ruling authorities discriminate in disbursing entitlements based on gender, ethnicity, and other affiliations. Ehsan Karimi reported that security personnel with disabilities face harassment and verbal abuse when visiting government offices. Persons with disabilities from non-Pashtun ethnic groups are often denied allowances or receive them only after persistent follow-ups. Hazarah women with disabilities face compounded discrimination due to gender, ethnicity, and disability, making them more vulnerable than any other group.

Children constitute a significant proportion of persons with disabilities in Afghanistan. Landmines and unexploded remnants of war continue to claim victims, with children forming the majority of casualties. Children with disabilities also face neglect and discrimination from families, society, and public institutions. Blind and deaf children, as well as those with intellectual disabilities, require specialized educational services such as Braille and sign language instruction. The ruling authorities have been completely neglectful in providing such services, and reductions in international assistance have further limited activities by both national and international organizations.

The lack of adequate support programs and services has marginalized persons with disabilities, preventing them from developing skills and participating effectively in decision-making. Building a stable, prosperous, and just Afghanistan requires the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life, ensuring their meaningful participation in planning and decision-making.

Chapter 9: Accountability, Transitional Justice, and International Accountability Mechanisms

For more than four decades, Afghanistan has experienced continuous conflict and insecurity. During the Soviet invasion, the subsequent civil wars, the first Taliban regime, the Islamic Republic, and now the second Taliban regime, thousands of people have been killed or injured, and millions have been displaced internally or forced to seek refuge in other countries. These wars have had profoundly detrimental effects on all aspects of Afghan life.

Throughout these conflicts, international humanitarian law and human rights principles have been repeatedly violated. Various Afghan parties and armed groups, and in some cases foreign forces involved in the conflicts, committed war crimes. Some armed groups also committed crimes against humanity. Notably, the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) has systematically, deliberately, and extensively targeted the Hazara Shi'a ethnic and religious minority, actions that may constitute acts of genocide.

Despite the commission of numerous crimes in Afghanistan, which continue to this day, no individual or group has been formally arrested or prosecuted by domestic or international judicial bodies. Perpetrators have benefited from the continued culture of impunity and continue to perpetrate their crimes. This situation has perpetuated a cycle of violence and crime over the past four decades. To date, the prospect of accountability for these crimes remains unclear, while victims of the conflict continue to await justice.

From late 2001 to 2021, efforts were made to address past crimes. In 2005, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) launched a national consultation. The findings, published under the title "Call for Justice," revealed that an overwhelming majority of Afghans sought accountability for past crimes. Based on this consultation, the Government of Afghanistan adopted the "Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation, and Justice," commonly referred to as the transitional justice program. Under this action plan, the AIHRC documented past crimes and produced a Conflict

Mapping Report. Documentation of cases and reporting were among the key activities of the action plan.

Other key activities, which were the responsibility of the Afghan government, were not implemented due to political considerations. Some alleged war criminals held positions in the executive and legislative branches, exerting pressure on the Presidency to prevent implementation of the action plan. In 2010, the National Assembly passed the “National Reconciliation and General Amnesty Law,” which granted amnesty to individuals accused of war crimes. The adoption of this law effectively neutralized the Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation, and Justice and rendered the pursuit of justice impossible.

During the Islamic Republic, legislative reforms and improvements in judicial and prosecutorial institutions were introduced. In 2017, the Afghan Penal Code was revised to criminalize war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in accordance with the Rome Statute. The Penal Code came into force in 2018. Additionally, a dedicated department for the investigation and prosecution of international crimes was established within the Attorney General’s Office, and the Supreme Court included a Public Security Chamber. Despite these reforms, Afghanistan’s judicial and prosecutorial organs were not fully successful in addressing serious crimes such as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Following the Taliban’s takeover in 2021, Afghanistan’s judicial system underwent a complete transformation. The Constitution and many laws, previously compatible with international human rights conventions, were repealed. The ruling authorities declared that, in place of the Constitution and other laws, Islamic jurisprudence (Sharia) would be followed. The Afghan Parliament was dissolved, and judicial and prosecutorial institutions were fundamentally restructured. Clerics, mostly Taliban members without formal academic legal education, were appointed as judges in the Supreme Court, other courts, and judicial offices.

Independent institutions, such as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, were dissolved by the Taliban, and other civil society and human rights organizations ceased to operate. Independent media face severe censorship, and achievements in freedom of expression have been completely eradicated. Journalists acting contrary to Taliban policies are subjected to threats, torture, and extrajudicial killings. At present, there is no domestic oversight mechanism to hold Taliban judicial and prosecutorial organs accountable.

The only remaining avenue for justice in Afghanistan lies in international legal mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Afghanistan acceded to the ICC in May 2003. The Court initiated a preliminary investigation in 2007 and, after 2011, has published annual briefings on Afghanistan. According to these reports, the Office of the Prosecutor has investigated cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, the previous Afghan government and its international partners did not provide adequate cooperation with the ICC.

Following the Taliban takeover in 2021, Afghanistan’s cooperation with the ICC ceased almost entirely. On 31 October 2022, ICC judges announced that the Office of the Prosecutor would resume investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan. The Prosecutor’s Office, however, will focus primarily on crimes committed by the Taliban and ISKP, rather than those committed by Afghan security forces or international forces.

The ICC has focused its investigations primarily on crimes committed by the Taliban against women. In January 2025, the ICC Prosecutor requested the Pre-Trial Chamber to issue arrest warrants for Mullah Hibatullah, the senior leader of the Taliban, and Abdul Hakim Haqqani, Chief Justice of the Taliban, for committing gender-based persecution. On 8 July 2025, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber issued arrest warrants under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute. The warrants stated that there were reasonable grounds to believe that these two Taliban leaders, through issuing orders, encouragement, or requests, committed the crime of “persecution as a crime against humanity. This persecution targeted individuals on the basis of gender—including girls, women, and others who do not conform with Taliban policies regarding sex, gender identity, or gender expression—and on the basis of political affiliation, targeting individuals perceived to be allies of girls and women...”¹³³

This is the first time in Afghanistan’s history that an international court has issued arrest warrants against Afghan citizens for crimes against humanity. The ICC has announced that investigations into other Taliban leaders are ongoing and additional arrest warrants may be issued. Although the current investigations focus on women’s rights, it is essential that all crimes under the Rome Statute, including war crimes and genocide against the Hazara community, are also investigated. The AHRC hopes the ICC will conduct comprehensive and public investigations and hold perpetrators accountable.

While the practical arrest of these two Taliban leaders remains difficult under current circumstances, this ICC action is highly encouraging for the future of justice in Afghanistan. At a minimum, it demonstrates that victims’ voices are being heard, providing hope and support to human rights defenders.

Although the issuance of ICC arrest warrants was expected to pressure the Taliban to refrain from committing further crimes, violations continue. Politically, the ruling authorities face greater international isolation, yet the human rights situation has deteriorated rather than improved.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) represents another international mechanism to address war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan. In September 2024, the governments of Australia, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands announced formal steps to demand that Afghanistan end violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

¹³³ International Criminal Court, Situation in Afghanistan: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber II issues arrest warrants for Hibatullah Akhundzada and Abdul Hakim Haqqani, July 8, 2025, Available on: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-afghanistan-icc-pre-trial-chamber-ii-issues-arrest-warrants-hibatullah-akhundzada>

Against Women (CEDAW)¹³⁴. They declared their intention to bring a case against Afghanistan at the ICJ for violations of this Convention¹³⁵. If pursued, this would mark the first CEDAW case before the ICJ, the highest judicial authority of the United Nations.

The ICJ has two main functions: settling legal disputes between states in accordance with international law when referred to it, and providing advisory opinions on legal questions referred by competent UN organs. The ICJ does not hear cases brought by individuals; it only addresses disputes between states. A case against Afghanistan would be the first instance of a state being summoned to the ICJ for discrimination against women.

Under international law, states that are parties to CEDAW may bring a case against Afghanistan, a member state systematically violating its provisions. Although the Taliban authorities have not been formally recognized by the United Nations or other states, Afghanistan, as a state party to CEDAW, remains accountable to its obligations under the Convention.

Although such a case would be complex and time-consuming, it could have a meaningful impact, aligning with Afghan women and girls' demands for justice and raising hope for the restoration of their fundamental rights.

Another mechanism for human rights protection at the international level is the United Nations and its subsidiary mechanisms. In 2005, the UN General Assembly adopted the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principles. According to these principles, if a state is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens from war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, or ethnic cleansing, the international community has a responsibility to act through the UN¹³⁶. UN measures may include diplomatic, humanitarian, and other peaceful means under Chapters 6 and 8 of the UN Charter. If all peaceful efforts fail, additional measures may include economic sanctions, referral to the ICC, or ultimately, the use of military force authorized by the UN Security Council¹³⁷.

Fact-finding missions and investigative commissions regarding serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law can be established by various UN bodies. On 6 October 2025, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution endorsing the creation of an independent investigative mechanism to examine human rights violations in Afghanistan. This mechanism has been established to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyze evidence of human rights violations and international crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, the mechanism has not yet begun operations.

¹³⁴ Forbes, "The Taliban To Be Taken Before The International Court Of Justice" Sep 26, 2024, Available on: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2024/09/26/the-taliban-to-be-taken-before-the-international-court-of-justice/>

¹³⁵ International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, "IBAHRI highlights gender apartheid regime in Afghanistan after four years under Taliban", Aug 29, 2025, Available on: <https://www.ibanet.org/IBAHRI-highlights-gender-apartheid-regime-in-Afghanistan-after-four-years-under-Taliban>

¹³⁶ UN, Resolution approved UN World Summit on Sep 16, 2005, Par 139, A/RES/60/1

¹³⁷ Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, what is R2P?, More information on: <https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/the-responsibility-to-protect-a-background-briefing/>

In April 2022, the UN Human Rights Council appointed Richard Bennett as Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan. The Special Rapporteur has been effective in documenting human rights violations. Coordination among the Special Rapporteur, the independent investigative mechanism, the ICC, and the ICJ is crucial for accurately documenting cases, preserving evidence, and analyzing data. Through such coordination, these mechanisms can reinforce each other's mandates and provide a precise assessment of the situation, offering promising prospects for justice in Afghanistan.

Without cooperation from Afghan civil society organizations abroad, international mechanisms will not be fully effective. Diaspora organizations play a crucial role in collecting evidence, analyzing cases, and documenting violations. Over the past four years, these organizations have actively worked on documentation and advocacy for justice.

Finally, the participation of victims is essential for achieving justice and ensuring the effectiveness of international accountability mechanisms. Victims' voices must be heard, and their perspectives incorporated into the justice process. Listening to victims is integral to the pursuit of justice.

Addressing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Afghanistan requires comprehensive cooperation among all relevant actors, including the ICC, ICJ, the independent investigative mechanism, the UN Special Rapporteur, Afghan civil society organizations, and the victims themselves. The United Nations, particularly the Human Rights Council, must provide the necessary authority, resources, and proactive policy measures to ensure effective international oversight and accountability in Afghanistan.

Chapter 10: Road Map, Civil Society, and Human Rights Defenders

Considering that the human rights situation in Afghanistan—particularly the rights of women—is being widely and systematically violated by the de facto authorities, it is essential to outline a roadmap for the future of human rights. While presenting a comprehensive roadmap under the current circumstances is challenging, such a framework can serve as guidance for stakeholders and encourage the development of measures to strengthen human rights protection and address existing gaps.

At present, human rights work in Afghanistan operates on two levels, each with distinct challenges. One aspect involves activities conducted from outside the country, while the other encompasses monitoring and advocacy within Afghanistan. Both approaches face significant obstacles, particularly regarding security, access, and capacity.

Working in the field of human rights in Afghanistan is extremely difficult due to multiple factors, most notably the serious security risks that limit the activities of human rights organizations. Many experienced and knowledgeable human rights defenders have left Afghanistan, and independent oversight mechanisms have either been dissolved or ceased operations. Consequently, access to accurate and timely information from within the country is extremely limited. Despite these

obstacles, human rights work remains possible, though it requires careful planning and adherence to safety principles.

Afghan human rights organizations operating abroad face several limitations, including insufficient capacity for remote work. Not only is the number of these organizations limited, but many also lack experience and expertise in maintaining secure communication with victims and witnesses inside Afghanistan, as well as in collecting documentation and evidence of human rights violations. Similarly, local monitors within Afghanistan often lack the experience and skills to work under high-security risks, increasing the likelihood of exposure, arrest, or persecution by the current authorities.

The principle of “Do No Harm” must remain central to all human rights activities, particularly under current conditions. This principle should guide not only the actions of human rights staff but also their interactions with victims, witnesses, and collaborators involved in evidence collection and documentation.

Furthermore, Afghan human rights organizations often lack sufficient awareness of trauma-informed approaches. During interviews with victims, this oversight can inadvertently cause harm or violate human rights standards. Therefore, it is essential for staff to acquire knowledge of trauma, ensuring that interactions with victims are conducted professionally, ethically, and sensitively.

In light of these challenges, the Afghanistan Human Rights Commission (AHRC) presents the following proposed strategic roadmap. This framework is intended to be discussed broadly with civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and international partners, and to be finalized and implemented in consultation with them.

Vision: A free Afghanistan where all individuals fully enjoy their human rights and live in peace.

Mission: To promote the development and protection of human rights in Afghanistan.

Objective: To strengthen and safeguard the freedoms and human rights of individuals through monitoring, documentation, and advocacy.

Key Activities:

1. **Cohesion and Coordination:** Establish cohesion and coordination among civil society organizations and human rights defenders operating outside Afghanistan.
2. **Monitoring and Documentation:** Monitor the human rights situation, including the collection, analysis, and preservation of documents, evidence, and records of human rights violations.
3. **International Advocacy:** Conduct advocacy through international networking, including organizing conferences, seminars, and dialogues with United Nations bodies, international judicial mechanisms, human rights organizations, and influential state officials.
4. **Awareness-Raising:** Promote awareness by organizing dialogues, webinars, and campaigns through independent media operating outside Afghanistan.

5. **Coordination with International Mechanisms:** Strengthen cooperation with international judicial mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and UN investigative mechanisms. Afghan civil society organizations and human rights defenders will provide documentation and evidence of human rights violations and collaborate in their analysis.
6. **Capacity-Building and Trauma Awareness:** Enhance the capacity of human rights organizations and local monitors to work remotely under high-security risks, ensuring effective monitoring and collection of accurate, credible information, documents, and evidence. Provide training in trauma-informed approaches and professional interview techniques for victims of human rights violations.

This roadmap offers a strategic foundation for continued human rights work in Afghanistan despite the challenges posed by the current political and security environment. Through coordinated action, adherence to ethical standards, and engagement with international mechanisms, Afghan human rights defenders can sustain documentation, advocacy, and protection efforts, keeping the pursuit of justice alive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the information presented in the various chapters of this report, it can be concluded that the human rights situation in Afghanistan under Taliban rule has severely deteriorated over the past four years, and the ruling authorities are systematically likely to further exacerbate the situation. If no changes occur in the current policies of the Taliban, the people of Afghanistan will face an unimaginable humanitarian crisis. The harmful consequences of the current Taliban policies regarding the freedoms and human rights of the Afghan people will remain irreparable for many years to come.

Considering the policies and actions of the Taliban over the past four years, the ruling authorities have not only refrained from withdrawing their anti-human rights policies, but day by day, they continue to intensify the violations of human rights and restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of the people, further worsening the situation. Therefore, at present, there is no expectation of any change in the current policies of the ruling authorities.

From August 2021 until the end of 2025, the Taliban authorities have issued 251 decrees, procedures, and written or oral orders aimed at restricting the freedoms and human rights of the people of Afghanistan, the majority of which pertain to the rights of women and girls. During 2025 alone, the ruling authorities issued 25 decrees and procedures limiting human rights and hundreds judicial rulings imposing corporal punishment, resulting in 1087 individuals being publicly flogged. In the same year, 5 individuals were executed in public.

Afghanistan is a country governed without a constitution. The 2004 Constitution and the majority of other laws enacted during the Republic era have been annulled. Nearly all laws, decrees, and procedures issued by the ruling authorities are in violation of international human rights conventions.

Women, who constitute half of the country's population, are subjected to the harshest forms of repression and restrictions, the likes of which have not been seen in any other country. Afghan women face systematic, widespread, and organized discrimination. The discriminatory and repressive policies of the ruling authorities have effectively excluded women from nearly all spheres of social, cultural, political, and economic life. The authorities have imposed restrictions on virtually every notion of freedom and human rights that women may have, a situation that can perhaps be described by no term other than "gender apartheid."

Ethnic and religious minorities are also systematically subjected to repression, discrimination, threats, killings, forced displacement, and the confiscation of property. Hazara employees have been removed from nearly all public offices. In some provinces, Hazara lands and properties have been forcibly seized under threat or by use of weapons and redistributed to individuals affiliated with the Taliban. The Ismaili religious minority in the northeastern provinces, particularly in Badakhshan, is also under severe pressure. Throughout 2025, multiple reports indicate that Taliban authorities have forcibly attempted to compel Ismailis to convert their religion, while those who resist have been arrested, tortured, or even killed. Other religious minorities, including Sufis, Ahmadis, and Christians, live covertly out of fear of persecution.

Although the Taliban authorities announced a general amnesty, hundreds of former security personnel have been arrested, tortured, or killed. Investigations indicate that the Taliban have used the amnesty decree as a trap to exact revenge on former security forces. Taliban detention facilities, particularly "Administration of 40" of the Taliban intelligence, have been transformed into torture centers, where some individuals have lost their lives due to severe torture.

The deteriorating economic situation, rising poverty, unemployment, drought, natural disasters, the large-scale return of migrants from neighboring countries, and the lack of financial and food support due to reduced international aid have left the majority of Afghanistan's population in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. However, there is little hope of mobilizing sufficient international aid to meet the needs of the population. Therefore, the risk of a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is extremely serious.

Although the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for the Taliban's supreme leader and chief justice on charges of gender-based persecution, considered a crime against humanity, no change is visible in the Taliban's policies toward women. They brazenly continue their oppressive and discriminatory policies against women and other citizens of Afghanistan.

United Nations member states, particularly Western countries, do not have a clear and consistent policy toward Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Although they have not formally recognized the Taliban government, they have adopted a stance of indifference and silence toward the Taliban's human rights violations, an approach that is unacceptable to the people of Afghanistan, especially women, who are the primary victims. Superficial engagement and mild criticism from the international community regarding the Taliban's oppressive and exclusionary policies perpetuate a culture of

impunity. It is crucial and necessary that all stakeholders, particularly NATO member states, learn from past approaches and adopt a more effective and principled response.

If the international community's policies toward Afghanistan do not change, the human rights situation in the country will become extremely dire, and Afghanistan will turn into a center of terrorism and violence. Regional countries, as well as Western states, will not remain immune to the harmful consequences of the current situation. Therefore, before it is too late, all stakeholders, including international organizations, civil society and human rights defenders in Afghanistan, and countries involved in Afghan affairs must seriously monitor the human rights situation in Afghanistan and take responsible, decisive measures in this regard.

Recommendations:

The AHRC, expressing deep concern over the current human rights situation in Afghanistan, proposes the following recommendations to improve the situation:

A. Recommendations to the International Community and International Organizations:

1. The Taliban regime should not be recognized as a legitimate government in Afghanistan; they took power by force and silenced the people in GUN POINTs. Do not remove the sanction on Taliban leaderships, rather adding more violent leaders in the sanction list.
2. Avoid normalization of human rights violations, particularly the complete isolation and discrimination of women in Afghanistan, do not use the excuse of respecting sovereignty, culture and religion.
3. The United Nations and its member states are urged to pressure the Taliban through political and economic sanctions to change their policies regarding human rights.
4. Treat the violation of human rights and severe discrimination of women as Gender apartheid and crimes against humanity. And support the codification of Gender apartheid in Afghanistan in the convention on crimes against humanity. This will help to end the culture of impunity for SGBV.
5. The criminalization of gender apartheid should be placed as a priority by the United Nations. Necessary support should be provided to the efforts of individuals and human rights/women's rights organizations working in this regard.
6. Support the civil society inside and women's groups inside and outside of Afghanistan to promote human rights and document the violation of human rights of women and minorities in the country. These documents can be used for awareness raising on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. and will be used for accountability and promotion of justice by the international mechanisms of justice.

7. Financial and political support to ICC and ICJ is fundamental for promotion of accountability in Afghanistan, As the judicial system in the country is not capable and not willing to take any action against these gross violations of human rights.
8. The countries that announced in September 2025 their intention to file a case against the Taliban at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are urged to act on their commitment and initiate proceedings against the Taliban for widespread violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including the denial of the right to education. They must carefully assess the risks of engagement with the Taliban and the unintended consequences of conferring legitimacy upon them.
9. Continue the support and distribution of humanitarian relief to the needy people in the country fairly, with close monitoring to avoid misuse and corruption by the regime. The INGOs or NNGOs should raise their voice in case of misuse and corruption to the media, with accurate documents.
10. Principles based dialogue should be the case to talk with Taliban, as soft approaches prove to be not working and do not put enough pressure on them to change their behavior.
11. It is important to have coordination between the different UN agencies and International stakeholders, to have an effective outcome with dealing with the regime.
12. The United Nations and its member states are urged to apply diplomatic pressure on the Taliban to revoke their discriminatory policies against Hazaras and other ethnic and religious minorities, and to respect their human rights.
13. The governments of Iran and Pakistan are requested to immediately halt the forced and mass deportation of Afghan refugees, particularly those with legal status or who face risks of torture or extrajudicial killing under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.
14. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, the Human Rights Committee, and the UN Human Rights Council are urged to deploy human rights field teams to the borders of Afghanistan with Iran and Pakistan to closely monitor the situation of refugees, produce comprehensive reports, present findings to international bodies, and exert political and legal pressure on Iran and Pakistan to comply with their international obligations.
15. The prohibition on issuing visas to Afghan citizens, which has been started by some countries and unfortunately is expanding places individuals at risk, especially women, in double jeopardy and discrimination. In this matter, reconsideration is necessary, taking into account international commitments and moral obligation.
16. Finally, the situation in Afghanistan is not solely a national issue but a matter of concern for humanity as a whole and must be treated with the utmost seriousness. It will not remain

confined within Afghanistan's borders; as history has shown, its consequences can extend to other nations as well.

B. Recommendations to Afghans and Civil Society Organizations:

1. All Afghan civil society organizations and human rights defenders, both inside and outside the country, are urged to advocate for the rights of women and girls, human rights activists, journalists, ethnic and religious minorities, and the enforcement of justice.
2. A comprehensive, multi-stakeholder roadmap must be developed for human rights protection in Afghanistan, combining advocacy, monitoring, humanitarian support, and accountability measures.
3. We call upon independent media outlets, both inside and outside the country, to give serious attention to reporting on and documenting cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide that are taking place in Afghanistan.
4. The people of Afghanistan require education and awareness-raising programs on human rights in order to increase their sensitivity to the ongoing crimes and to strengthen their unity and solidarity in confronting violence and discrimination.
5. Genuine religious scholars within Afghanistan must not remain indifferent to the Taliban's misuse and misinterpretation of Islamic teachings. The distortion and instrumentalization of religion for the purpose of excluding, oppressing, and violating the rights of women cannot be justified under any circumstances.
6. The people of Afghanistan, particularly the men of the country, should exercise their right to civil disobedience to raise and advocate for women's rights, especially fundamental rights such as girls' access to education. This issue is not solely a concern for women or for women human rights defenders; rather, it affects every household and concerns the future of the entire country.
7. The people of Afghanistan, particularly fathers and brothers, should take all possible measures to facilitate access to education for the female members of their families. Every household should endeavor to become a place of learning for girls, using all available means. Women and girls within the family should also encourage their fathers and brothers to share the knowledge and education they have acquired.
8. The public should support civil society organizations that are engaged in promoting human rights and documenting violations of human rights, including cases of torture and the forced displacement of minority groups within the country. These documents can be utilized to promote accountability and justice for the victims, as well as to serve as a record of the country's recent history. They can also be employed to prevent the recurrence of international crimes and to help end the culture of impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

C. Recommendations for the De facto Regime:

1. The de facto authorities are urged to respect all fundamental rights and freedoms of women and girls and to annul all restrictions imposed on their right to work, access to education, freedom of movement, and other freedoms.
2. The de facto authorities are urged to end torture, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, corporal punishments, and public executions.
3. The de facto authorities are urged to respect the human and civil rights of ethnic and religious minorities and to cease all forms of oppression, threats, and seizure of their properties. They are specifically called upon to stop repression and coercion aimed at forcing members of the Ismaili community to convert their religion.
4. It is necessary to remind them that they are obligated to fulfill Afghanistan's commitments under international human rights laws and conventions ratified by the Afghan state. A change in the country's governing regime does not absolve them of responsibility for violations of human rights.
5. They must repeal all decrees, laws, and orders that contravene Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights laws and conventions; failure to do so will result in appropriate legal and international consequences.
6. They must derive their legitimacy from the people of Afghanistan. The inclusion and meaningful participation of the population, particularly women in social and public life serves as a key indicator of legitimate and accountable governance.

The end.